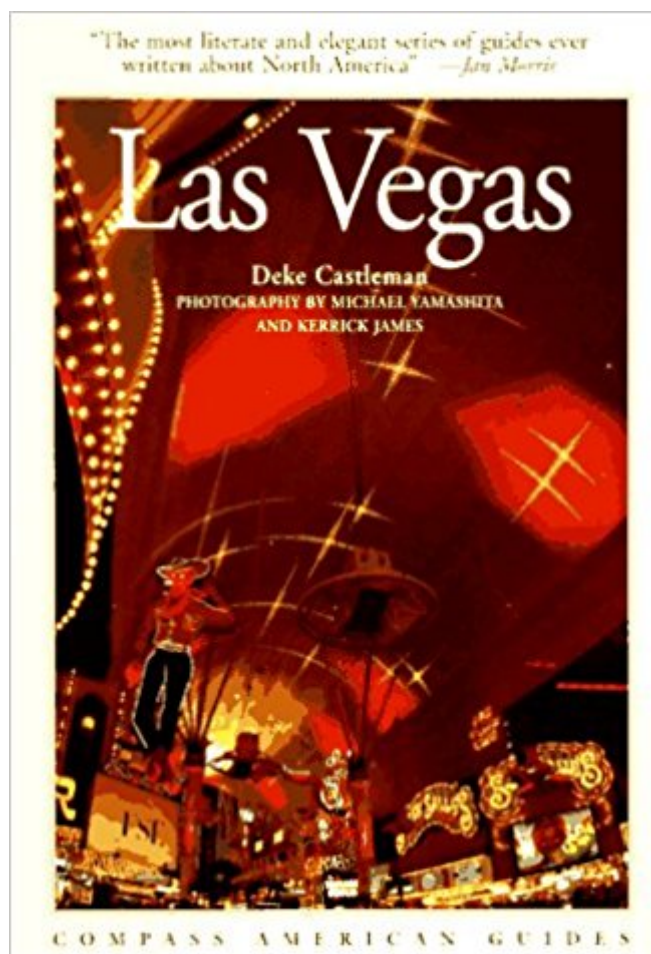


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# Compass American Guides : Las Vegas



## Synopsis

Created by local writers and photographers, Compass American Guides are the ultimate insider's guides, providing in-depth coverage of the history, culture and character of America's most spectacular destinations. Covering everything there is to see and do as well as choice lodging and dining, these gorgeous full-color guides are perfect for new and longtime residents as well as vacationers who want a deep understanding of the region they're visiting. Outstanding color photography, plus a wealth of archival images. Topical essays and literary extracts. Detailed color maps. Great ideas for things to see and do. Capsule reviews of hotels and restaurants. About the Author "Las Vegas" is Deke Castleman's middle name. He's been covering the boomtown since 1987, when he researched the first edition of Moon Publications' Nevada Handbook. He has also contributed to Las Vegas Access, Fodor's USA, Great American Vacations, and Great American Vacations for Travelers With Disabilities. He has edited two guides to Las Vegas for Huntington Press, and he is the managing editor of the Las Vegas Advisor, a monthly newsletter for Las Vegas visitors and locals. Castleman is also the author of Las Vegas 2040, a novel about the future of Las Vegas. About the Photographers Michael Yamashita has been shooting pictures for National Geographic books and magazines since 1979. He has participated in five Day in the Life projects, and has received awards from the National Press Photographers Association and the New York Art Directors Club, among others. His work has been exhibited at the National Gallery of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Kodak's Professional Photographer's Showcase at EPCOT Center. Mr. Yamashita's images are also featured in Compass San Francisco and Compass Manhattan. Kerrick James is well known for his photography of the Southwest. In addition to appearing in Compass Arizona, San Francisco, and The American Southwest, his work is featured frequently in Hemispheres and National Geographic Traveler, as well as several Smithsonian guidebooks and school textbooks. He lives in Mesa, Arizona, with his wife and two sons.

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## Customer Reviews

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Bugsy had a dream. He would become the greatest guardian of public gambling and private prostitution in the country. His hotel would provide the best resort facilities in the world. His casino

would be the most luxurious and offer the finest service. His employees, down to the lowliest janitor, would wear tuxedos. His guests would be famous, glamorous, rich. He spent \$6 million to bedeck his dream palace and pop out the eyes of his mobster financiers, movie-star friends, competition present and future, and attract battalions of citizens who'd come to play the games and live to tell the tale. And the best part? The whole thing was legit! Bugsy didn't even have to buy off, scare off, or run from the cops. It was perfect. The Flamingo transcended any mere tourist attraction. Las Vegas took the long drive out Highway 91, 12 miles round trip, just to stare. The incomparable Tom Wolfe, in *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, explains, "Siegel put up a hotel-casino such as Las Vegas had never seen -- all Miami Modern. Such shapes! Boomerang Modern supports, Palette Curvilinear bars, Hot Shoppe Cantilever roofs, and a scalloped swimming pool. Such colors! All the new electrochemical pastels of the Florida littoral: tangerine, broiling magenta, livid pink, incarnadine, fuchsia, demure, Congo ruby, methyl green, viridian, aquamarine, phenosafranine, incandescent orange, scarlet-fever purple, cyanic blue, tessellated bronze, hospital-fruit-basket orange. And such signs! Two cylinders rose at either end of the Flamingo -- eight stories high and covered from top to bottom with neon rings in the shape of bubbles that fizzed eight stories up into the desert sky all night long like an illuminated whisky-soda tumbler filled to the brim with pink champagne." Wolfe makes the point that throughout the history of art, the aristocracy had been solely responsible for style -- for the simple reason that aristocrats alone had the time and money to cultivate it. World War II, however, changed all that forever. "The war created money. It made massive infusions of money into every level of society. Suddenly, classes of people whose lives had been practically invisible had the money to build monuments to their own styles. Las Vegas was created after the war, with war money, by gangsters." But all that -- the shapes, colors, signs -- was just the exterior, the false front, designed to grab your eye as you cruised by at 30 miles an hour. Inside, you were presented with another false front: the promise. Of the indulgence. In the three oldest, most primal, irresistible, and taboo pastimes of human nature: intoxication, gambling, and sex. All this electric glamour in the desert, all this style, seduction, and cushioned comfort -- all to debar the barrier to your bankroll. And then! From the backstage special-effects control booth appeared the wizard, controlling Oz, wielding the Percentage. The Edge That Must Be Obeyed. A legal game, an honest game, but by no means a fair game. All designed to pass the cash over to the custodial side of the pit. Never to return. It was perfect. Except that Bugsy, like most empire builders and some lifestyle creators, either suffered from delusions of immortality or clearly recognized the imminence of his own fall. Whichever, along the way he forgot to cover his ass. He literally gave his life to the vision, but not before initiating the Golden Age of Las Vegas. In

early January 1947, 14 days after it opened, the Flamingo financially flopped. By June, the Flamingo was being managed by Gus Greenbaum, boss gambler from Phoenix, and Davie Berman, boss gambler from Minneapolis. Both had arrived a few years earlier in Bugsy's wake, helped him run the El Cortez downtown, then after his death fronted the Flamingo for hidden owner Meyer Lansky. In 1955, after Greenbaum and Berman moved over to the Riviera, the hotel was sold to Thomas Hull, who'd built the El Rancho Vegas, and Al Parvin, who was to buy and sell a number of hotels over the next 20 years. In 1960, the Flamingo was again sold, to a large group of investors headed by Miami hotel magnates Morris Lansburgh and Sam Cohen. Lansky received a hefty "finder's fee" for both sales. It was later determined that he'd held an interest all the way up to 1967. That year, entrepreneur Kirk Kerkorian bought the Flamingo for \$13 million during the Hughes whirlwind to use as a "hotel school" for the core staff of the huge International that Kerkorian was then planning. He immediately sank another \$2.5 million into improvements: the casino and theater were expanded, and the champagne towers were torn down. Hilton Corporation bought the Flamingo in 1970, becoming the first major hotel chain to enter the Nevada market. Hilton embarked on a colossal expansion program that added 500-room towers in 1977, 1980, 1982, and 1986; a 728-room tower in 1990; and a 908-room tower in 1993. The grand total of 3,575 rooms makes the Flamingo the fifth largest hotel in town. The 1990 expansion required tearing up the 45-year-old rose garden planted by Bugsy himself. The 1993 expansion required tearing down the original bungalows from the 1940s so that the pool area could be expanded to cover 15 acres. Also demolished was the Oregon Building, where Bugsy Siegel himself had a suite on the fourth floor. It was replaced with a 440-unit Hilton timeshare tower. Today, the Flamingo is the highest-class bona fide resort on the Strip -- no gimmicks, no spectacles, just pure vacation. The pool area is the finest in Las Vegas; the series of pools is connected by water slides (the tot pool has a tiny slide of its own). The Flamingo, in a rare demonstration of nostalgia, erected a little brick shrine to Bugsy, with a plaque commemorating his life, a bas relief of his face, and even a garden full of the man's treasured roses. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is not your typical tour book. The author is more interested in making you know about Las Vegas than telling you about it. Las Vegas is made tangible and not just rated in terms of good or bad. The typical tour book stuff is here including hotel rates and restaurant reviews. However, if you want to know more, it's there. It provides description of hotels as well as details their history. Every subject is handled in this manner as well making the book feel more like a narrative. There are small excerpts from popular authors for even more perspective. Perhaps, perspective is the right word for

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How good is this book? Another guidebook recomedns reading it! This book gives great insight into the history of Las Vegas as well as the individual hotels. While it is a little short on specific information, this guide more than makes up for it with specacular color photography and well written articles. A must read for those who want to know more than what the Chamer of Commerce or the Convention and Visitors Bureau will admit.

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