



We've seen them arriving in plush limos and tossing huge bets at the casino tables. I know they're rich, but why are they called whales? *PLJ, New Orleans LA*

A: We love Vegas, go there frequently and are familiar with those big-bucks gamblers from all over the world known as whales. The term indicates they have unlimited resources and spend like spouting whales.

Some come to Sin City with inherited millions, others have built up oil and other business billions. Like the original Vegas mobsters, many got rich in drugs and other illegal dealings. Today, the newest wave of whales include super-rich rock stars, TV celebs, Hollywood moguls and grossly-overpaid pro jocks. They freely gamble away their easy-come-easy-go millions, knowing there's more where that came from. Posh Vegas hotels vie for whale patronage with free goodies, including private jet flights, penthouse suites, posh restaurants, 24-hour limos and front-row tickets to major shows. Throughout their stay, the whales also get personal servants, guards and access to Sin City's high-class hookers. (Liz Taylor earned the Academy Award portraying one in 1960's *Butterfield 8*)

The whales lose considerable sums of money, because Vegas being Vegas, the odds always favor the house. Although some players win big momentarily, inevitably the fat whale wallets get thoroughly harpooned and skinned. Do they care? As with ocean-going whales, the human cetaceans always return to the Sin City spouting and spawning grounds.