

Downtown hotels' weekend rates rise as Life is Beautiful returns

By [Mike Shoro](#) Las Vegas Review-Journal

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The priciest best-available room this weekend in Las Vegas isn't at the valley's newest resort or its most upscale.

It's not on the Strip, either.

As of Tuesday, the title belonged to downtown's California Hotel, where the cheapest room was listed at \$700 a night on Friday or Saturday — excluding taxes and other fees.

The Cal may have had the highest starting price, but guests will pay a pretty penny for any room downtown this weekend. The three-day Life is Beautiful music and arts festival makes its return to downtown Las Vegas this weekend, lasting from Friday to Sunday. Last year's festival was canceled due to the pandemic.

Though a festival spokesperson didn't provide an attendance estimate for this weekend, high room rates downtown suggest it may be a busy one.

As of Tuesday, four casinos downtown were charging between \$400 and \$500 for a stay on Saturday. A stay at Golden Nugget on

Friday starts at \$199, the cheapest rate available at a downtown hotel-casino this weekend. A Saturday stay, however, would cost an additional \$300 per night for a rate of \$499.

Golden Gate offered the cheapest Saturday rate at \$329, though its sister properties, Circa Resort and the D Las Vegas, are sold out both days.

'A win for all of Las Vegas'

“A major event that drives visitation is a win for all of Las Vegas,” said the owner of those three properties, Derek Stevens, in a statement. “The return of Life is Beautiful is a milestone for the city and has reflected positively on our occupancy for the weekend. We’re excited to welcome the tens of thousands of visitors and locals who will experience downtown this weekend.”

Fremont is also sold out this weekend. Online booking for Binion’s doesn’t advertise room availability on Friday or Saturday. Instead, it tells prospective guests to call the hotel due to limited availability.

The short availability and tall room rates speak to people’s interest in returning to some sense of pre-pandemic normalcy through events like music festivals, said Brendan Bussmann, a partner at Global Market Advisors consulting group.

“No different than we’ve seen in meetings and conventions. No different than what we saw last night with the Raiders game,” he said Tuesday.

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority has paused its efforts to estimate event attendance during the pandemic, as its calculations rely on pre-pandemic data. The 2019 festival drew an estimated 178,025 people, 48,325 of whom were from out of town, according to the visitors authority.

The average room downtown last September cost \$64.80, just three months after casinos were allowed to reopen from the pandemic-spurred shutdown. September room rates held fairly steady from 2019 (\$78.29 for a night), 2018 (\$78.81) and 2017 (\$80.58), the visitors authority data said.

September 2021 data is not yet available. The visitors authority publishes average daily room rate data for the month, not for individual weekends like Life is Beautiful.

The average daily room rate downtown for July was \$101.54, up from \$59.74 from July 2020, according to the most recent available data. The average room on the Strip this July went for \$160.71.

Strip rates start lower

Most room rates on the Strip this weekend start at a lower price than those downtown, factoring in discounts like an ongoing

Caesars Entertainment Inc. promotional code sale. There are seven Strip hotels with Saturday rates starting below \$200, and 11 with rates between \$200 and \$300. An additional six range from \$300 to \$400.

Just three Strip resorts have rates starting higher than \$500 — Mandalay Bay (\$579), Delano (\$609) and The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas (\$650).

Main Street Station, which opened last week for the first time during the pandemic, listed weekend room rates starting at \$559.30.

The cheapest available room at the Cal was listed at \$67 for a Wednesday stay and \$138.55 for a Thursday night stay. A stay on Sept. 24 or 25 starts at \$449.65, compared to the \$700 rate for the Life is Beautiful weekend.

A spokesman for Boyd Gaming Corp., which operates Main Street Station, the Cal and Fremont, didn't return messages seeking comment Tuesday afternoon.

Downtown hotels have sold out more frequently during Life is Beautiful weekends as the festival has grown in recent years, Bussmann said. Their proximity to the festival grounds plays a factor, as does the configuration of related street closures and barriers surrounding the festival.

“People just want to stay there for the weekend and not be in and out of there,” he said. “It’s hard to get dropped off on the outskirts and then get in there along the way.”

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