



Beyond the lush resorts, buffets and casinos, Las Vegas also offers scenic bike trails, including downtown, the suburbs, nearby Mount Charleston, Red Rock Canyon, the shores of Lake Mead and Hoover Dam.

The first reaction about local bike trails from the typical Vegas visitor could be: who takes time from gambling to ride bikes in Sin City? Admittedly, it's difficult to envision gamblers getting up early in the morning to ride their Schwinns through the traffic-choked, high-rise Las Vegas Strip.

It's actually possible to ride bikes on the Strip and downtown streets. Not only visitors, but squads of bicycle cops roam throughout the area day and night, often wheeling around where cars can't always venture.

There are bicycle rental agencies in Las Vegas that cater to visitors who want to exercise or get around the traffic-congested Strip areas much more quickly than they can in cars and cabs. The bikes are delivered to hotels, and the rates are from about \$50 a day. However, unless you're an expert cyclist who's had daily experience in city traffic in places like Manhattan, it isn't wise to try riding in Las Vegas during busy hours of the day and evening.

The secret of successful cycling in downtown and Strip areas is to get out on the streets just before dawn. This means about 4:30 am in summer and 6 am in winter. Cyclists then can enjoy a good safe hour before the heavy car, taxi, bus and truck traffic begins. Also, many Vegas summer days quickly heat up to 100 degrees plus by 10 am, making cycling very uncomfortable.

Helmets are mandatory, and cyclists are advised to wear bright reflective strips or patches on backs, arms and legs. Plastic water bottles are a must, especially when in summer heat. For safer biking experiences, there are companies that conduct guided tours in quieter desert and mountain areas beyond the Strip and downtown.

Excellent bike trails within the Las Vegas metropolitan area are located in the suburb of Summerlin, a large planned community of more than 50,000 homes. The development includes over 150 miles of designated cycling and hiking trails. Streets have marked bike lanes, and neighborhood cycling club groups are common sights daily throughout Summerlin.

Naturally scenic bike trails are through Red Rock Canyon in the Mount Charleston area, about a 30-minute drive from the Strip. The mountainside views are spectacular when the rising sun emphasizes the brilliant red, copper and orange hues of the prehistoric rock formations. More

than a mile above the the dry desert floor, the Red Rock canyon boasts impressive growths of trees that tower above the trails.



When riding in the cool mountain air, cyclists can feel they're a continent away from city traffic, desert heat and glare of Las Vegas. Additionally, at some crests, they can actually enjoy views of the far-away Strip, especially at dawn and dusk, when glittering lights color the sky for miles around.

Other designated cycling areas include Henderson Trails, Lamb State Park, the Blue Diamond Mountain Trail and Cottonwood Valley.