

The 10 best Las Vegas hacks that only a local would know

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While the glamour, excitement and glittering lights of the Strip are what pulls you to Las Vegas, sometimes you want to get away from it all and see the town as locals know it, the places where they eat and shop and just hang out. It may mean a drive across town, but you want to tell people you've seen the real Vegas, right?

Tacos – [Tacos El Gordo](#)

This taco joint has been serving up Tijuana-style tacos in handmade corn tortillas since 2010, but the family behind it opened their first restaurant in 1972. On Fridays and Saturdays you can expect to find it packed with a mixed crowd, from casino workers clocking off shifts to tourists fortifying themselves on a night out, right up to closing at 4am. Try the popular *carne asada* (grilled beef) with fresh guacamole and don't forget to ask for extra jalapenos. It's popular, so whatever time you rock up you can expect a (fast moving) queue.

3049 S Las Vegas Blvd

Coffee - [Vesta Coffee Roasters](#)

Bringing the hipster coffee shop vibe to Las Vegas, Vesta's commitment to quality roasts and traceable bean origins means the farm-to-cup coffee you buy helps the families that produce it, too. The coffee is roasted in-house, ensuring your cup of Joe is the cleanest and sweetest tasting in town. It also serves teas and a selection of breakfasts and snacks. Enjoy.

1114 S Casino Center Blvd #1

Live music – [Bunkhouse Saloon](#)

Bunkhouse has been here forever (well, six decades anyway), and these days it's known as the place to see local favourites or up-and-coming bands that are passing through town. Its renovation a few years back updated the sound system to something awesome, improved the food and introduced the "listening tree" (it's out back, go see – or more accurately, listen).

124 S 11th St

Pizza - [Settebello Pizzeria Napoletana](#)

This restaurant has two locations, one in Las Vegas the other in nearby Henderson – and both use a traditional wood-fired oven to cook authentic Neopolitan pizzas for hungry Las Vegans. It can be a bit of a splurge, but locals in the know head to Settebello during happy hour on Monday, where you can enjoy a delicious margherita pizza for \$5.

9350 W Sahara Ave #170

140 S Green Valley Pkwy, Henderson

Cocktails – [Velveteen Rabbit](#)

Located in the arts district, Velveteen Rabbit is a warren of nooks and crannies furnished with Victorian-style furniture. Added attractions include a

cracking beer list and affordable cocktails. It runs a seasonal list with imaginative, sometimes shot-out-the-park drinks (the breakfast cigar is not only a wonderful name, but pits scotch, mescal, vermouth, French press liqueur, chocolate bitters and applewood smoke together).

1218 S Main St



Velveteen Rabbit: a local favourite in Las Vegas Photograph: PR/PR Company Handout

Thai – Lotus of Siam

Not exactly an unknown gem – it won a James Beard award, after all – but still the spot to hit for the most mouthwatering Thai in town. The *khao soi* (crispy duck) is legendary in these parts, but there are supposedly some 150 menu items, including a section of northern Thai specialties, so don't feel boxed in.

620 E Flamingo Rd

Japanese – Izakaya Go

You can spend some seriously silly money on Japanese food in Vegas, but for something relaxed, affordable and down to earth, an *izakaya* (a kind of gastropub) is the solution. It does offer sushi, but the menu is much broader – dumplings, ramen burger and tempura being a few of the tasty options.

3775 Spring Mountain Rd

Dive bar - Double Down Saloon

Billed as the “anti-Vegas”, the Double Down is a real-deal dive bar with attitude, pool and (free) live music. It’s been serving locals cheap, solid drinks since 1992 and claims to be the home of the original bacon martini, although you may be safer with a bloody mary. The bathroom doors may not always lock, but it must be one of the few places where you can take out “puke insurance” (\$20, or else you clean it up yourself).

4640 Paradise Rd

BBQ – Big Ern’s BBQ

This simple, no-frills barbecue joint was originally a feature of the area’s farmers’ markets. It now has a permanent home at the quirky Downtown Container Park, which, as the name suggests, is built largely from shipping containers. Big Ern’s is the kind of place your taxi driver will recommend, renowned locally for its signature sauces and smoked meats, such as the mouth-watering brisket. Space inside is limited, so you may have to wait for a table, sit out or explore the container park with fingers dripping in sauce.

Downtown Container Park, 707 E Fremont St

Breakfast or brunch – Eat

Every city needs a go-to breakfast place and, for Las Vegas, Eat is it. Located downtown, chef Natalie Young serves up ample portions of her casual, welcoming, southern-inspired food. The shrimp and grits or *huevos motuleños* (eggs on tortillas with black beans and cheese) should set you right for a long day exploring Las Vegas. Eat is also open for lunch (check out the Reuben sandwich), with egg dishes available all day.

707 E Carson Ave