

# HOTEL CENTRAL



## Viva Las Vegas!

Hotels grow up in Sin City. By JOANN GRECO

**T**he Las Vegas of the 21st century is poised to be a real place, not just a fantasy destination. The \$8-billion CityCenter complex now rising from a huge hole in the ground, for example, will offer not only hotels and shops, but also condos and green spaces. When it opens next year, "it's going to bring some of the best parts of urban life to the best of the Vegas lifestyle," says Brad Friedmutter, a long-time resident and architect who's purchased a CityCenter condo. "Vegas is committed to infra-

structure, historic preservation, culture, and the arts," he adds. Downtown Las Vegas already hosts First Friday art gallery walks, and a much-anticipated performing arts center is slated to open in 2011.

Las Vegas hotels are keeping pace with this maturing. They're continuing to play down old themes, redesigning guest rooms with more personality, and adding amenities borrowed from urban boutique hotels like rooftop bars, state-of-the-art spas, and restaurants helmed by celebrity chefs. And they keep on coming. If all goes according to plan, new and expanded hotels will add more than 30,000 rooms by 2011.

The first new arrival is the casino-free condo hotel **Trump Las Vegas** ([www.trump.lasvegashotel.com](http://www.trump.lasvegashotel.com); from \$349). Enveloped

in gold and glass, the building's audacity continues inside with glittering crystal chandeliers. Apartments—which include full kitchens—eschew such flash, with beds decorated in subdued taupes and browns. Guests can reinvigorate after a night on the Strip with the spa's signature treatments, including the Morning After Eye Cure. Also new is **The Palazzo** ([www.palazzo.lasvegas.com](http://www.palazzo.lasvegas.com); from \$199), next to **The Venetian** ([www.venetian.com](http://www.venetian.com); from \$199), with 60 luxury boutiques including Fendi, Bottega Veneta, Canali, and Piazza Sempione, and over 3,000 guest rooms. Both hotels are all-suites and feature sunken

living rooms and remote-controlled curtains. Not to be outdone, the **Palms Casino Resort** ([www.palms.com](http://www.palms.com); from \$109) has also opened a new tower. Guest rooms don't offer the half-court basketball courts and stripper poles of the "fantasy suites," but they do come equipped with satin curtains that part with the push of a button to reveal floor-to-ceiling windows onto the sparkling Strip about a mile away. Bathrooms are stocked with practical extras like razors and red-eye relief. This is party central for Vegas, and a very distinctive pulse (not for everyone!) throbs at the world's only Playboy Club, where Bunny dealers invite everyone to try their hand at high stakes gaming, and in Hart & Huntington, a tattoo shop that's home to the reality TV show *Inked*.

**Planet Hollywood** ([www.planethollywoodresort.com](http://www.planethollywoodresort.com); from \$159), recently opened in the old Aladdin space, evokes klieg light glamour in a different way—with musical note motifs, velvet curtains, and columns of cascading crystal. "Hollywood Hip" guest rooms contain movie memorabilia—such as the dinner jacket worn by John Travolta in *Pulp Fiction*.

At the south end of the Strip, a different groove rules. The scent of coconut permeates the air and a sandy strip of "beach" rakes down to a pool with quite

*(Continued on page 55)*

**In Las Vegas, portraits keep an eye on diners at the Flamingo's Voga restaurant; above: gondoliers ply the illuminated canals at the Venetian.**



## Hotel Central

home conveniences like a dishwasher and coffeemaker; a fireplace provides romance. Outdoors, the Red Rock landscape offers miles of hiking. From \$200; 928-282-4119.

### Black Mountain Cabin

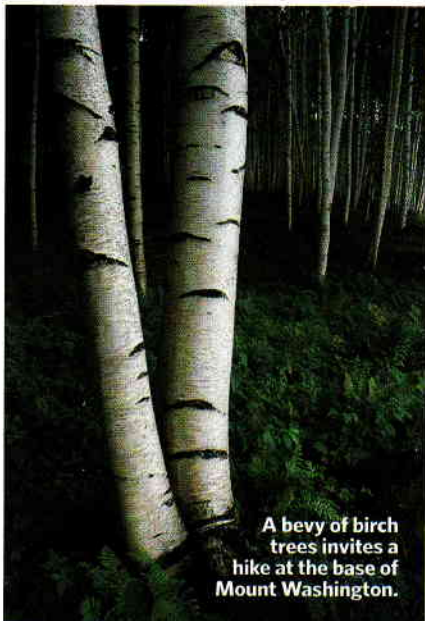
#### WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST, N.H.

In the 1930s, the CCC built this rustic log shelter as a backcountry ski refuge, a purpose it still serves: In winter, Black Mountain's steep slopes challenge skiers and snowshoers. In any season, reaching this hut perched at 2,460 feet requires hoofing up a 1.4-mile elevator-shaft of a trail departing from the classic New England town of Jackson. Visitors must also haul in their own firewood, water, and lanterns. The reward for such exertion? Unrivaled vistas of Mount Washington shared among the cabin's privileged eight occupants. From \$20; 603-447-5448.

### McKeever Cabin

#### HIAWATHA NATIONAL FOREST, MICH.

Only loons' haunting cries pierce the stillness surrounding McKeever Cabin on Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Ghostly birches and evergreens surround this six-person lakeside camp, reached by a 1,000-foot hike in summer and a one-mile ski or snowshoe in winter. Carry in a canoe for paddling 132-acre McKeever Lake, home to muskie, pike, bass, and bluegill. Or hit the trails: McKeever Hill Ski Trail, a six-mile Nordic ski route, runs right past the cabin. From \$45; 906-387-2512.



The pool cabanas and terrace at Wynn Las Vegas provide a tranquil breakaway from the Strip.

(Continued from page 49)

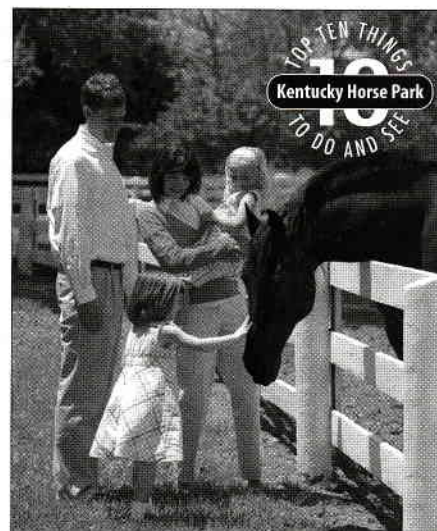
convincing wave action at the Mandalay Bay complex. Guests at the casino-free **Four Seasons Las Vegas** ([www.fourseasons.com/lasvegas](http://www.fourseasons.com/lasvegas); from \$275)—its rooms located on five floors of the Mandalay—enjoy access to this tropical playground. Weekend brunch on the flower-filled patio restaurant, Verandah, is a treat. Save room for the homemade doughnuts, offered with a choice of five different glazes.

At the center of the Strip sits the pretty-in-pink **Flamingo** ([www.flamingolasvegas.com](http://www.flamingolasvegas.com); from \$90). This kitschy haven has renovated 30 percent of its 3,000-plus rooms. Dubbed "Go" rooms, a moniker that takes inspiration from the last syllable of the hotel's name, these zippy spaces turn up the mod volume with white vinyl headboards and bubble-gum pink touches on everything from the wallpaper to the insides of the wastebaskets. In a nod to the city's new luxe slant, though, bathrooms are outfitted with in-mirror flat-screen TVs.


By year-end, **Encore** ([www.encorelasvegas.com](http://www.encorelasvegas.com)), a stand-alone companion next door to the five-star **Wynn Las Vegas** ([www.wynnlasvegas.com](http://www.wynnlasvegas.com); from \$209) arrives. Precious little has been leaked about this resort (including its rates), but if it's anything like Wynn, expect careful attention to details like mosaic floors, silk-covered walls, and hand-painted ceilings. Coming in 2009, the behemoth **Caesars Palace** ([www.caesarspalace.com](http://www.caesarspalace.com); from \$199) unwraps a \$1-billion addition that promises more rooms and pools. For now, guest rooms feature chocolate velvet sofas with sky blue trim, Anichini linens, and coveted views of the dancing fountains of neighboring Bellagio. At Qua Baths and Spa, a tea sommelier pairs warming brews with your chosen spa treatments.

## DESTINATIONS

### KENTUCKY



## LEXINGTON, KY

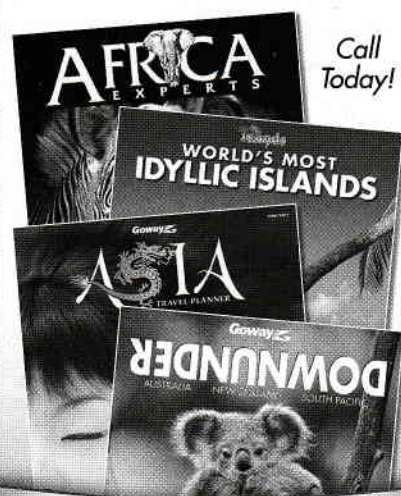
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