

Shopping with a twist

Las Vegas malls keep you entertained while you browse

By Jeannie Borbe
Vegas.com

Dinner and a show may be a typical night out for many Las Vegas visitors, but only in Vegas can a typical day out include shopping and a show.

From malls with gondola rides and talking statues to one-of-a-kind fashion shows, Las Vegas takes shopping to a whole different level.

Fashion shows at Fashion Show mall

Sometimes mannequin displays just aren't enough. That's why at the Fashion Show mall, shoppers can catch glamorous live fashion shows every weekend. Models wear clothes that are immediately available for purchase.

"While our weekly runway shows are typical of what might [be seen] at New York fashion week, the fashions on display feature styles that reflect the current season," explained Jim McMichael, senior marketing manager for the Fashion Show mall.

The mall's multimillion dollar event area features an 80-foot retractable runway, the only one in the world.

"The sight of watching the stage and runway magically rise out of the floor is truly a one-of-a-kind experience," said McMichael. "What better way to enhance a visitor's shopping experience than to actually bring our fashions to life?"

Models strut the runway in apparel from bebe, Everything But Water and Macy's, to name a few. But sometimes, the fashion shows feature themes that are out of the ordinary.

"We just did a fabulous show commemorating Barbie's 50th anniversary," said Olwen Zarlengo, in-house stylist for Fashion Show mall. "It was a collective show that hit across Barbie's signature looks throughout the ages. We even included a Bob Mackie Vegas showgirl with a feather headdress and a shirtless sailor Ken."

"Fashion Show's weekend runway shows are a big hit since no weekend is exactly alike," McMichael added. "The feedback we hear from our shoppers is extremely positive."

The models come from a variety of backgrounds and the show is always changing. "On any given weekend, you can see [TV] personalities, Chippendales dancers, singers and models who fly from New York and L.A. just to do our shows," said Zarlengo.

And of course, every show is bound to have its funny moments. "We've had models put outfits on the wrong way, not get completely zipped up or lose

their footing and slip on the runway," McMichael said. "However, our team works diligently behind the scenes to make sure each model gets the proper attention and looks as polished as ever."

The models definitely get a workout as well. "The Fashion Show hosts over 1,000 runway shows each year," said McMichael, "During a typical weekend show, one model will walk more than two miles up and down the runway during the three-day show schedule. If a model worked every weekend for a full year, this would equal walking almost 100 miles along the Fashion Show catwalk."

The fashion shows run from Friday through Sunday, every hour on the hour, from noon to 6 p.m.

Gondola rides at the Venetian

Across the street from the Fashion Show, shoppers can take a break on a gondola ride at the Venetian's Grand Canal Shoppes. For only \$16 a person, this romantic little getaway is worth the trip.

"Where else in the world can you take a boat ride on the second floor of a building in the middle of the desert?" said Constantino Fortuna, a gondolier at Venetian's Grand Canal Shoppes.

Passengers will truly feel like they're in Italy. Modeled after authentic Venetian gondolas, each gondola seats four, which is perfect for a double date.

The indoor gondolas make their way through the Grand Canal Shoppes, beneath bridges and below the shops and cafés that line the canal running through the mall. Passengers can admire the blue sky ceiling as well as the Venice-inspired architecture.

Outdoor gondolas take the authenticity of the Venetian gondola ride one step further. Although the ride is two minutes shorter at 12 minutes long, the outdoor views more than make up for it.

Guests can enjoy the weather and views of neighboring hotels, all while gliding along a 31,235-square-foot lagoon.

"They both have something different to offer, but I personally prefer the inside ride because the weather is always perfect," Octovio Spina, a gondolier at Grand Canal Shoppes, said.

The outdoor ride has its perks too. "You can see the beautiful architecture of the property [and] the way it looks in the evening," Fortuna noted.

Many of the gondoliers have musical backgrounds (some in opera) and have performed all over the world.

Rides are available Sunday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. – midnight.



Photo courtesy of Fashion Show Las Vegas

Models strut down the runway at a show inside Fashion Show mall on the Strip.

Other attractions inside malls

Centaur Art Galleries at Fashion Show Mall

Hours: Monday – Saturday, 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Fountain Show at Miracle Mile Shops at Planet Hollywood

Hours: Monday - Thursday from 11:45 a.m. - 11:45 p.m.; Friday - Sunday, 11:15 a.m. - 11:45 p.m.

M&M's World at Showcase Mall

Hours: Sunday – Thursday, 9 a.m. – 11 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m. – midnight

Streetmosphere at the Grand Canal Shoppes at the Venetian

Hours: Daily, 11:30 a.m. – 10 p.m. Show locations vary. Please call (702) 414-4500 for details.

Fall of Atlantis at Forum Shops

While you're out shopping at the Forum Shops at Caesars Palace, stop by and witness sibling rivalry like you've never seen it before at the Fall of Atlantis water show.

The Fall of Atlantis features talking statues, flooding water and pyrotechnics. Watch as brother

and sister fight for control of Atlantis with stunning special effects.

"A show control room houses the technical equipment that is required to operate the show," explained Maureen Crampton, director of marketing for the Forum Shops at Caesars Palace. "We are required to have two of our on-staff experts present since the show features fire."

Hundreds of visitors gather for each show, so it's a good idea to arrive early for a prime spot. Show times are every hour on the hour from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. (Sunday through Thursday) and 10 a.m. to midnight (Friday and Saturday).

Visitors can also see as many as 300 fish of more than 100 different species in the same area. The mall's 50,000-gallon saltwater aquarium includes stingrays, tropical puffers, flounders and sharks, to name a few.

Some of these creatures have noteworthy life spans. "The Atlantis Aquarium animals are known for their longevity," said Crampton. "Some are over 13 years old."

This is definitely an attraction the entire family can enjoy.

"The beauty of our aquarium is that it appeals to all ages," Crampton said.

With all of these attractions inside malls, Las Vegas takes shopping to a new level – call it an adventure within an adventure.