hospitalitydesign
february/march 2024 hospitalitydesign.com
path forward
the development issue
hd Presenter of expo+ conference

By Katie Kervin

Photos and renderings courtesy of Champalimaud Design, Groot Hospitality, Studio Munge, and the respective properties

ALL IN

The latest Las Vegas debuts aim to draw a new generation of travelers

Ever a city of reinvention, Las Vegas is now fashioning itself as a mecca for sports entertainment, too. The rapidly evolving landscape includes the recent Major League Baseball approval to relocate the Oakland Athletics team (where it will join professional NFL, WNBA, and NHL squads) in a new $1.5 billion stadium on the site of the soon-to-be-demolished Tropicana Las Vegas. Last November, Formula One's Las Vegas Grand Prix made its debut, attracting approximately 300,000 spectators and leading to gambling revenue of more than $820 million that month, a 23 percent increase year-on-year according to the Nevada Gaming Control Board. With the Super Bowl held at Allegiant Stadium last month and the first sporting event—a UFC fight—coming to the Sphere later this year, it's clear that the city is looking to attract the next-generation visitor.

Casino hotels and other venues, on and off the Strip, are doing their part to keep up, with a slew of additions and renovations in the books and on the boards. The Mandalay Bay Convention Center, for example, is in the midst of a $100 million remodel expected to be complete by the end of the year. Further up Las Vegas Boulevard, Hard Rock International is moving forward with its rebrand of the former Mirage, which the company acquired in late 2022.

The Strip isn't the only location attracting new venues. The Durango Casino & Resort recently opened in the southwest valley, and nearby is the Sundry, a destination food hall (crafted by Studio 11 Design) showcasing culinary talent within the UnCommons mixed-use development.

Read on for more places to check out while in Vegas.

Photo by DREX AGENCY/MARK MEDIANA

The exterior of the recently opened Fontainebleau Las Vegas

1. Durango Casino & Resort

Opened in December in southwest Las Vegas, Station Casinos' 17th property features architecture by local firm Friedmutter Group. Interior spaces come courtesy of Studio Munge, including Mijo restaurant (shown) and Wax Rabbit, a speakeasy designed around the Mexican folklore tale of 400 divine rabbits; Los Angeles-based Avenue Interior Design handled Nicco's steakhouse; and Dallas-based Looney & Associates envisioned guestrooms as a modern desert escape to complement city and mountain views through the floor-to-ceiling windows.

2. Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino

Orla, a Mediterranean eatery by chef Michael Mina, has opened at the casino resort (joining the chef's STRIPSTEAK outpost, recently redesigned by LA-based Bishop Pass). Crafted by New York-based Parts and Labor Design, Orla is brought to life through tile mosaics, white marble, dark wood tables, and an ornate tiled floor. A statement bar featuring waxed 3D plaster greets guests on entry, while two large olive trees sit beneath the vaulted ceilings, which are brought down to human scale thanks to massive woven chandeliers.

3. Waldorf Astoria Las Vegas

The hotel, a luxurious haven for non-gamblers that was reflagged from a Mandarin Oriental in 2018, recently unveiled phase one of a multimillion-dollar transformation. A new entry has been replanted with desert flora, and the airy hotel reception, relocated from the 23rd floor, is swathed in Calacatta gold marble that nods to the brand's iconic Beverly Hills location. As part of phase two, that former check-in area will soon be home to the Rockwell Group-designed Peacock Alley (shown) and a new bar concept.

4. Rio Hotel & Casino

Dreamscape Companies' redevelopment of the property a block off the Strip on Flamingo Boulevard will encompass 2,500 suites, a casino floor, meeting and convention space, and five acres of poolside amenities at the hands of locally based Marnell Architecture and landscape architecture firm Lifescapes International. West Hollywood-based GGID and London and LA firm Fettle are collaborating on the porte-cochère, reception, and Circle Bar, and have reimagined the former Carnival World Buffet space into the vibrant Canteen Food Hall (shown).

5. Bellagio Hotel & Casino

On the heels of a $110 million revamp of its Spa Tower guestrooms and suites (designed, respectively, by the Gettys Group and Champalimaud Design with MGM Resorts' internal team), social options are also upping the stakes. Reimagined by Woogmaster Studio, the pool deck, including a lively café and bar, will bring a distinctly Italian feel beneath a new pavilion dome. Cocktail lair the Vault, designed by Studio Munge, showcases an entry vestibule steeped in drama. Also on deck for early this year is a jazz bar dubbed the Pinky Ring, designed and curated by musician Bruno Mars.

6. Caesars Palace

A new location of Peter Luger Steak House (shown) recently opened with an industrial vibe that echoes its original Brooklyn, New York home. Crafted by Jeffrey Beers International, wooden floors meet classic leather-upholstered chairs and pendant lighting. Opening this spring from Clique Hospitality, caviar and cocktail bar Caspian's by New York-based Celano Design Studio pairs brass accents with onyx and pearl hues in the luxurious bar space, while the Art Deco-inspired music lounge boasts oversized sofas, blue velvet curtains, and a dramatic chandelier.

7. The Venetian Resort Las Vegas

As part of its $1 billion capital investment project, masterplanned by multidisciplinary firm RIOS, the Venetian is embarking on a $188 million renovation of its convention center and meeting facilities (shown). Also part of the refresh, new cabaret-style nightclub Voltaire boasts immersive interiors by Tony Award-winning production designer Derek McLane, while a newly reimagined arrival and Sala 118—a bar and lounge evoking the romance of the 118 Venetian islands—now welcome guests to the property.

8. Fontainebleau Las Vegas

The massive resort, in the works for 16 years with a pricetag of upwards of $3.7 billion, finally launched in December. As a nod to its sister property in Miami Beach, the new iteration evolves the brand's timeless elegance for the Vegas market thanks to a who's who of designers, architects, and restaurateurs, including Piero Lissoni, David Collins Studio, Jeffrey Beers, and David Grutman, among others. The first openings in Las Vegas from Miami-based Grutman's Groot Hospitality, restaurants Papi Steak and Komodo (shown) join LIV nightclub—all designed by Rockwell Group. **hd**