



Even fast food gets neon treatment in Las Vegas.

Conspicuous Consumption

High-rolling on and off the Las Vegas strip / by Matthew Rudy



Any idiot can get comped in Las Vegas. To get a free \$1,000-a-night suite, dinner at Joel Robuchon or a foursome on Shadow Creek (or anywhere else, if you know what I mean), all you have to do is be willing to lose \$10,000 at the tables.

But even if you don't have that kind of bank—or you can't stomach that kind of risk—you can still do Vegas *a la carte*.

My mission was to drive (and play golf) like a superhero for three days in Las Vegas, but without a degenerate

gambler's line of credit at one of the Strip casinos.

While it'd be more than a little lame to rent an exotic car for a trip to, say, Disney, it somehow makes perfect sense in Las Vegas—the place where a Chevy Malibu just won't do. Dream Car Rentals has locations on both ends of Las Vegas Boulevard, and you can roll in classics ranging from a Lamborghini Gallardo to a 1968 Pontiac GTO, for five hours or by the day.

At \$1,875, 24 hours with

the Gallardo costs more than mediocre breast implants, so we picked a Dodge Viper SRT/10 convertible—which was just the right combination of price and ostentatiousness. For \$395 (and four pages of stipulations about not melting the tires or driving to the Grand Canyon), we got five hours of car candy for two.

Five hours might just be a perfect amount of time to have a Viper, too. No supercar is built for running errands, but Dodge made spending time in this one particularly penal. The Viper is wider than a Toyota



REGISTRATION

STATE: Nevada

MILES: 204

TOTAL COST OF FUEL: \$58

Viper Rental: \$395/5 hours

Round at Shadow Creek Golf Club (above): \$500/5 hours



Camry, but the transmission tunnel between the seats not only takes up half the room in the cabin, but heats up enough to boil your leg in stop-and-go-traffic. And fuel economy? Push the go pedal and you're sending somebody in Saudi Arabia to graduate school.

But it doesn't matter if the radio knobs look like they were made by Fisher Price when you get hoots of approval virtually everywhere—even the drive-thru at In-N-Out Burger. A Viper convertible has a medieval kind of sex appeal that's

pitch perfect for The Strip—all unsubtle red flash and coarse rumble. We even got a thumbs up from Vegas bicycle cop, who has to have seen everything.

After a sweaty afternoon in the Viper, we traded the hot wheels back in for the rental car and its functional trunk and headed north, where most of the great golf is.

As much as Las Vegas is about separating you from your money, Shadow Creek—Tom Fazio's blank-check Pacific-Northwest-meets-the-desert masterpiece in North Vegas—makes it hard to spend it. Granted, a \$500 green fee is just crazy talk for most people, but the folks who run the MGM Mirage properties (MGM Grand, Mirage and Bellagio, among others) won't just let you give your credit card number for a round at their place.

Staying at one of the properties is a prerequisite, and a membership in one of the casinos' players clubs is strongly advised. But if it's a weekday (and you have extra special phone manners), they'll let you spend \$2,000 for a foursome—and even throw in

a limo ride to the course.

I'd like to say it was worth it, but for the same money, you could drive 70 miles up the road to Mesquite, play your golf there, and have enough left over to hire an LPGA player to come play with you in your member-guest.

Wolf Creek gets all the press when it comes to Mesquite golf, and it is positively astonishing to see. The crazy quilt of desert rock outcroppings, bleached white bunkers and radical elevation

DODGE VIPER SRT/10

PRICE: \$495 a day, 100 miles included (dreamcarrentals.com)

SEATS/MPG Two/13.5

TRUNK SPACE Ha. Right.

ENGINE 510-hp, 8.3-liter V-10

THE GOOD Whatever kind of attention you want, you'll get.

THE BAD Rattles your kidneys like a stagecoach; stone age plastic interior.

the big difference: I'll take 85 percent of the blow-you-away backdrop (and 45 percent of the green fee) in exchange for risk-reward holes seemingly

A Viper has sex appeal that's pitch perfect for The Strip—all unsubtle red flash and coarse rumble

changes from tee to fairway make it look—and play—like an M.C. Escher drawing. They list the course rating at 75.6, but it might as well say "stupid hard." The best score in our group was a 92, by a club pro who had shot 68 the day before—at Falcon Ridge, a course we all liked better.

Falcon Ridge is less than four miles from Wolf Creek, and it shares the same desert canyon DNA. But playability is

created by the golf wagering gods anyway. My buddy went from \$20 up to \$60 down over the space of one failed attempt to carry a rock face from the tee on the 382-yard 10th. We made him play the next three holes with a pink ball.

Luckily for him he had testosterone left over from the Viper ride.



TEE TIMES

1 SHADOW CREEK G.C. (★★★★½), Las Vegas, 7,239 yards, \$500, shadowcreek.com, 702-399-7111.

2 WOLF CREEK G.C. (★★★★½), Mesquite, 7,073 yds, \$250, golfwolfcreek.com, 702-346-1670.

3 FALCON RIDGE G.C.S.E. (not yet rated), Mesquite, 6,550 yds, \$115, golfalcon.com, 702-346-6363.

Torrey's South
Course has
beautiful views
of the Pacific.



GOLF COURSES HERE

1 PLANTATION (★★★★½), 6,549 yards, Course Rating 71.4, Slope 130.

2 RETREAT (NR), 6,760 yards, 72.2, 131.

3 SEASIDE (★★★★½), 6,550 yards, 71.1, 126.

✓ Torrey Pines is a 36-hole public facility, with preferred tee times (and green fees) for San Diego County residents. Visitors can reserve tee times up to 90 days in advance at 877-581-7171. The green fee for the South Course, where the U.S. Open will be played in June, is \$145.

✓ Full-week badges for the U.S. Open are selling for \$480 and up