

Spotlight On Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS RANKINGS

Gay Index Rank: **123**
 Gay Male Index Rank: **138**
 Lesbian Index Rank: **108**
 National Norm: **100**
 Median Household Income: **\$44,069**

Las Vegas has long been known as "The Entertainment Capital of the World," but these days the desert destination boasts much more than strippers and Cher concerts - especially for its growing LGBT community.

While there are no hard and fast numbers on how many LGBT residents live in and around **Clark County** - in which Las Vegas is located - it's estimated that 10 percent of the area's 1.7 million residents call the desert paradise home. The region is also one of the fastest growing in the United States according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 study (500-600 new gay residents are reportedly moving to the area every month), which ranked Las Vegas proper as the 28th most populous city in the nation.

Driving Las Vegas' steady economy is the confluence of tourism, gaming and conventions, which in turn feed the retail and dining industries - industries that employ much of the city's residents and keep tourists busy. Among travelers, **Sin City** is consistently the second most visited U.S. destination for gay and lesbians after New York City, according to the 12th Annual Gay and Lesbian Tourism Study conducted by San Francisco-based Community Marketing Inc., a gay market research and development lab. In addition, **McCarran International Airport**, which serves the Vegas area, was ranked 14th in the world for passenger traffic, with 47,595,140 passengers passing through its terminal last year.

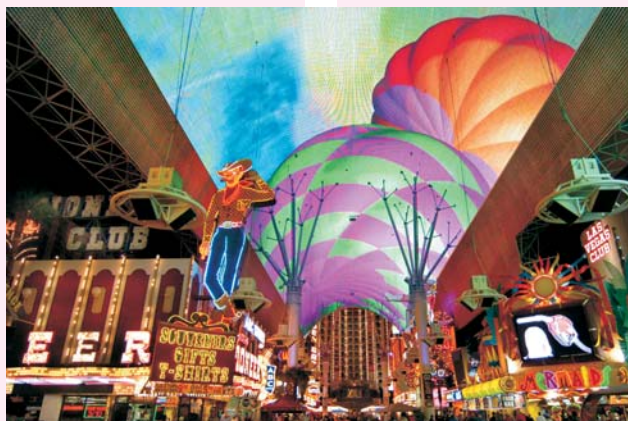
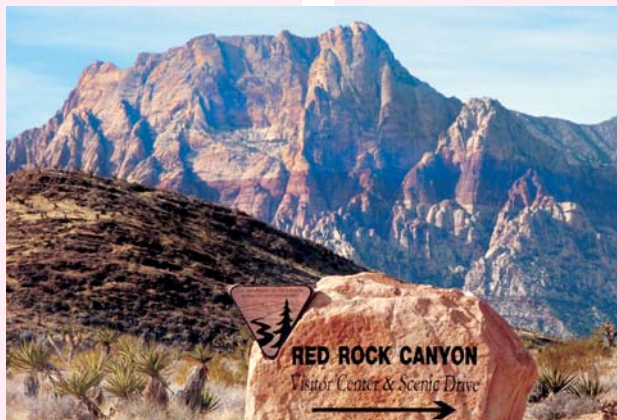
Off the famed **Strip**, business booms in other areas, including the legal services industry, which provides bail, marriage, divorce, tax, incorporation and other services. Technology companies, such as **Bigelow Aerospace**, **CommPartners** and **eVital Communications**, also are growing their presence in the area. This influx of new business is likely due to Clark County's favorable tax climate, which assesses only a 7.75 percent sales and use tax, exempting food for home consumption and prescribed medical goods. Nevada also claims the lowest tax rate of any state in the nation, with no personal income, inheritance, gift, estate, franchise, inventory or corporate taxes.

While gay life in Vegas - though scarce until recently - is scattered on and off the Strip, its unofficial gay district, known as the "**Fruit Loop**," serves as the heart of Vegas' LGBT community. Located near the intersection of Paradise Road and Naples Drive, this strip mall is home to a variety of clubs, bars and a bookstore frequented by a diverse crowd seven days a week. On the other side of town, the Commercial Center, located on Sahara Ave., provides even more alternative outing options.

Popular bars and clubs include **Freezone**, featuring the Queens of Las Vegas, the longest-running drag show in Sin City; **Piranha Nightclub** and **8 ½ Lounge**, where free drinks are often given to those who imbibe in the underwear; **Badlands Saloon**, attracting a country-western crowd; **Gypsy**, voted 'Original and Legendary Gay Nightclub' by **GayVegas.com**; **Goodtimes**, which plays a variety of music, including '80s and industrial; and **Girl Bar**, Vegas' only lesbian dance party, held Saturday nights at **Krave Nightclub**, the only alternative hot spot located on the Strip.

In the print media, Vegas has only one major publication targeting the LGBT community. **QVegas** - a monthly, full-color, glossy magazine - has served as the voice of the LGBT community in southern Nevada since its inception in 1978 as the *Bohemian Bugle*. Over the past three decades, QVegas has changed names and publishers, but has remained a constant force in the local community's fight for equality and acceptance, both within the Las Vegas area and the world at large. The magazine's overseeing entity, **Stonewall Publishing**, also created the first successful gay community business directory as well as a number of special event guides. Integral figures at QVegas include Kelly McFarlane Smith (Publisher), LuAnne Austin (Advertising Director), Chris Campbell (General Manager) and M. Cory Burgess (Editor/Creative Director).

Politically speaking, the State of Nevada has enacted non-discrimination laws, protecting individuals against discrimination based on sexual orientation but not gender identity. The state government also pro-



mits single LGBT individuals to adopt and does not explicitly prohibit same-sex couples from adopting; in some jurisdictions, such as Clark County, an LGBT man or woman can adopt his or her same-sex partner's child. In addition, the state will issue new birth certificates to post-operative transsexuals. Nevada law does not, however, address school issues relating to sexual orientation or gender identity, and the state constitution bans the recognition of marriages between same-sex couples; there are no other forms of relationship recognition for same-sex couples in state law or policies.

Major events held in Vegas annually include **Las Vegas Pride**, which generally spans from mid-April to early-May and features a wide array of activities and entertainment including an art show, an all-ages "Skate Night," bingo, a parade, festival, the official "Pride Ball," and the **Threads of the Community** fundraiser. More recently established, "Gay Days & Nights Las Vegas" takes place over the Independence Day holiday weekend and is presented by **Cirque du Soleil**, **Travelocity**, host hotel **Paris Las Vegas**, and QVegas magazine. Weekend activities include cocktail parties, fashion shows, gay excursions and desert discovery adventures, among a host of other available options, all which benefit the **Gay & Lesbian Center of Southern Nevada**, Las Vegas Pride and the **Liberace Foundation**.

Though Vegas lacks the centralized LGBT social area that most major metro areas contain, the city is ripe with resources for its active community. The aforementioned Gay & Lesbian Community Center of Southern Nevada offers a focal point for the variety of gay and lesbian organizations found throughout the greater Las Vegas Valley area, including the **Human Rights Campaign**, which manages a hub within the city, and Parents, Families, Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG). Other organizations, such as the **Imperial Royal Sovereign Court of the Desert Empire**, **Lambda Business & Professional Association**, **Nevada Gay Rodeo Association**, and **Sin City Q Socials**, cater to a variety of varied interests within the LGBT community.



Larger Fortune 500 companies with strong diversity initiatives for gay & lesbian employees include:

Company	CEI Rating*	Fortune 500 Rating
- Harrah's Entertainment	100	254
- Sierra Health Services	88	943
- MGM Mirage	85	315

CEI Rating: HRC Corporate Equality Index is a tool to measure how equitably companies are treating their gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees, consumers and investors.

PRINT

QVegas Magazine: www.QVegas.com

Vegas Gay Yellow Pages: www.VegasGayYellowPages.com

INTERNET

www.GayLasVegas.com

www.VegasOneSource.com

www.gaylasvegasonline.com

EVENTS

Las Vegas Pride: www.lasvegaspride.org

Gay Days and Nights: www.GayDaysAndNights.com

BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS

www.lambdalv.com

ORGANIZATIONS

Gay & Lesbian Community Center: www.thecenter-lasvegas.com