

Las Vegas - I'll Do It My Way

By Susan Long

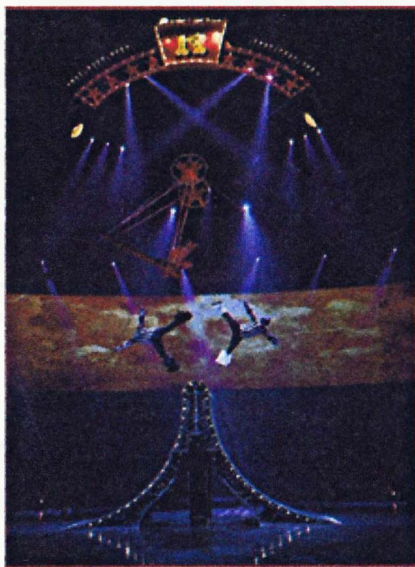
There are probably as many ways to enjoy Las Vegas as there are slot machines to take your money. That's what I like about it - its diversity. Because it's become a family tradition of sorts that I meet my close and extended family there once a year, I've adopted my own routine. You'll figure out your own, of course, but consider the following:

- If you spend much time gambling at a particular hotel, make sure you get a casino card. Depending on how much you play, you'll receive special offers from the hotel for free or discounted rooms and other perks. Every casino has a casino host who will be happy to help you.

- The shows in Las Vegas are rivaled by none. Before my first trip, I considered myself a Broadway snob and couldn't imagine a Las Vegas show even coming close. Then I saw *The Beatles™ Love™* by Cirque du Soleil® at the Mirage. The show, which celebrates the musical legacy of The Beatles, was spectacular. I've seen several other shows since that time,

and none have disappointed. Consider other shows that release tickets on the day of the event and are sold at half-priced Tix4tonight ticket venues on the strip. Ask your hotel concierge for locations.

- I'm a milkshake aficionado. Wherever I go, I look for a decent shake place. Sometimes, I actually find one. For a thick, luscious shake that will put a smile on your face



The Beatles™ Love™ by Cirque du Soleil® at the Mirage

even if you've just lost your shirt, visit B.I.T. in the Mirage Hotel and Casino. For about \$6, plus tax and tip, you can drink your way to oblivion. I don't even bother to sit down in this burger joint. I order mine to go at the front counter and take it with me.

- While you're at the Mirage, check out the Secret Garden and Dolphin Habitat. The cost is \$15 for adults, \$10 for children ages 4 to 12, and free for children under 3. It's definitely an oasis in the middle of the noise and glitter. You'll see bottlenose dolphins frolicking in the enormous pool. Nearby, in the Secret Garden, lions, tigers, and leopards go about their business. When I visited, I was lucky enough to see several baby lion cubs in various states of playing, napping, and just hanging out.

- For those who like a somewhat stronger drink than a milkshake, try the Parasol Lounge at Winn's. It's a beautifully designed bar with brightly colored parasols hanging from the ceiling. You can sit inside or outside, depending on the weather.

- No matter how many times I visit Las Vegas, I never tire of watching the pageantry of The Bellagio fountains. Don't miss it!

- Although most don't visit Las Vegas for its culture, The Bellagio Gallery of

Fine Art is a nice little gem. I saw an exhibit of the photography of Ansel Adams there. Unfortunately, the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum in the Venetian has closed. But, it's nice to be able to step into the Bellagio Gallery if you tire of the non-stop night life and fast-paced environment.

- Walking in Las Vegas is fun because there's so much to see. Whether you people-watch, enjoy the Venetian Living Statues and other entertainment in the Venetian's Grand Canal Shoppes, or stroll through the Forum Shops at Caesar's, it's never dull. Also, during the holidays, there are special displays. The Bellagio, in particular, does a fantastic job of changing out its displays in its Conservatory & Botanical Gardens.

- With all of my talk about other things I enjoy doing in Vegas, you're probably thinking I'm not a gambler. Well, think again! My choice is the slot machines. Why? Because I like the mindless fun of spinning the Wheel of Fortune or hoping that the Double Diamonds fall into place on the center line! Of course, I have a budget and always stay within it.

Whatever takes you to Las Vegas, discover your own groove there.