



A WEEK in the Mexican sunshine is up for grabs for less than £1,000 with Tui next month. The £959 three-star, all-inclusive holiday to the Caribbean coast departs from Gatwick on May 9. Go to www.tui.co.uk to book.



PACK AND
GO

VIVA Vintage Vegas

HISTORIC:
Fremont
Street, Vegas



You bet Sin City has cool quarters

by **Chris Granet**

VINTAGE neon blazing against the night, the high sun bleaching the day...

Old-school casinos with their slot-machine jungles. Scantly clad croupiers serving low-rolling gamblers. Candy-coloured wedding chapels, tourist hordes, and oh-so colourful locals.

Old Vegas is back.

Though it never really went away. It's just that most tourists these days don't get beyond the Strip – the four and a half mile stretch of Las Vegas Boulevard crammed with mind-boggling megaresorts and their warrens of casinos, bars, shops and restaurants.

But Downtown is the true heart of Vegas. The Old Vegas from dozens of movies. For many years neglected, the city blocks surrounding the palm-lined Fremont Street have now been revitalised.

It's fabulously surreal. Like an endless movie set, with a sense of déjà vu that's only heightened by the jetlag and obligatory first-night cocktails.

Built around the old railroad station in the middle of the desert, it was where the first tents were pitched when the city was founded in 1905. The area fell into decline when the action moved a few miles south during the 50s and 60s, but has been steadily regenerated and now has plenty to offer visitors.

The top end of Fremont Street has

two distinct halves. The first is the kitsch Fremont Street Experience, centred around the original gambling strip of Glitter Gulch.

It's now pedestrianised and covered with a canopy housing the world's largest LED screen, which ignites into a light show every hour.

At night it's a riot of sight and sound. Live bands and dancing girls get to work outside dazzling casinos, floods of boisterous tourists meander around madcap street performers and packs of zipliners streak through the air high above.

It's on far smaller scale than the Strip but is more authentic and great fun. The other half of Fremont Street is the cool Fremont East. It's less frequented and more alternative, with its Technicolor low-rise buildings home to dive bars, hipster cafes, and multi-storey murals.

It's best seen during the day, when

the dozens of photos you'll be inspired to snap are framed by towering palms and the big blue sky.

Its mellow vibe is perfect for those wishing to take a break from the frenzy of the Strip.

You feel like you're in a real city rather than an adult theme park.

The Neon Boneyard is essential viewing when visiting Old Vegas.

Sloshed

It's a fascinating open-air collection of over 200 historic neon signs salvaged from demolished or abandoned casinos. Equally good is the new night-time light and sound show at a nearby secondary boneyard.

Another must-see in Downtown is the Mob Museum.

With three floors of interactive displays, Las Vegas's connection with organised crime is excellently documented, especially how Mob money sloshed into the city during Prohibition, then lit the fuse for the boom years of the 50s.

The 50s were literally boom years

for Vegas too. Nuclear-weapons were tested at the Nevada Test Site 65 miles northwest of the city.

But instead of scaring off tourists, it was a major attraction. There were parties held to a backdrop of mushroom clouds.

You could watch the explosions from the roof of Atomic Liquors on Fremont East, the bar that counted the Rat Pack and Barbra Streisand as regulars. It still displays the Geiger counter that was used to check if radiation levels were safe enough for customers to continue drinking.

These days, though, your blasts have to come through atomic-themed cocktails and the sky burns via spectacular desert sunsets instead.

If cocktails aren't your thing, then get your highs figuratively and literally on SlotZilla, the 12-storey slot machine-inspired zip line.

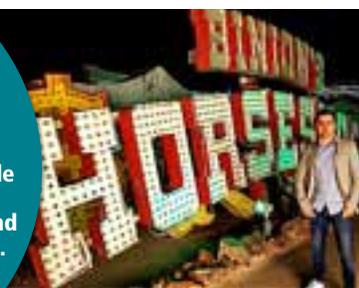
Soar the high wires above circus of the Fremont Street Experience, covering the 1700ft strip in 60 adrenaline-inducing seconds.

Probably the most thrilling way to see Old Vegas anew.

FACTFILE: Netflights.com offers direct flights to Las Vegas from £749pp, departing from Gatwick with Virgin Atlantic. Based on selected dates in September 2018. Book by April 30: 020 7001 4377, www.netflights.com.



HIGH STAKES: Downtown streets



LIT UP: Chris at Neon Museum

TRAVEL TIPS

■ **VISIT** the National Atomic Testing Museum for great exhibits on the Atomic Age. There are monthly guided bus tours to the Nevada Test Site.

■ **DOWNTOWN** Container Park is a quirky open-air shopping centre made from shipping containers and filled with boutique shops, restaurants, and a stage for free live entertainment.

■ **TRY** the famous shrimp cocktail at the Golden Gate, Las Vegas's oldest casino.

£1,000

THAILAND
May 1 (10nts, b&b, 4*)
Heathrow, £826
awayholidays.co.uk

JAMAICA
May 1 (7nts, a/i, 4*)
Manchester, £933
loveholidays.com

£750

ORLANDO
May 1 (7nts, r/o, 4*)
Edinburgh, £655
traveltrolley.co.uk

SRI LANKA
May 1 (7nts, b&b, 4*)
Heathrow, £660
southalltravel.co.uk

£500

EGYPT
May 4 (7nts, h/b, 4*)
Birmingham, £410
onthebeach.co.uk

BULGARIA
May 1 (7nts, h/b, 4*)
Luton, £249
sunshine.co.uk

My PERFECT day

By **MICHAEL VINALES**, director at tour operator Olympic Holidays.

MORNING

My ultimate sunrise destination is Gibraltar, where I was born. I would head to the top of the Rock where the Atlantic meets the Mediterranean for a breakfast with a view like no other.

I have family in Gibraltar so it is special to me.

AFTERNOON

Take a cruise on the Mekong river in Vietnam. With the stunning backdrops the river has a surreal beauty.

EVENING

A Skiathos sunset never ever disappoints. Of all the Greek islands I have been lucky enough to visit, a Skiathos sundowner with your pick of landmarks made famous by the Mamma Mia! film is just exquisite.



Tell us your perfect day, email: travel@people.co.uk

YOUR £ ABROAD

Australian dollar	1.77
Bulgarian lev	2.07
Canadian dollar	1.71
Croatian kuna	7.95
Czech koruna	27.04
Egyptian pound	22.59
Euro	1.11
Hungarian forint	323.37
NZ dollar	1.85
Polish zloty	4.50
S African rand	16.02
Swiss franc	1.32
Thai baht	41.36
Turkish lira	5.39
UAE dirham	4.93
US dollar	1.37

These rates are an indication only.