



SAFE BET: Old-school casino hotel

## Nuggets and chips

### Golden Nugget Las Vegas

#### THE WELCOME

Arriving on a Saturday afternoon, I saw the glitzy lobby heaving with new arrivals and guests happily milling around this vast and historic Downtown hotel and casino.

The queue was big, but fast and efficient staff meant I was soon seen to. That said, due to the size of the place, it took time to navigate the crowds and corridors to find my room located in one of the four towers.

#### THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Fremont Street is a blaze of neon and raucous fun. The first paved street in Vegas is now pedestrianised. Its row of old-school casinos bustle 24/7 with tourists, light shows, live music and zip-lining. Once run-down, Old Vegas has been regenerated and is more down to earth than the sprawling Strip a few miles to the south.

#### HOTEL inspector

**THE ROOM**  
I stayed in a Premium King in Carson Tower. It was slightly dated compared with The

Strip's hotels. But the bed was comfy and the bathroom a decent four-star standard. It was surprisingly quiet considering it was one of 2,419 rooms at the heart of party central.

#### THE FOOD

The Golden Nugget has nine restaurants and two Starbucks. I only tried the hotel's Buffet breakfast. It had the usual impressive array of hot and cold food you expect from an American all-you-can-eat breakfast. Perfect after a night on the margaritas.

#### THE SERVICE

Like most customer service in the US, super friendly and attentive. Don't forget to tip!

#### LOVED

The two outdoor pools with bars, music and party vibe akin to the Strip. The ground-floor pool has a three-storey waterslide that spirals through a giant aquarium. How Vegas is that? The upstairs pool is smaller but with a proper cocktail bar, private cabanas, and slightly hidden away, so less busy.

#### HATED

No USB port for phone charging in my room. Not good when you've lost your US adaptor.

#### VERDICT

A great blend of old and new Vegas.

#### BOTTOM LINE

Rooms from £40pn.

#### CHECK IT OUT

goldennugget.com.

## Magical mysteries

FOR a proper surprise Christmas present, book a mystery tour of the capital.

**TAKE AWAY**

Travel company Make My Day has just launched a range of mystery days in London from £69. It already runs unusual tours in other cities, such as penny-farthing trips. Sign up, answer a few questions and expect the unexpected. See [makemyday.travel](http://makemyday.travel).

THE space between Christmas and New Year is one of the season's gifts. Betwixmas, twixmas – call it what you will – is a time when many workplaces shut. So let's make the most of it.

### Holiday cottages

Renting your own four walls is the simplest way to fill the Betwixmas gap. Hunker down somewhere where everyone can squeeze in, take board games and go for windy walks.

There are loads of agencies to pick from. Original Cottages, [originalcottages.co.uk](http://originalcottages.co.uk), offers Osgodby, which sleeps six on the Yorkshire coast, for £766 from December 27-30.

Sykes, [sykescottages.co.uk](http://sykescottages.co.uk), has Carreg Rhys, which sleeps two, on the island of Anglesey in Wales for £405 from December 27-29.

Among the National Trust's wide selection at [nationaltrust.org.uk/holidays](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/holidays) is former gardener's cottage Orchard Cottage. In the grounds of Gunby Hall in Lincolnshire, it sleeps four and costs £839 for five nights from December 27.

Mulberry Cottages, [mulberrycottages.com](http://mulberrycottages.com), has Winchelsea Cottage, which sleeps five and is close to the Sussex seaside. It costs £476 from December 28-31. Also by the seaside, Blue Chip, [bluechipholidays.co.uk](http://bluechipholidays.co.uk), has Swallows Cottage in Brixham in Devon. It sleeps four and costs £383 for three nights over New Year's Eve.

Finally, a dream for dog owners, Holiday Cottages, [holidaycottages.co.uk](http://holidaycottages.co.uk), has Ashera's Barn, which sleeps four plus two pets, near Glastonbury in Somerset. It costs £494 from December 28 to January 3.

### UK resorts

Holiday parks with entertainment provided are a good solution for families with children who like to hang out with other people.

Away Resorts, [awayresorts.co.uk](http://awayresorts.co.uk), has Mill Rythe Holiday Village on Hampshire's Hayling Island. It is offering a three-night Betwixmas Showbreak from December 27, with bands and performers, and prices from £149pp for three nights, half-board.

While further to the west, Cofton Holidays, [cofthonholidays.co.uk](http://cofthonholidays.co.uk), near Dawlish Warren in Devon has two-bedroom mobile homes available for £307 for three-night breaks over the Betwixmas period.

Cofton's facilities include a heated indoor pool, gym, restaurant, pub, steam room, sauna, fitness studio and soft play area. Guests also have access to five coarse fishing lakes.

### Hotels at home

Plenty of hotels up and down the land offer special Betwixmas rates, and some UK tour operators put together packages.

If you want to go wild and windy, combining gourmet dinners and fine scenery, then Airds Hotel, [airds-hotel.com](http://airds-hotel.com), in Port Appin, right up in the West Highlands, is doing a luxury offer. It costs £402pp for three nights half board accommodation from December 27.

Enjoy a two-night Twixmas Escape for £180pp in Conwy, North Wales, at the Quay Hotel, [quayhotel.co.uk](http://quayhotel.co.uk), from December 27. You get a £32.50 dinner allowance too.

If you want to blow away the cobwebs with like-minded people, check out HF Holidays, [hfholidays.co.uk](http://hfholidays.co.uk). It has a programme of guided walks from its Thorns Hall property in the Yorkshire Dales. You pay £399 half board for three nights, from December 27.

Those more interested in history and culture should sign up with Shearings, [shearings.com](http://shearings.com), for one of its coach-based city breaks. It has a £107 two-nighter in elegant Bath that departs on December 27, staying half board.

Finally, if you fancy the big city, try an affordable combination of West End show and

# Travel

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ENGLAND'S GLORY:  
The Yorkshire Dales



CUTE COTTAGE:  
Osgodby, Yorks

central London hotel stay with Just London Theatre Breaks, [justlondontheatrebreaks.com](http://justlondontheatrebreaks.com).

It has a variety of one-night theatre packages from £70pp. Shows on offer this year include Only Fools and Horses, Fast Love – A Tribute to George Michael, All About Eve, Nine to Five, Waitress, The Messiah and All My Sons.

### Verona, Italy

It is not too late for a complete change of scene – somewhere not quite so grey, where everything won't be quite so shut down.

Try Verona in Italy. The spirit of romance hangs over this Unesco World Heritage city – the setting for the story of Romeo and Juliet.

Visit the Roman amphitheatre, the square fort of Castelvecchio or the Torre dei Lamberti, and stay in the Giulietta e Romeo hotel, within easy walking distance of Juliet's house. Sunvil, [sunvil.co.uk](http://sunvil.co.uk), is offering three nights B&B, plus

## WORLD TEMPERATURES

Estimated at noon today

Algarve	Fair	18C	64F
Amsterdam	Cloudy	7C	45F
Barbados	Fair	29C	84F
L Angeles	Fair	19C	66F
Madeira	Fair	20C	68F
Miami	Cloudy	24C	75F
Moscow	Fair	-11C	12F
New York	Rain	7C	45F
Paris	Cloudy	10C	50F
Sydney	Thunder	28C	82F