

{On a Budget} By HEATHER TURK, *Los Angeles Times Special Sections Writer*

Priceless Memories

VEGAS' BEST FREE ATTRACTIONS

Las Vegas may be known for its lavish spas, exclusive nightclubs and high-limit tables, but believe it or not, there are plenty of things you can do in town for free. Here's a look at how you can spend your next vacation without spending a dime.

Traveling with tots in tow? For a city that's supposedly not meant for kids, there are actually quite a few free kid-friendly attractions in town. Among the more popular attractions are the **free circus acts at Circus Circus** (beginning at 11 a.m. daily). Strutting their stuff every half hour in the Carnival Midway, death-defying performers delight visitors both young and old with their truly breathtaking skills, ranging from trapeze artistry to juggling.

Want to take a walk on the wild side? Even though the Mirage's free tiger exhibit has been replaced by a burger joint, guests can still get up close to the king of the jungle at **MGM Grand**. The hotel's popular **Lion Habitat** (open daily 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.) gives guests the unique opportunity to be stalked by lions within a see-through (and safe!) tunnel that runs through the habitat and allows the ferocious felines to prowl above and below.

For a journey under the sea, head on over to the **Silverton's 117,000-gallon reef aquarium** — home to more than 4,000 tropical fish and three species each of stingrays and sharks — for its interactive feeding shows. The show occurs daily at 1:30, 4:30 and 7:30 p.m., and guests can ask questions of the aquarium's marine biologist, who is equipped with a full-face communication mask during the dive.

Guests can satisfy a sweet tooth at **Francois Payard Patisserie** inside **Caesars Palace**, which features a 13-foot-tall truffle-inspired timepiece dubbed the Payard Chocolate Clock in its retail store (open Tuesday through Friday 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Saturday through Monday 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.) that displays nine different time zones and randomly dispenses free truffles to guests.

And don't forget a visit to Las Vegas' sweetest attraction: **Jean Philippe Patisserie's** glass-enclosed floor-to-ceiling chocolate fountain at the Bellagio. Viewable 24/7, the fountain stands more than 26 feet tall and is the tallest chocolate fountain in the world, circulating nearly two tons of melted dark, milk and white chocolate at a rate of 120 quarts per minute.

As if Jean Philippe Patisserie's choco-

late fountain wasn't beautiful enough, art lovers are sure to rejoice over the city's newest free attraction: the **CityCenter Fine Art Collection**. The first major permanent collection of art in Las Vegas to be integrated into a public space, visitors will happen upon works by such acclaimed artists, sculptors and visionaries as Maya Lin, Jenny Holzer and Richard Long as they walk the grounds.

History buffs, meanwhile, are sure to enjoy the urinals (you heard us) inside the men's restroom at **Main Street Station** hotel and casino, as they are mounted on an authentic piece of the **Berlin Wall**. Although the attraction is generally only seen by male guests, when the bathroom is empty, women can be escorted in by hotel security.

If it's too busy, though, gals can check out another interesting free attraction Downtown: the Hand of Faith. Weighing in at 61 pounds, 11 ounces, the **Hand of Faith** is the largest known gold nugget on display in the world and can be found — where else? — inside the **Golden Nugget's** Gold Tower.

So even if you lost all your gold on black, there's no reason why you should ever go bored in Las Vegas! ♣



THE 26-FOOT-TALL CHOCOLATE FOUNTAIN AT JEAN PHILIPPE PÂTISSERIE



THE GOLDEN NUGGET'S GOLDEN NUGGET



CITYCENTER'S FINE ART COLLECTION



MGM GRAND'S LION HABITAT