

TRAVEL

LAS VEGAS – AN EXCITING PLACE TO VISIT!

By Donna Bulger

Some of you may or may not remember a previous article in the SBHANA newsletter, detailing my last big travelling adventure in New Orleans. To paraphrase my own story, it had a multitude of ups and downs and was truly an eye-opening experience for me as a disabled traveler.

I am quite happy to say that I have since been on a lovely trip to Las Vegas, where, at least on my trip, accessibility was rarely an issue. If issues arose, the staff and people in general in Vegas and on our flight, were more than willing to find a way around them.

We booked our trip with Signature Tours, who had a representative meet us and arrange transportation to our hotel the moment we were off the airplane in Vegas. The transit system in Vegas was also very accessible and the bus drivers were extremely amusing and able to put a person with a disability at ease.

From the moment we arrived (at night), the lights and sounds of Vegas were intoxicating. Of course, who can go to Vegas without tossing a quarter or two (in my case the nickel machines were my best friend) into the slot machines. The majority of these machines have fairly heavy chairs in front of them or bolted to the floor. On those occasions where this was the case, the staff always circulating in the casinos, were right there to either move the chair or, in some cases, actually remove the bolts in order to allow me access to the machines.

From the amazing wax statues of famous lives past and present at the Madame Toussaud's Wax Museum in the Venetian, to the frighteningly freaky haunted halls in the same place, the sights were outstanding. The sidewalks and slopes were easily managed from the wheelchair, either by myself or with a friend lending a pushing hand, allowing easy access to the beautiful facades of New York, New York, Paris, and Rome (Caesar's Palace) along the strip. Being free to independently stroll into the past, at the Excalibur, where a person could be wowed by the Tournament of Kings Medieval Dinner and show or saunter on the docks and decks of the Treasure Island Hotel where a pirate show could be seen daily, was exciting to say the least.

We stayed in a handicapped suite at the Flamingo about midway on "the Strip." The room was a great size for the three of us, with the washroom being accessible and the elevators in good repair. A pool is always a favorite place for me to go, but rarely accessible. While it was beautiful to be outside enjoying the balmy sun, doing it from the cool waters of the pool was a wish I hadn't hoped to have granted. Was I surprised when not only was there a chair lift into the pool - allowing me access, but there was also a knowledgeable set of life guards who went above and beyond the call of duty to see that I was in and out of that pool comfortably.

If there was a drawback, in terms of accessibility, it was in the casinos themselves. The carpeting on the floors and ramps was luxurious; however, not always the easiest to maneuver on, due to its thickness. It tends to pull your chair off to one side or the other and can consume a lot of energy if you don't have that helping hand with you. The high desks, where a person cashed their travelers cheques or redeemed their winnings (not really a common occurrence for me) could have been problematic, were it not, once again for the staff watching for those individuals in need of assistance.

Normally, I would agree with the adage "What happens in Vegas - stays in Vegas"; however, this time - I want to share with everyone, just how comfortable, accessible and exciting Las Vegas was to visit!

