

# Vegas

BUT NOT AS  
YOU KNOW IT



From race car driving to zip-lining through the canyons, *WF*'s Lizza Gebilagin discovers another side of the infamous town



“DO YOU TRUST ME?” asks the man to my right. I’ve known him for all of five minutes, but I find myself saying yes anyway. I can’t help it – I’m a sucker for handsome men with American accents. “Okay, this is your last lap. I want you to push down as hard as you can. Ready?” No, I don’t think... “Now!”

On his command I lean my foot on the accelerator. Handsome American Man, or Jordan as he’s known to his Dream Racing colleagues, places his hand on my thigh (oh, hello) and pushes it down: “More pedal”. I let out a scream and do as he says. I’m now driving 200km per hour around a nine-corner track at Las Vegas Motor Speedway! In a Ferrari F430 GT race car! I don’t even know what all those letters and numbers mean, except that the ride is illegal to drive on the streets.

My heart still feels like it’s speeding down the track when we slow down to park. I get out of the Ferrari (which they had to fit with two seat bolsters because my legs are so short) and my instructor Jordan high-fives me. I blurt out it was more of an adrenaline rush than skydiving and thank him for pushing me beyond my comfort zone. He simply smiles, says it’s his job and walks away to meet his next student.

There’s no time to mourn the end of my brief (imagined) moment with Jordan as I’m On. A. High. It’s my third time visiting Las Vegas and I never knew there’d be more to the city than partying, losing money, and doing a Britney with a Handsome American Man at one of the wedding chapels. Apparently there is.

## CANYON COUNTRY

A 30-minute drive from the famous strip is the very un-glitzy Bootleg Canyon. The desert landscape reminds me of *Breaking Bad*, but I don’t spot any suspicious-looking caravans. Over the next three hours we’ll be zip-lining from the top of Red Mountain with Flightlinez. Our guides tell us that this area is famous for growing rocks (these guys clearly got stuck in Vegas on the way to LA to pursue a stand-up career), so when they warn us that the fastest of the four zip-lines is almost race car-speed, I’m not sure whether to believe them. Turns out, they’re exaggerating. It’s okay, though, as the views more than make up for it.

Speaking of canyons, on the last day of our trip we visit the grandest one of all. There are a few ways to explore the Grand Canyon: if you love to challenge yourself, you can hike; if you want to try something



### BONUS VIDEO

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different, you can ride a mule; or, if you like to stay out dancing until 5am, you can get a helicopter ride there. I chose the latter.

The night before our canyon trip we hit up two of the newest clubs, Light and Hakkasan. The theatrical Light at Mandalay Bay is like a Cirque du Soleil show with avant-garde performers and extravagant visuals, while Hakkasan at MGM attracts DJs like Calvin Harris and Steve Aoki. I don’t recommend going to both in one night, especially if you’ve got a helicopter tour the next morning. Bad idea.

Amazingly, I wake in time for our hotel pick-up. Maverick Helicopters fly us over the strip, Lake Las Vegas, Hoover Dam and an extinct volcano. It’s cool to watch the concrete expanse of the city transform into the vast desert landscape. We land in the Hualapai Reservation, almost 100 metres above the Colorado River. Our pilot brings out a picnic basket and opens a bottle of Champagne. I don’t decline. In fact, I’ve got my second wind and I keep my eyes open all the way back to the hotel. Success! Who has time to rest in Vegas? I’ll just sleep on the plane home.

### Book it!

- Zip-line through a *Breaking Bad* film set (not the real one). [flightlinezbootleg.com](http://flightlinezbootleg.com)
- Race down the Las Vegas Motor Speedway in a Ferrari. [dreamracing.com](http://dreamracing.com)
- Explore the Grand Canyon from above and celebrate with bubbles. [maverickhelicopter.com](http://maverickhelicopter.com)

## Las Vegas essentials

**WHERE TO STAY:** The Cosmopolitan is Vegas’ version of a hipster hotel. I had a view of Bellagio fountain (left) from my shower! [cosmopolitanlasvegas.com](http://cosmopolitanlasvegas.com)

**WHERE TO EAT:** Part restaurant, part show, Rose Rabbit Lie is like stepping through the Looking Glass. [roserabbitlie.com](http://roserabbitlie.com)

**HOW TO GET THERE:** Fly with Hawaiian Airlines to Honolulu, then get a connecting flight to Vegas. Why not even book a few days in Waikiki on your way home? It’s the perfect way to unwind after partying. [hawaiianairlines.com.au](http://hawaiianairlines.com.au)

**WANT MORE INFO?** Head to [visitlasvegas.com.au](http://visitlasvegas.com.au) and [travelnevada.com](http://travelnevada.com)