

Valley of Fire & Mountain of Snow: Touring Las Vegas & Beyond!

Story & Photos by Koz Mraz



Las Vegas is gamblers paradise to tourists worldwide but Vegas also serves up winning rides for us motorcyclists. Showing its hand with crimson hues of Red Rock and snow-covered mountains of Mt. Charleston to the vibrancy of the Valley of Fire. Rolling into Sin City on a Harley Davidson Ultra Classic Champion conversion this Triking Viking dominates the strip, well; I get some waves from streetwalkers. Picking the Golden Nugget in old downtown Vegas as ground zero for my invasion I don my Viking helmet and hit Fremont Street. Disneyland for derelicts, Fremont's replete with hookers, hucksters and comic book dress up characters... I feel right at home here.



Part of this story is about renting a motorcycle in Vegas and Eagle Rider Las Vegas wrote the book on Harley rentals worldwide. Vegas has 2 locations but the one Dean Martin Drive has Trikes for rent and said they are always in demand. They rent for around three hundred bucks a day and Harley Owners Group members get a 10% discount if the book online. Eagle rider also offers travel options at every level, from Maps of local routes, GPS tours to full on escorted rides.



Red Rock Canyon

My first ride was to Red Rock; only 20 miles from Las Vegas take the 215 Las Vegas beltway to Charleston Blvd (159). There is a \$10.00 fee for motorcycles (and Trikes) and \$20.00 per vehicle. A stunning 13-mile one way loop allows visitors to soak up the ocher of Red Rock. With nine designated parking areas, 100 miles of hiking, and restroom facilities, one could easily spend the day here. I was so focused on getting photos, I missed just experiencing the natural flow so I rode the loop again. They don't mind. It happens all the time the attendant told me.



Mt Charleston Ski Resort



I then headed to Mt Charleston. Take the 95 Veterans Memorial Hwy to the 157 (Kyle Canyon Rd) to Mt Charleston resort. It's only 47 miles from Red Rock and is a full-blown ski resort. Yes, Nevada has a ski resort with mountains 11,916 feet in altitude. It's another amazing ride but instead of red rocks, I am now in white snow. Boasting four lifts, the resort generally opens November through April, depending on conditions. It's chilly but with the sun out but freezing here at night. It gets down into the 20's. The views are endless, the roads are long sweeping turns to tight twisties and again, I turned around and road the other way just to see it again.



A piping hot bowl of French Onion soup at the Mt Charleston Lodge was just what the doctor ordered to warm my freezing fingertips. You can rent cabins here during the winter season. I'm talking fireplace, Jacuzzis and private porches with spectacular view cabins. The Resort on Mt Charleston was built in the early 1980s, the charming Resort on Mount Charleston underwent a multi-million-dollar renovation and upgrade in 2005. The newly styled guest room and suite accommodations feature views of the surrounding Spring Mountains.



I found a place to do some doughnuts in the snow then hit the 95 back to Vegas. If you tackle both Red Rock and Mt Charleston, be prepared for a full 8-hour day of solid riding. Depending on the time of year, either bring water and sunscreen or winter wear and a hot thermos.



Valley of Fire State Park

The next day, I headed east to The Valley of Fire State Park. Dedicated in 1935, it is Nevada's oldest state park. About a 45-minute ride from Vegas, the long stretch of road to the entrance is a triker's dream; an un-traveled two-laner allows you to see for miles. Its long curves allow for some really aggressive riding. I'm not sure what the speed limit is but I don't think anyone really cares. The Valley of Fire gets its colorful name from the spectacular red, orange and yellow sandstone formations that are exposed in abundance here.



Elephant Rock

The multi-shaded red and golden yellow sandstone cliffs and rocks in the Valley of Fire are part of the Navajo Sandstone Formation that is found throughout southern Nevada. Cagers and motorcycles get dinged fifteen bucks at the entrance, ten Bucks with Nevada plates. The main paved road snakes past giant sandstone beehives and sculpted formations like the Seven Sisters. The Visitor's Center near the middle of the park houses interesting displays on the area's history. This includes inhabitation by ancient Pueblo peoples: the Anasazi, who were farmers from the nearby fertile Moapa Valley. Evidence of the ancient culture remains inscribed on the back of Atlatl Rock, a popular attraction at the park. A few sheltered picnic tables offer relief from the heat, but there's no shaded parking. A 40-foot stairwell leads to the well-preserved petroglyphs. The symbols and stories tell a tale long undeciphered, but some of the symbols are easy to recognize.

Coming out of the East Entrance to the park, we turn left on North Shore Drive for the short ride to Overton. Check out the Lost City. It's a mile outside Overton and houses an extensive collection of virgin Anasazi artifacts. Built on an actual Anasazi pueblo, the museum has a reconstruction of its original architecture. There is a \$5.00 museum fee but you can roam the pueblo grounds at no charge.



We stopped for lunch at Sugars and a photo op at the Red Rooster Saloon in Overton, Nevada. There is a painting on the side of a big red rooster riding a bike through the desert. Sugars Home Plate is a very rider-friendly place and full of sports memorabilia. Famous for their home baked pies, they have an extensive menu.



The HD touring line comes standard with a TC 107 power plant. Loaded with a passenger and luggage, high altitudes and mountain grades had me wide open shoving gas into the throttle bodies. On my best day I was getting 160 miles out of a tank with an overall average of 25 miles per gallon.



Back at the Golden Nugget, I pondered all the amazing motorcycling Las Vegas has to offer: from Hoover Dam to Death Valley, Red Rock, Mt. Charleston and The Valley of Fire. Vegas has so much to offer riders, from some serious mileage to spots like Death Valley or short relaxing day trips. Days of cheap drinks, breakfast buffets and dollar blackjack have all but disappeared. As I chugged my \$12 dollar bottle of water in my hotel room and headed to the bar for a \$18 dollar martini, I realized that spending a fantastic day with your lady riding through the gorgeous Nevada landscape on a rented bike or Trike is a cheap date. Be sure and plan your trip around the weather. Hot days in January become 32-degree nights and cool mornings in June become 118-degree days, so be prepared.

