

HER FAMILY / HIS™

Reviewing Family Entertainment



HERS

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Viva Lake Las Vegas!

Daylight Savings Time has begun, stretching the day and evoking the words of my favorite poet, E.E. Cummings, "In just spring, when the world is mud-puddle happy..." In a blink of the eye, it is May and time to travel again!

In our first trip of 2005, we journeyed across Death Valley to the jewel of the desert, Las Vegas. Advertising assures us that "What happens in Las Vegas, stays in Las Vegas". Not a very comforting thought to the mother of a fifteen-year old son. But, undaunted, we packed up the SUV and trekked across the hostile, arid abyss making our way to Lake Las Vegas and the Hyatt on Reflection Bay. Just twenty minutes from the fabled Vegas Strip is a tranquil village tucked between hills and golf courses that offer the best in family recreation and relaxation.

For those of you who have noticed the rapid proliferation of "spas" but never ventured to indulge in that European-sounding luxury, welcome to the club! But, my husband insisted that I try my first facial while the men of the family played a round of golf. Highly skeptical, I made my way to the Spa and Health Club area, where I slipped into a luxurious terry cloth robe. I was soon escorted into a private, darkened room. There, my mind was transported by the creams and oils, kneading and stretching, until an hour had passed and I was escorted into the perfectly warmed sauna, followed by a luxurious shower. The end result- I love spas!

After the spa and the golf the entire family enjoyed hours of pool play and sun before heading for the Las Vegas Strip and an evening show. With a fifteen-year old sidekick that fantasizes about the life of a stand up comedian, the best show in town was The Second City at The Flamingo. Five quick-witted actors controlled the stage for an hour and a half with biting comedy sketches, improvisation and spontaneous music filling the audience with laughter and enthusiastic applause. My teenaged son became a convert and found the same delight in this form of humor that I found years ago, at the original Second City in Chicago.

When it was time to leave I found myself wanting to hold on just an hour more- maybe one last dip in the pool or another trip to the spa. But, alas, we had five hours of driving ahead of us and work the next morning. Regardless of what the advertising pundits say, it never crossed my mind to leave the experience of Lake Las Vegas behind in the desert. I want to carry this experience in my memory for a long time to come, and I would encourage all of you to hop on your chariot and make a weekend of this jewel of a Las Vegas experience. After all, it is spring...and the world is mud-puddle happy.

Today's Vegas boasts elegant accommodations, belt-bursting buffets, jaw dropping shows and convenient people moving escalators. It's usually a fun circus to jump into, but especially with the kids, it often quickly becomes overpowering, full of shoulder-to-shoulder strangers in an environment that feels out of a parent's control. Looking for that alternative Las Vegas location that offers the convenience to the Strip without the aforementioned competitive excesses on your family vacation time? Give Lake Las Vegas a try - you'll be most glad you did.

We stayed for several days at the Hyatt Regency Lake Las Vegas Resort, yet because of the luxurious disconnect it provided from our everyday routine, the time away felt like weeks. This Hyatt property, beautifully nestled between rugged mountains and meticulously manicured world-class golf courses, is a place worth saving up for even if it doesn't immediately fit into your typical Las Vegas budget. The hotel reflects an exotic yet comfortable Moroccan theme. The hotel's lobby is large and spacious, but I still found an abundance of corners and private nooks to hide out in to get some early morning reading done before the others started their day.

On day number two, we let mom escape to the hotel's Spa. We boys decided to hit the links at the Jack Nicklaus-designed Reflection Bay Golf Club - what an experience for a couple of recently new-to-the-game hackers. Rated as one of *Golf Digest's* "Top 100 Public Golf Courses," this course boasts an incredible layout with waterfalls, arroyos and lake front scenery all in natural surroundings. We had a first rate experience at this first rate golf course.

In the evening, our usually California casual family suited up for a more formal evening and meal at *Japengo*, the Hyatt's "Pan-Asian Cuisine" fine dining restaurant. Not totally new to sushi or Asian food, the innovative menu that fused the surf to the turf so creatively surprised us. Lucking out with a window seat overlooking the sun setting across the Lake Las Vegas horizon, we felt like we couldn't have landed in a more romantic and tranquil corner in the whole state of Nevada. Don't worry - the Strip buffets will always be there tomorrow.

If you have children ages three to 12, look into the Camp Hyatt program at the hotel. This program offers arts and crafts, movies, fishing, swimming, water games, hikes, nature walks and much more. We obviously didn't use this service for our teenager, but we heard from other hotel guests that their age-appropriate kids had a great time at Camp.

Beyond the great amenities, natural beauty and calmer pace that Lake Las Vegas offers, it gives your family a great base camp from which to conveniently drive into and out of the Las Vegas Strip - all within a half hour. We tried it once and now we're hooked. Viva Lake Las Vegas!

Both having degrees in theater and having studied in Oxford and Paris respectively, Suzanne and Chris Shoemaker now call Los Angeles their home where they live with 3 three sons and 2 grandsons. They can be reached at suzanne@actsofcreation.com or chris2@actsofcreation.com.

