

Spirit of NEVADA

Pick a direction, any direction:
Nevada is a study in contrasts at
points north, south and in between.

by Mikalee Byerman

While freelance writer Mark Petruska, 42, works from his home base in Portland, Ore., he often plays in Nevada, a state with a north vs. south philosophical disparity not seen since the Civil War.

But Petruska is neither a figurative Blue nor a Gray; Confederate nor pro-Union; a Reno devotee nor a Las Vegas disciple. Instead, he enjoys both north and south with equal—and sometimes, reckless—abandon.





RENO, NV



EDGEWOOD
AT LAKE TAHOE

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“Southwest Airlines flies out of PDX,” he says, “so it’s convenient — and inexpensive — to hop a flight to either Reno or Las Vegas for a quick and fun weekend getaway.”

The state of Nevada is massive, but that doesn’t prevent the uninitiated from assuming two of it’s largest cities, Reno and Las Vegas, are neighbors. Instead, the cities are as far apart as Chicago and Nashville, Boston and Toronto or Albuquerque and Denver. And as different in character as each of these cities is from its pairing, equally different are Reno and Las Vegas — or northern and southern Nevada.

“Reno’s small size and easy navigability brought me to the city,” Petruska says. “It’s got the advantage of having a vibrant, Vegas-style nightlife but is less expensive and is easy to get around in, with plenty else to see and do during the day. It’s a great weekend trip from the Bay Area.”

But while the outdoors and ease of access appeal to Petruska’s calmer nature, the lure of Las Vegas also tempts his “Mr. Hyde” side.

“I went to Vegas for the neon and the glitz and the ‘big-city’ vibe,” he says. “Plus, Vegas has a storied past and a great reputation ... it’s a fun place to lose yourself. ‘What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas’ is a mantra that I — and many others — live by.”

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So whether you're feeling Jekyll or Hyde, in the mood for crystal-blue pool waters or striking gray alpine lakes, craving four-season outdoor fun or hot-hot-hot nightlife, Nevada has something at points north, south and everywhere in between.

SOUTHERN SPIRIT

Perhaps the most celebrated physical feature of Las Vegas is the Strip, a row of hotels, retail establishments and dining destinations that comprise the core of copious fun that is Las Vegas.

And the icon that fittingly serves as punctuation along the Strip, the exclamation point demanding visitors take notice: the Stratosphere Casino, Hotel & Tower, the tallest freestanding observation tower in the United States.

Jutting 1,149 feet into the Vegas skyline, the Stratosphere boasts panoramic views of the shimmering Strip and valley beyond. And the Vegas tower also houses the world's highest thrill rides and the tallest controlled free fall in the world, SkyJump Las Vegas.

Also at the top are the highest night-life venues and restaurants of any Las Vegas hotel on the Strip, where Executive Chef Rick Giffen takes dining to a whole new level. The award-winning Top of the World Restaurant rotates 360 degrees every 80 minutes, ensuring guests get a full, breathtaking view of the Las Vegas Valley. And resting on Top of the World: Level 107 Lounge, which features one of the best happy hours in town.

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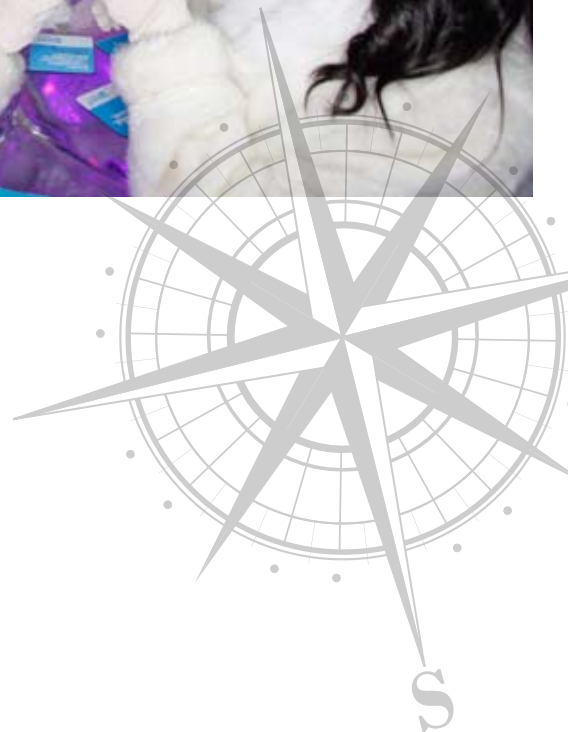
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POOL AT HOOTERS CASINO HOTEL



MINUS 5 BAR AT MANDALAY BAY AND MONTE CARLO RESORT AND CASINOS



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Another landmark along the Strip is the Tropicana, a legendary Las Vegas institution that recently underwent an ambitious \$180 million transformation. The destination now features a Miami South Beach theme, new restaurants and an all-new, sophisticated pool scene.

The expansive, four-acre pool area is now Nikki Beach, which was voted “The Sexiest Place on Earth” by the London Observer. Nikki Beach Las Vegas conjures the same spirit of European sophistication as its national and international sister clubs, yet it is the largest Nikki Beach in the world. The adjoining Club Nikki brings the world’s most exclusive beach club and nightclub experience to the Las Vegas Strip — a place to experience hot fashion, haute cuisine, exotic cocktails and sexy entertainment.

If scorching pool scenes are your thing, another must-visit destination is Hooters Casino Hotel. Hooters features one of the only pools in Vegas that is open 24 hours a day, and one of its most popular features: You don’t have to be a hotel guest to use the pool. That’s right — no cover, and no need to show a room key, making the Hooters experience accessible to anyone with an appetite for fun.

Spend your day relaxing poolside, a frozen drink or cocktail in hand, served by the property’s Hooters girls in bathing suits and sarongs. The only possible way to make this experience better: Socialize and partake of your libation in one of Hooters’ hot new cabanas.

While southern Nevada abounds with properties tempting your sensory side, how about one that caters to balance and health? About 15 minutes from the bustle of the Strip is Element Las Vegas Summerlin, an eco-chic hotel that features a chlorine-free pool, complimentary bikes to borrow and a fully stocked organic pantry onsite.

Conceived with the health-conscious traveler in mind, Element Las Vegas Summerlin promotes a well-balanced lifestyle through dining, design and recreation.

TOP PHOTO COURTESY OF LARRY HANNA PHOTOGRAPHY; BOTTOM IMAGE MINUS 5 BAR

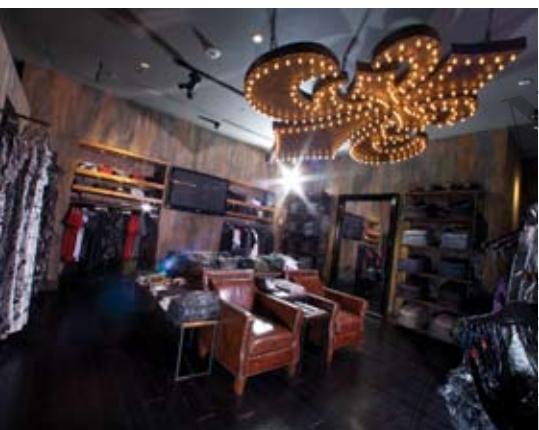
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THE GRAND CANAL SHOPPES AT THE VENETIAN



AFFLICTION AT THE HARD ROCK HOTEL AND CASINO

The urban-inspired property's state-of-the-art fitness center and refreshing pool introduce travelers to a "green" oasis away from the carnal thrills of Las Vegas life.

And such an eco-friendly experience clearly needs a clean energy link: All Element Hotels offer ChargePoint Charging Stations, along with preferred parking for electric cars and hybrids.

With amazing places to stay and visit, many tourists wonder what to wear while they're there? Fortunately, a visit to Las Vegas includes an intimate introduction to countless upscale boutiques —sometimes all in one place, like The Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian, famous for its signature quarter-mile-long "Grand Canal" and singing gondoliers.

The Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian combines Old World charm with up-to-the-minute fashion and retail offerings: Kenneth Cole, Paige Premium Denim, Dooney & Bourke, Pandora and Hervé Léger highlight the luxury retail landscape.

Part of the charm of The Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian is the "Street-mosphere" created by an international roster of classically trained singers, actors and musicians. Daily performances in St. Mark's Square add an unexpected element of entertainment to the shopping experience.

Pedestrian walkways connect The Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian to The Shoppes at The Palazzo, which means shoppers have easy access to an impressive 140 boutiques, restaurants and specialty stores.

But if you're in the mood for a more signature retail experience, one that makes a personal statement reflecting both art and ideology, visit Affliction inside the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino. Most pieces feature high-quality, hand-drawn graphics, pieces that have caught the attention of rockers, country crooners, mixed martial artists—and everyone in between.

The full line of clothing from the lifestyle brand is represented at the Las Vegas

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GLADYS KNIGHT AT THE TROPICANA

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store, with board shorts and bikinis, leather jackets and even sexy evening wear among the offerings. While Affliction began as a fashion-forward T-shirt company reflecting a “live fast” lifestyle, a range of clothing and accessories is now available in this dynamic retail establishment.

With wardrobe purchased and pool-side cocktails consumed, it’s now time for the reason you’re probably in Las Vegas: nightlife. And while many of the shows feature one name — Celine, Garth and Manilow among them — only one promises “A Mic and a Light”: Gladys Knight, now playing at the Tropicana. The seven-time Grammy Award-winning performer, who came to fame as lead singer of Gladys Knight & the Pips in the Motown era, showcases fan favorites like “Midnight Train to Georgia” as well as newer hits in this intimate experience.

While much of the show shines a spotlight on the “Empress of Soul” and her sultry voice, she is also joined by singers, dancers and an 11-piece band. A portion of the performance fittingly features Merald “Bubba” Knight, one of the original members of the Pips.

Or if you find yourself needing an evening of laughter and variety, head to the Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino for Gordie Brown Live, the property’s headlining act. Brown mixes an irreverent sense of comedy, music, impressions and parody to create a fast-and-furious interactive experience that inspires roaring laughter and standing ovations.

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CLIMBING AT LAKE TAHOE

Brown, a permanent headliner performing in the recently transformed Gordie Brown Showroom at the Golden Nugget, is backed by a five-piece band. And even if you've seen Brown's act before, his endless energy, spontaneity and improvisational skills lend each show its own special character.

Another nightlife option: Las Vegas' original permanent Cirque du Soleil® production, the exhilarating *Mystère*, now celebrating its 18th year and more than 8,000 performances at Treasure Island Hotel & Casino.

The awe-inspiring fan favorite brings a signature mix of energy, athleticism and imagination to the stage. *Mystère* features an adrenaline-charged blend of acrobatic acts such as Chinese Poles, Hand-to-Hand balancing, Aerial High Bar and Bungee with powerful music and colorful costumes and sets. A cast of 75 international artists embodies a full spectrum of memorable characters.

The production has been credited with changing the face of Las Vegas entertainment since its premiere on Dec. 25, 1993. Since that date, the critically acclaimed show has wowed more than 12 million guests — about 48,000 of whom have been the unsuspecting victims of a prank involving a bucket of popcorn. Audience, beware!

NEIGHBOR TO THE NORTH

While southern Nevada abounds with thrilling and awe-inspiring attractions, the same can be said of its northern neighbor: the Reno/Lake Tahoe area, which includes Reno's sister city, Sparks, and the state capital, Carson City.

But these are thrills typically inspired by majestic surroundings, spectacular events and unmatched outdoor fun. Yes, the region features gaming and top-name entertainment. But it also offers an artistic and recreational vibe that reflects the unique character of this four-season setting.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NEVADA COMMISSION OF TOURISM

If you go...

Nevada is a hotspot for adventure — some taking place outdoors, others in. Here are a few ideas for your summer travel:

Penn & Teller's live show, combining outrageous comedy and magic, has a permanent home in Las Vegas at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino. But don't leave after the show: The duo hang out in the lobby, greeting guests, posing for pictures and signing autographs.

www.pennandteller.com

This year, Reno's **16th Annual Artown celebration** presents a wide variety of dance, music, theater, visual arts, workshops, exhibits and performances June 30 — July 31. Of the nearly 400 events, more than 60 percent are free and many more are low-cost. For a calendar of events, visit www.RenolsArtown.com.

Cirque du Soleil boasts "Seven Worlds, One City" when it comes to its Las Vegas entertainment choices. So whatever your tastes, there's a Cirque experience for you. See *Mystère* at Treasure Island, 0 at Bellagio, Zumanity at New York-New York, Kà at MGM Grand, The Beatles LOVE at the Mirage, CRISS ANGEL Believe at the Luxor and Viva ELVIS at Aria.

www.cirquedusoleil.com/lasvegas

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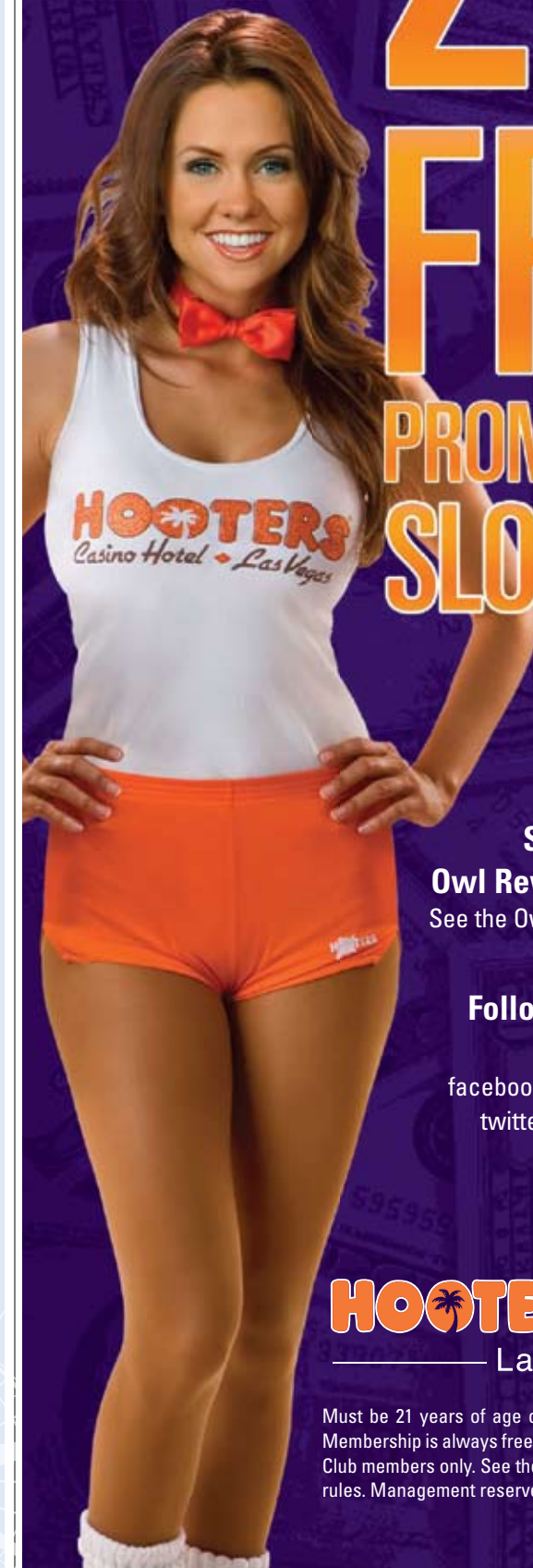
www.minus5experience.com

South Lake Tahoe is the backdrop for the **Harveys Outdoor Concert Series** spanning the months of June through September. A sampling: Alison Krauss & Union Station, July 10; Lionel Richie, July 16; Lady Antebellum, July 29; Steve Miller Band, July 30; and Miranda Lambert with Little Big Town, Aug. 19. For details about this and other South Lake Tahoe events, visit www.tahoesouth.com.

Garth Brooks has emerged from retirement to perform in the intimate Encore Theater at Wynn Las Vegas. Often sporting a simple ball cap and sweatshirt, the country mega-star delivers a solo acoustic show that is receiving rave reviews.

www.wynnlasvegas.com/shows

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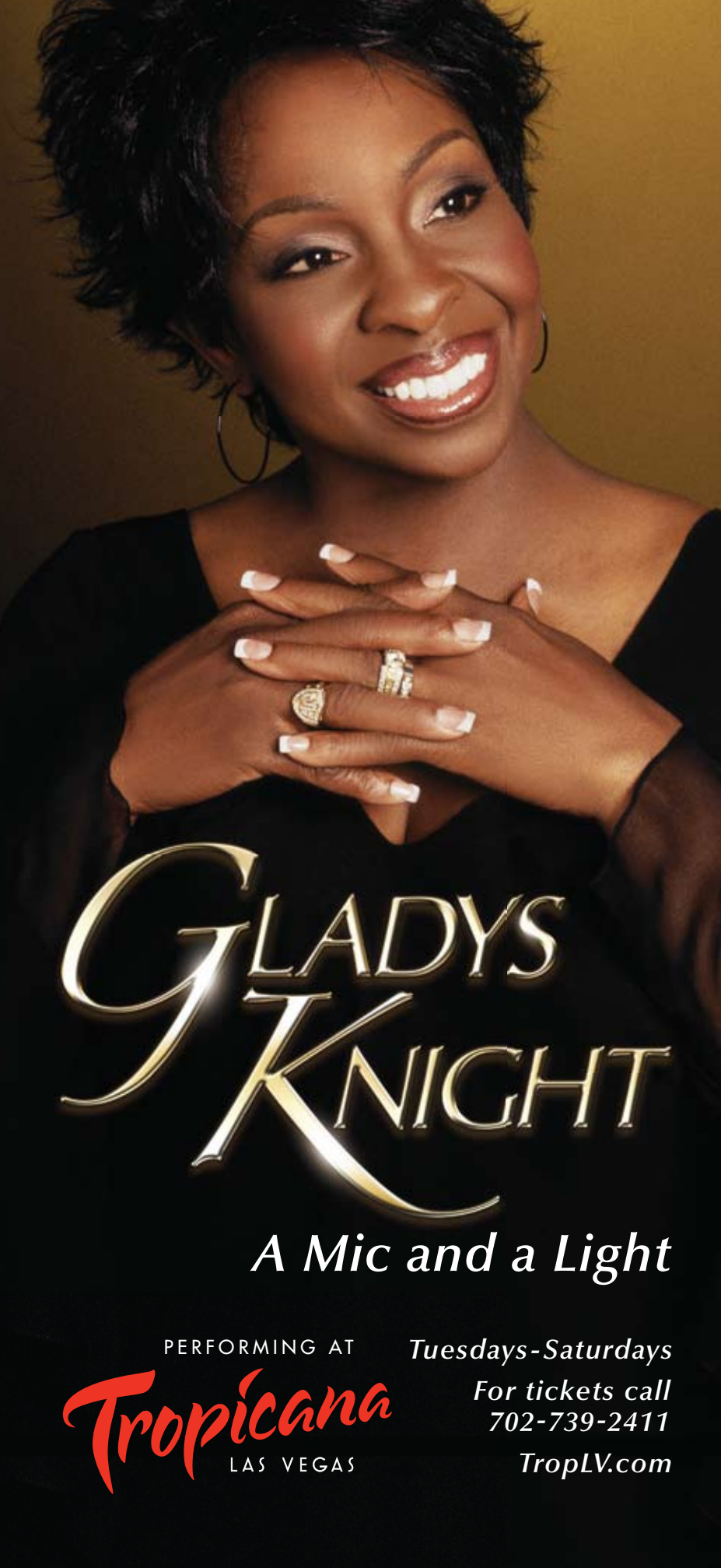
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The nation's largest alpine lake, Lake Tahoe, straddles the border between Nevada and California, creating a haven for outdoor enthusiasts who love to ski, board, bike, swim, hike and more. But North Lake Tahoe also lures visitors for some of the country's most unusual special events.

The month of July can find tourists enjoying fireworks on the beach and the multiday Red, White and Tahoe Blue in Incline Village; a picnic dinner lakeside at Sand Harbor State Park for the Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival; astronomy nights called "Star Tours" at area ski resorts and on guided Tahoe kayak tours; entertainment and comedy at the area's historic casinos in Crystal Bay and Incline Village; and outdoor music, including the Lake Tahoe Music Festival and High Notes, North Lake Tahoe's summerlong music series.

Events aside, many take to North Lake Tahoe to enjoy the solitude on the Tahoe Rim Trail, a 165-mile loop that meanders through peaks and valleys around Lake Tahoe. Or instead of taking a ride, take a swing: North Lake Tahoe is surrounded by 50 golf courses within a 60-minute drive.

Just down the hill, the region welcomes cultural and special events like the classic car and nostalgia fest called Hot August Nights, Star-Spangled Sparks, and the monthlong Artown celebration, one of the nation's most comprehensive arts and culture festivals attracting more than 300,000 people in 2010.

Of course, Reno and Sparks also feature the kind of nightlife and entertainment options more akin to its southern neighbor. Popular destinations include downtown Reno's Siena Hotel Spa Casino, which borders the scenic Truckee River, and Peppermill Resort, Spa & Casino, home to EDGE, a hotspot for nightlife.

Another popular resort, Atlantis Casino Resort Spa, is placing the finish-

ing touches on a \$100 million expansion, including all new Luxury and Concierge Tower Rooms, a 650-foot sky bridge connecting the hotel to the Reno-Sparks Convention Center and the 30,000-square-foot Spa Atlantis. This is a must-visit if you're sore from hiking, biking or skiing, as it was recently named "Best Hotel Casino Spa" and "Best Spa for Men" in the SpaFinder 2010 Reader's Choice Awards.

Here you'll find yourself gliding into complete tranquility as you rejuvenate your mind and body in one of the many relaxation rooms, 15 opulently appointed treatment rooms or adjacent indoor and outdoor pools with new private cabana suites. Couples looking for an intimate experience can try the Rasul Ceremonial Chamber, where gentle herbal steam surrounds couples as they artfully apply six mineral muds, followed by a brief tropical shower, a side-by-side massage and a soak for two in the private infinity soaking tub.

But the true indulgence at Spa Atlantis is the tantalizing treatments. Spa Atlantis is one of only a dozen spas in the United States to offer the Pantai Luar, an Eastern Asian Massage that literally translates to "off to new shores."

NORTH vs. SOUTH

Los Angeles attorney Amy Jensen, 36, has a unique perspective regarding the two cities: She grew up in Reno, and now most of her family and friends call Vegas home.

And she notes that while both offer incredible gaming and entertainment options to woo the typical traveler, they both embody a character all their own that begs to be explored.

"Reno and Las Vegas are both so exciting and full of energy, but each is unique in its own way," Jensen says. "Las Vegas is like the louder, more popular, outrageous big sister, with Reno being the just-as-pretty (if not more so) sister, but with a quieter energy."



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