

Trip 4 – Episode #11: What Happens in Vegas...



Neither Jim nor I had ever been to Las Vegas before. (I know, it's shocking isn't it?)

What finally got us there was Charles. Well, obviously Charles got us there, literally, but also, we went to Vegas because Charles needed some repairs and we'd read from many LTV owners that Van City in Las Vegas was reliable. And, miraculously, they had an opening that worked with our timing. So, to Vegas we went.

But first, we had to get through...



We've driven through a lot of deserts in Charles. But the Mojave somehow seemed the most intimidating.





One of the weirdest parts of the drive was when the GPS showed us that we were approaching and then crossing a large lake.



But this is what it looked like out the window.



This used to be under water.



And then there was more.



With The Good, The Bad and The Ugly music echoing in our heads, we congratulated ourselves for filling up before we left.



But we weren't sure how to react to this:



So we just kept on going.



This could be one of my favourite signs of all time.



Finally, after over three hours of driving, we saw signs of “civilization”.



The moment we crossed into Nevada, we went from nothing to everything.



Suddenly, there was no sense of being in the desert.



And woohoo! We could gamble!



About a half an hour later, and more desert, we arrived in Las Vegas. And we saw what could be my second favourite sign.



We decided to take Charles down the Las Vegas strip. Even though we've seen these images for years on TV and in movies, we just weren't prepared for the reality – or should I say the unreality!













Like the desert, it just goes on and on. But unlike the desert, it was everything, everywhere all at once!

Overwhelmed and exhausted, we checked into our KOA campground. Which was conveniently situated right beside a casino.



The next day, we dropped Charles off for servicing, and took an Uber downtown to explore Vegas on foot. We decided to start at the famous Vegas sign.



We couldn't believe our luck! Elvis was there at the same time!



This historic chapel has been the wedding site for such celebrities as ZsaZsa Gabor, Judy Garland, Bob Geldof, Richard Gere, Mel Tormé, Mickey Rooney, Billy Bob Thornton, Angelina Jolie and Robert Goulet. Not sure how many times each of them got married here...



I was excited and surprised to see that Jack Jones was still playing Vegas. I worked with him on a TV show over 30 years ago and thought it would be fun to see him in Vegas. Then I realized this Jack Jones is a basketball player. He wasn't even born when we did the TV series.



Canadian impressionist Rich Little is STILL playing Vegas. Not surprising to see that he plays an early set.



It was fun to see this marker for the Rat Pack. I've always wished I'd gone to Vegas back when you could see Dean or Frank for next to nothing, just so you'd go to the casino. (Sorry, I forgot to take a photo of their footprints. If you want to see them, you'll have to go for yourself.)



We had breakfast in the Tropicana and then decided we had to check out at least one casino.



Being the intrepid travellers we are, we took our chances at a slot machine.



And we came away
with a payout!

That was enough
excitement for us.



We went back out into the world where we discovered there's a monorail, which is kind of like a train, so of course, Jim wanted to try it. We saw a sign directing us to the monorail. So we took the escalator up.



It led us into the MGM Grand.



And despite the fact that we kept following signs to the monorail, we kept finding ourselves in the middle of more opportunities to gamble. It was almost as if they didn't want us to find our way out! (But they wouldn't do that, would they?)



Finally we found the entrance we were looking for.



And we got a wonderful tour of all the places these huge hotels dump their trash.



So, our tip for anyone planning a trip to Vegas: Skip the monorail. You'll do more walking as you try to find the entrance than you would if you walked the entire strip. And there's nothing to see anyway.

We got off the monorail near the Venetian, just so we could remind ourselves of what the real place looks like. But on the way out of the monorail we saw something you'd never see in Venice: Cowboys.

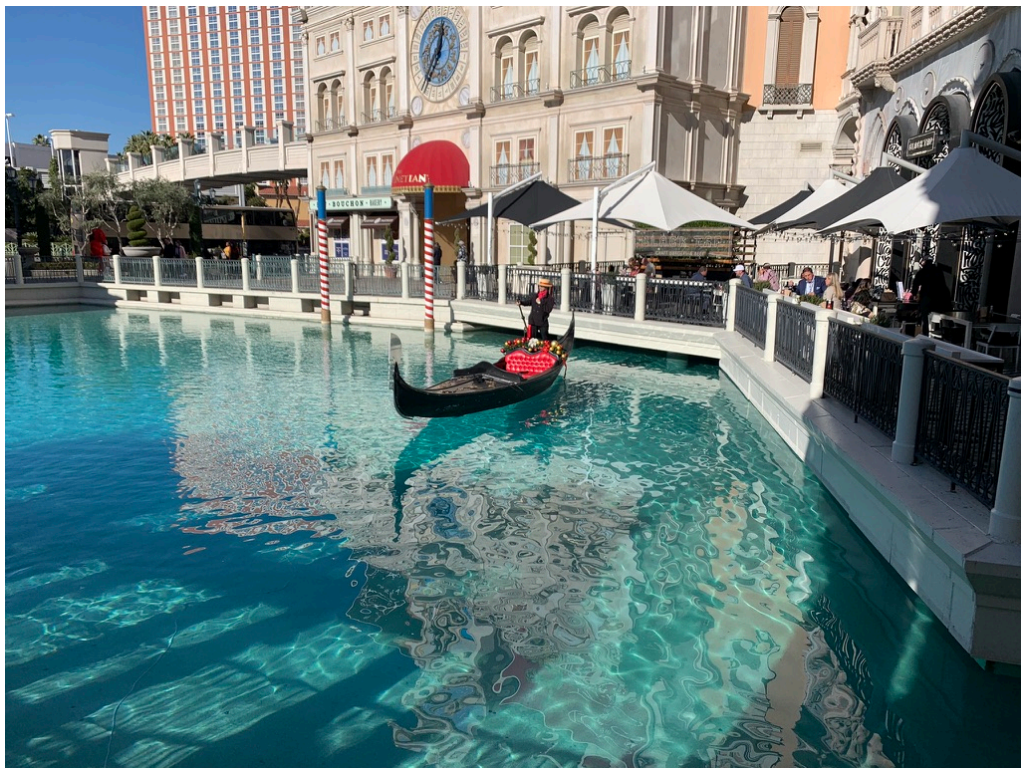
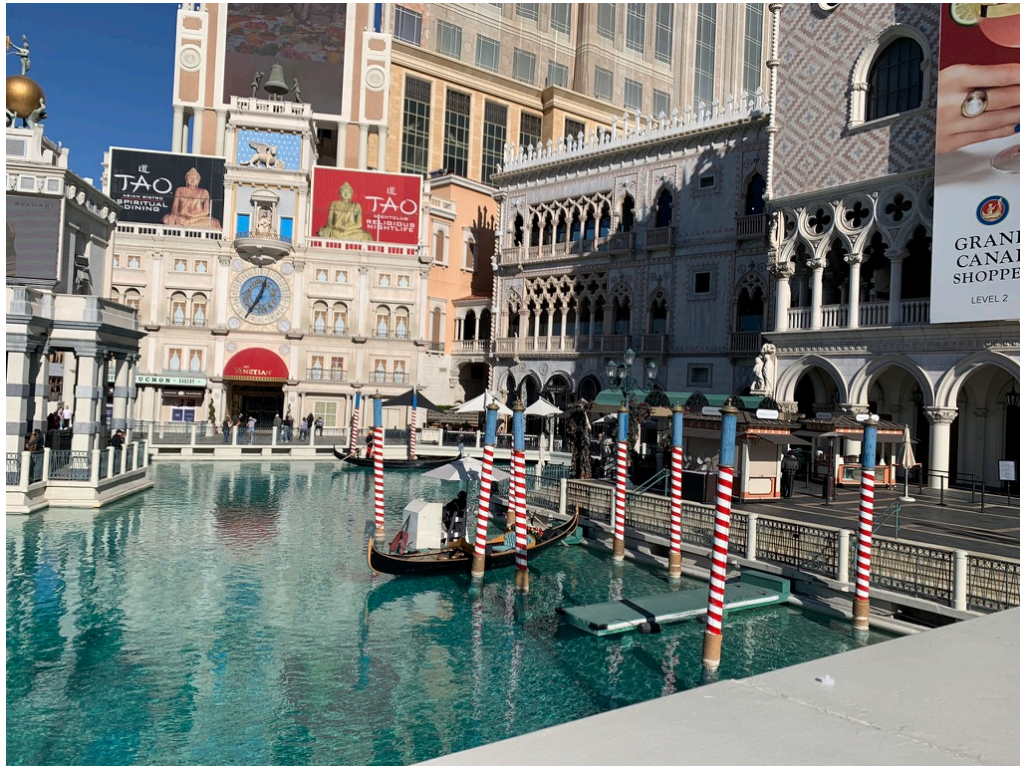


We'd seen a large area filled with horses and cowboys when we were driving into town. It turned out there was a huge rodeo happening in Vegas that weekend. So everywhere we went, we kept running into cowboys.



There's at least one kind of convention or giant gathering pretty much every week in Vegas.

The Venetian is impressive. But despite the fact that the water in Venice was never that blue and the crowds were never that sparse, we'd rather go back to the real thing.





Just as we began searching for a place that would serve us an Aperol Spritz (which we first discovered when we were in Venice), we got a call saying that Charles was ready!

We went back to Van City, thanked Allan and Nina, and escaped to our quiet little campground.



The next day, we cleaned out everything that might go bad in six weeks, parked Charles in an RV storage lot, and said goodbye. Then we flew home for Christmas.

Waiting for us in our kitchen was a welcome home surprise: A beautiful looking pie made by our dear friend Alan Gotlib. It was as delicious as it looks.



So endeth this episode and this trip. We had a wonderful Christmas at home, spending time catching up with family and friends. We saw some theatre. We got some work done.

And near the end of January, we flew back to Vegas for the next trip.

Have we mentioned how lucky we feel?