

Las Vegas Trip May 2002

Our next trip after Disneyland was planned in April and it was decided that we would go to Las Vegas for 2-3 days. Hotel (with a special deal and discount) and Car were booked in advance. We took car one day earlier because Purvi was planning to take her driving test. She had taken 2 driving lessons through a driving school in April and as she had passed written test, she has Instruction Permit (she can drive under guidance). As we rented the car, both the car and the “instructor” were different compared to the driving school and the “new” instructor (guess who? ... Nimish ☺) decided that Purvi should practice more before giving the driving test. Therefore it was decided that she will drive during our trip to Las Vegas and after coming back she should give the driving test.

Tuesday (14th May): Car was specially rented for Purvi to drive as much as possible and feel confident about her driving. Most of the day Purvi drove around the Phoenix area (approx. 30 miles) and on way we completed some unfinished business by going to some departmental stores.

Wednesday (15th May): Las Vegas is approx. 310 miles from Phoenix and most of the highway is 2-way (something like a state highway) with reduced speed limit. The estimated travel time was 7 hours. Because the road is little deserted and there are very few rest areas, we started at 9.30 am after eating little heavy breakfast (brunch).

At first, we had to pass through the whole Phoenix Metro area for approx. 1.5 hours (60 miles). After taking first rest area break and passing through a small town of Wickenburg, Purvi took over the driving. Purvi drove nearly 120 miles on US93 2-way highway. Her first experience was very nice and she enjoyed but it made me tense and feeling little odd as I was sitting in the front seat doing nothing (except giving her some advice) ☺. Around 1.30 pm, we stopped at Macdonald's in Kingman for ice cream and fries. Now I took over the driving and after 80 miles we reached Arizona – Nevada border. Hoover Dam is located on the border and is one of the biggest dams in US. We stopped for ~ 30 minutes and took some photographs. There were two clocks, one had Arizona time and the other had Nevada time. Usually those two times have 1-hour difference but during summer they are same. After leaving Hoover dam, we had 1-hour drive to Las Vegas. We reached Circus Circus Hotel in Las Vegas at 5.00 pm.

Circus Circus Hotel Casino has two 30-story buildings for hotel, a huge indoor theme park (with roller coaster and other 20 rides), a big casino and a shopping area with different shops/restaurants. This hotel has approx. 3000 rooms and is located on the Las Vegas Blvd ('The Strip'). When we reached the hotel, looking at the parking area and hotel reception area we felt as if we were at a big airport. Check-in procedure took nearly 45 minutes. Our room was on 18th floor and had a view of Las Vegas downtown.

After one hour we started exploring our hotel. Our building had a small casino, which was connected to the main casino via a sky shuttle monorail. We came to the main casino. This was Purvi's first visit to a Casino so we looked through few games (without spending \$\$). As we came out of our hotel casino it was dark and we started walking on 'The Strip' looking at light decorations on each building. Las Vegas Blvd (also called 'The Strip') is the main road of Las Vegas on which all major casinos are located. The Strip is approx. 3 miles long and it has

about 20 big casinos. Due to lot of traffic and people around, we decided to walk and see the extravaganza.

Las Vegas is called the world capital for gambling. These hotels spend huge amount of money in decorating their casinos (specially from outside) with lights and huge TVs (advertising their shows) so they can attract people to their place. Our first stop was 'Treasure Island' hotel casino. This casino has a show outside their building every 90 minutes. We reached in time for the next show. The show had 2 big boats – one of pirates and one of British army. The show is all about special effects as these two boats fight each other and after 15 minutes British boat sinks (another special effect). Nice show with hundreds of people watching. Our next stop was 'The Mirage' hotel casino. This casino is very well decorated with waterfalls and small lake in front of their building. Every 15 minutes this casino has a show of a big volcano erupting and related special effects of sound and fire. Our last stop for the day was 'Bellagio' hotel casino. This casino also has a nice lake in front of their hotel. Every 15 minutes they have a show of fountains, very well choreographed and on a very nice piece of music. Every time it has different music and different choreography. During our walk we also saw few other casinos ('The Venetian', 'Frontier', 'Stardust', 'Caesars Palace', 'Ballys' etc), which had lighting decorations only.

Now we had already walked about 4 miles (going and coming back) and had spent nearly 5 hours on 'The Strip' so we were tired. We came back to hotel at 1.30 am. Long and very entertaining day ended.

Thursday (16th May): Today morning we had decided to visit 'The Adventuredome Theme Park' in our hotel (Circus Circus). This theme park is the biggest indoor theme park in US. The park has 21 rides for kids and adults. The idea of making this theme park in this hotel was to attract families to Las Vegas because otherwise casinos do not allow anybody below 21 years to gamble. When we booked this hotel, we got discount that 2 can visit this theme park at the price of 1 (50% discount). We spent 3 hours in the park enjoying rides like roller coaster (fast), pirate boat (swinging), inverter (slow but turns you upside down), chaos (individual person is swinging randomly in all directions including in circle), rimrunner (water ride which throws you down in water from 4 story height), lmax theatre show and few others. We both enjoy rides so it was fun.

Later in the afternoon we were back on 'The Strip'. This time we wanted to see casinos beyond 'Bellagio', which we visited previous day. Again our legs were our vehicles and this time we also had time to see most of the casinos in daylight. Major casinos we saw today included...

- 'Paris' hotel casino (which is mini Paris, France with Eiffel Tower and few other buildings).
- 'Aladdin' hotel casino (middle eastern and desert look. Everyday few magic shows inside the casino).
- 'Monte Carlo' hotel casino (nice showy building).
- 'MGM Grand' hotel casino (huge light decoration and big bronze lion statue – MGM is a big Hollywood studio).
- 'New York New York' hotel casino (which is mini New York city with Statue of Liberty, Brooklyn bridge and few other buildings).

- 'Excalibur' hotel casino (looks like a big castle with different colors on each part of the castle).
- 'Luxor' hotel casino (looks like a Pyramid of Egypt – a huge black triangle shaped hotel)

The Strip nearly ends at Luxor. Beyond Luxor you do not see any major casinos. When we reached Luxor, we had walked nearly 3 miles so we entered Luxor casino to take-off some weight from our pockets and spend some \$\$ with a hope to ride a Limo while going back to the hotel ☺. Using 'Slot' machines we tried our best but at the end we had to go back to our hotel on our tired feet ☹.

We reached our hotel at 11.30 pm and ended our nice and long second day.

Friday (17th May): Today we had to checkout at 11.00 am. So we left our room at 10.00 am and checked out at 10.30 am. We had to take brunch (between breakfast and lunch) in Circus Circus hotel as they had given us free coupons to eat (deal when we booked the hotel). After waiting in line for few minutes, we got our table at 11.00 am. It was a huge place and all kinds of food and drinks available for buffet. We had to eat properly because this was our lunch before we leave Las Vegas and most importantly it was free ☺. To give an idea of what type of food and drinks were available here is a small list...

Different kinds of cereals, fruits, yogurts, muffins, doughnuts, bagels, different breads, waffles, pan cakes, potatoes, different kinds of meat, butter, margarine, jams, syrups, biscuits, salads, french toasts, tea, coffee, different flavors of milk, juices etc etc etc.

After eating heavy brunch at 12.00 pm we went to see circus tricks performed by artists in our hotel. We saw two shows before leaving at 1.00 pm from the hotel. We drove through 'The Strip' to have a final look at all casinos in daylight. It took nearly 45 minutes to drive through 'The Strip' (heavy traffic).

At 2.00 pm we left Las Vegas for Phoenix. I drove first 2 hours to reach Kingman MacDonald's. After drinking coffee, we left at 4.30 pm with a new driver, Purvi. Again she drove approx. 2.5 hours for ~ 130 miles. After rest area break, it was getting dark at 7.00 pm so I took over and reached home around 8.45 pm.

Saturday (18th May): As we had planned, Purvi wanted to give her license test today BUT unfortunately due to some system problems, all Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) offices were closed for that day. So she will have to wait until we rent the car some another time.

We had very nice 3 days vacation before we both start our summer semesters. It was a very enjoyable trip with a good experience of driving for Purvi. Hope you all enjoy our long trip report.
