



Our recent trip was to Las Vegas.

I didn't state that in the last issue because I had hoped I could get back down to Avon, Colorado to conduct the interview I had to cancel and introduce Herald readers to Brian Kozak, the new Cheyenne police chief. That became impossible for me to schedule and I wanted to relate some things about our Vegas trip so now the cat is out of the bag about that "secret" interview. It was with Brian Kozak.

My wife and I are not big gamblers and my suggestion to her that we make a trip to Las Vegas was to "explore" an exciting destination after not having traveled there for more than 20 years.

The route we took going west through Wyoming, avoided Salt Lake City, stayed south of Provo and then continued south on I-15 through southern Utah, crossed the northwestern corner of Arizona and into Nevada's far southern wedge. The plan was come back through the mountains of Colorado to Avon to meet with our incoming police chief and stay one more night enroute (in the Vail area) then cover the remaining 200 miles from Avon to Cheyenne Friday after my interview.

The drive through Utah is a beautiful one. One highlight was that there were two "test" stretches of interstate, 17-18 miles each, where the speed limit was 80 mph. I do have trouble keeping the Taurus to that slow a speed but it was nice not to be breaking any laws by going 80.

To say Las Vegas has changed since we were last there would be an understatement. The Strip is still the strip but so many of the old hotel/casinos are now gone and replaced with taller, larger and much more impressive structures.

We were determined to see much of what we'd never bothered with before and at least some of what has been built since our last trip there. I used to go to Vegas on business trips but never set foot into a casino on those travels. Swear to God.

When I went alone, I stayed at a Best Western down the street from the Hilton where trade shows were centered. After trade show hours, I went back to the room, read, made calls back to my office and home, watched television and slept.

Obviously, traveling on expense account, I could have wagered and lost a lot of money and the company would have covered it but it never dawned on me to do that. Didn't want to so didn't.

We arrived in Las Vegas on a Sunday afternoon and checked into our hotel (no, it wasn't that same ratty Best Western) at 3:00 pm and hit the bricks. By my conservative estimate, by the time we turned in that first night at about 1:00 am, we walked at least a hundred and eighty-five miles. It might have been less but it seemed like at least that far.

Those who know my wife and I would attest that we are not 30 anymore. Nor 40. We seldom stopped for any length of time. She wanted a slice of New York style pizza (why, you ask) so we fulfilled that demand at the New York, New York Hotel and Casino. ??

Since we were in Vegas last, they've put walkways over many of the busiest intersections on the Strip. That added immeasurably to the walking distance. You can look down the street a block or so and see the next hotel/casino you plan to visit but it was always about 18 miles in walking distance to it. Those walkways have made things so much safer but add seemingly double distance to any walk.

We were able to see the new pirate show (scantily clad women, actually) at Treasure Island (my wife covered my eyes through most of the "show" but I could hear men around me talking about the dress of the women) and a great fountain show at Bellagio. You need to see these after dark and we were out after dark that night. As well as the other nights we were there. That night we hit most of the hotel/casinos north of Tropicana Blvd.

I don't recall that we did any gambling that first night - I could be wrong but I don't remember any in particular. No, I wasn't in an alcohol induced haze. We were there to "explore," not to lose money.

My wife wanted to see some shows. I didn't. Whatever Lola wants, Lola gets. We saw two local shows. No big celebrities. Not many were in town and those who were did not appeal to us or were too expensive. \$12.95 was as high as I was willing to go. I wish. Monday and Tuesday nights, we went to shows. Both very good, in spite of what hawkers trying to sell tickets to other shows had warned us. One was at Stratosphere and the other downtown at the Golden Nugget.

We also took in two buffets - one at the M shown above and the other at The Orleans. Lunch at M, dinner at Orleans. It dawned on us that buffets may not be the best idea for octogenarians who are trying to explore Vegas on foot. The food was edible, the presentation impressive, and the service exceptional but when we finished, we had to convince ourselves to continue our mission. Which we did.

We saw other attractions - aquariums, "rainstorm" (the least impressive of all - Planet Hollywood Hotel/Casino), botanical gardens and conservatory, the Flamingo preserve and a weird presentation at Caesar's Palace that hasn't changed since the original Caesar ruled Rome. All of these things had no admission charge. And my specialty is "free."

Our last day we had planned to hit places we had missed until then - specifically Trump International and Wynn Hotel. Probably the greatest disappointment for my wife was not getting to the "M & M" place. I have no earthly idea what that is but there is such a place on the Strip.

Many people who visit Las Vegas plant themselves on the Strip and never leave it because they flew in and have no ground transportation of their own. We did so we saw fascinating places that others may miss. The M pictured above is miles down South Las Vegas Boulevard from the Strip. Miles. You think you're about to reach Death Valley before you see it in the distance. It was worth the trip. Not only for the buffet but we cleaned them out with our gambling prowess.

My wife is a very cautious spender of her hard-earned money. But, when she was on a roll, it took a crane to move her. "In just a bit," she'd say. "I've doubled my money, if I get back to even, I'll quit." Or, "I just got a drink, I can't leave now." So, we wiped out M and the Plaza downtown. Both places have offered us comp rooms, food and private jet transportation if we'll return. Oh, that's right, that's what they do for losers, not winners. Never mind.

Finally, the Fremont Experience downtown is awesome. It is a curved overhead projection screen several blocks long that covers the street, with a light and music presentation every hour on the hour. And, any music show that starts with "We Will Rock You" at a thousand decibels can't be all bad. The first show we saw introduced the "tribute" singers with that same Queen offering. In the dark. The point to all this is that you can enjoy Las Vegas on the cheap. Nice rooms are inexpensive. Food is inexpensive when you consider you only eat once a day. Many attractions are free. They could eliminate all the creeps on the street trying to hand you cards for "girls, girls, girls," though.

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