

Borgata

Las Vegas Comes to Atlantic City

By Melissa Wolcott and Al Martino

In a word? Spectacular. That's how to describe the new \$1.1 billion Borgata Hotel/Casino in Atlantic City. From the moment you step through the tall glass doors and encounter the first magnificent chandelier (of thirteen located throughout the property) by the master glass artist Dale Chihuly, you begin to see where the money went in creating Atlantic City's first new resort in thirteen years.

The 43 story Borgata is now the largest hotel and tallest building in New Jersey, with 2,002 guest rooms and suites. With eleven restaurants, retail shops, and a first class spa, the resort rivals those found in Las Vegas. Indeed, where Atlantic City tends to be a "day-trip" for a lot of people, the Borgata makes it a get-away destination.

Designed in a classic Italian style, the building is sleek, modern, and well planned. There is a private glass lobby for guests of the hotel before you reach the guest room elevators, which has a guard at the door. The area is filled with comfortable chairs and even an amenity bar, so guests can just pop down from their room to purchase necessities without having to go out into the resort.

Our 460 ft. classic (standard) guest room had a fabulous view of the Marina through floor-to-ceiling windows, high-speed internet access, three telephones, an armoire with a refrigerator, an incredibly comfortable king bed, and a shower large enough for two in a Grecian marble bathroom.



Melissa Wolcott



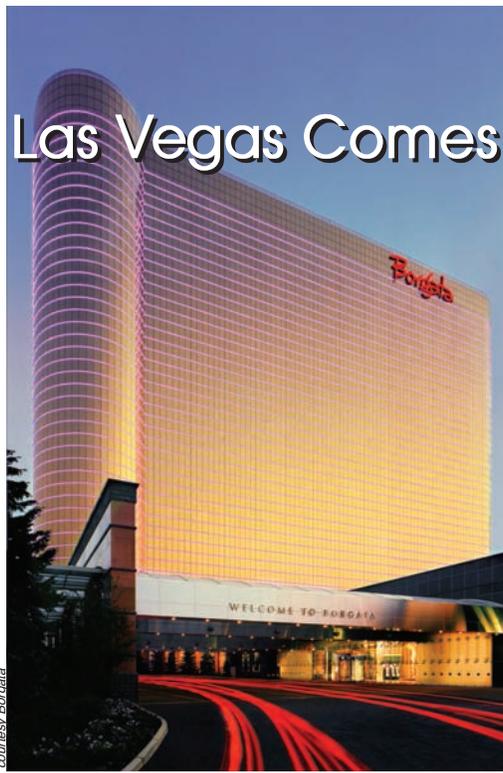
Melissa Wolcott

We toured, but unfortunately, did not have time to experience, the 50,000 sq. ft. Spa Toccare, with 22 treatment rooms, fitness facility, and a full-service hair salon. The indoor/outdoor garden pool complex looked very inviting.

The Borgata is business friendly, and has a complete business center on property

open 24 hours a day, and available to guests at no extra charge.

We also did not have time to sample all eleven restaurants, but the ones we did try were memorable. The Borgata Buffet is not your typical warmed-over steam-table affair. Here the serving dishes are smaller and changed often so the food is always freshly prepared. The cuisine choices are that of a fine restaurant.



courtesy Borgata

vacancy. The tuxedoed wait staff attends to your every need. Our first clue that we were in for an amazing dining experience came

with the magnificent presentation of the shrimp cocktail. No one in our party had ever seen shrimp that large, with one pound of shrimp equaling 5 succulent pieces! The Crab Meat Cocktail was equally impressive

with 8-10 inch whole knuckle, shell-free crab legs. The appetizers, as well as all the courses, were works of art. The Classic Caesar salads were as fresh as can be, and when the entrees arrived, we were all already full. Everything was HUGE. (Are we

in Texas?) The Filet Mignon was 18 oz., and the Prime Rib was 32 oz. The folks that ordered seafood as well as the meat-eaters all agreed this was truly one of the—if not THE—best meal we've ever had. We topped it off with their creamy NY cheesecake, and creme brulee which was cooked to perfection. Don't let the hamburger price throw you off, The Old Homestead's menu is priced comparably to other upscale restaurants, and you get a lot more food for your money.



Melissa Wolcott

And speaking of fine restaurants, the Old Homestead Steakhouse at the Borgata is one of the best dining experiences we have ever had—so much so, we ate there twice in two days, rather than try a different restaurant.

The Old Homestead has been a NY City institution since 1868. This is owners Greg and Marc Sherry's first foray out of the city into a second location. You may remember this restaurant in the news recently for having the most expensive hamburger in the country at \$40. How can a hamburger cost so much you ask? Because it's Kobe beef, it weighs 20 oz., and could feed a small country.

The restaurant has a combination of old-world and modern decor, warm lighting, and half walls cleverly laid out for pri-

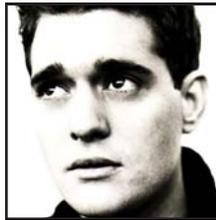


courtesy Borgata

The Borgata bars were all jumping when we were there, with the Gypsy Bar being a particular favorite. The Gypsy offers over 60 types of tequila, 15 beer brands, and live entertainment.

Since we were at the Borgata on opening night, we were treated to the music of Michael Buble in The Music Box,

Borgata's 2,400 seat theater. Michael is the current darling of the cabaret set. His sound evokes the music of 40's and 50's standards by such favorites as Frank Sinatra, Bobby Darin and Ella Fitzgerald. The Music Box will be featuring varied acts from Steely Dan to Def Leppard to Dennis Miller.



Michael Buble

And now to gaming. The Borgata has a 125,000 sq. ft. casino with 3,650 slot machines and 145 table games. All the slot machines are the new Rapid Pay system (ticket-in/ticket-out)

which is so much better than hauling around buckets of coins. They even have two \$1,000 machines—yes, that's \$1,000 per pull! The payout, should you win on one of those, is a \$1 million jackpot. And yes, there were people playing it. Unlike most of the other Atlantic City casinos, the Borgata said it will always have a few \$5 tables open. It was always hard to find a table in A.C. that was under \$15. The sportsbook room

is one of the most comfortable we've ever seen. There are 30 plasma TV screens for individual viewing and betting.

Joining the Player's Club is always a good idea at any casino, as you will start to earn comps right away, which can be used toward your next visit. The Borgata is tied in with other properties in the country, so Borgata comps can be used at any of the MGM Mirage properties, as well as Sam's Town, Main Street Station, and the Stardust in Las Vegas.

While staying at the Borgata, we decided to tool around town and see what else is new in Atlantic City. We took the Great American Trolley's "Splash Of Atlantic City" tour, which takes you all over town to the many points of interest. The last time we were in A.C. was about 15 years ago. Since the advent of casinos (around 1977) not too much renovation had been done off the boardwalk, with the casino/hotels concentrating only on their own properties. Now you can see a lot of renovation going on for the city itself—especially around the entrance to the city. New shopping and entertainment areas are going up, casinos are refurbishing to compete with the Borgata (which has set a new standard for them.) The Showboat added a 544 room tower in May, and The Tropicana is now involved in a \$280 million renovation. Part of this city rejuvenation comes from a relatively new tax on the casinos that specifically goes into city improvement.

Great American Trolley



Of course, Atlantic City is most famous for the Miss America Pageant, which has moved from its original place on the Boardwalk to the Sheraton Convention Center Hotel. It started in 1921, with a 14 year old girl as winner of a trophy. Our current

Miss America, Erika Harold, is 23 and earns \$300,000 a year. You've come a long way baby.

The famous Boardwalk was built in 1870, and is 5 miles long, with competing salt water taffy shops dotting the way. We found out that salt water taffy really has nothing to do with salt water in the recipe. In 1883, due to a storm, salt water got into a boardwalk store that made taffy, and even though the water never actually got into the ingredients, the name stuck. The equally famous Steel Pier is still on the Boardwalk, but is not the entertainment mecca it once was (when Benny Goodman, Frank Sinatra and Guy Lombardo held court). It is now an amusement park with kiddie rides and fast food.

Another new thing on the beach is the law allowing alcohol on the beach for the first time in its long history. This is probably not going to be a good thing.

We passed by White House Subs—a long standing tradition, and saw they were still bustling with business. Casino headliners, high rollers, big losers... everyone heads to White House Subs at least once every visit. Cheesesteak with fried onions—none better!



Miss America 2003, Erika Harold.

We rode over to Historic Gardner's Basin, home to an aquarium, restaurants, boat cruises and fishing charters. The Original Steel Pier Diving Bell and Tempo II, the Speedboat owned by Guy Lombardo are there, as well as the "Analematic Sundial", where visitors can tell true solar time. You stand on or near the current month and face the direction of your shadow. The number on which your shadow

The Borgata from Gardner's Basin.



Melissa Wolcott

falls represents true solar time. Since it was cloudy that day, we couldn't tell what time it was—had to use a watch.

Consider Atlantic City the next time you want to go on a gaming getaway. We flew non-stop roundtrip from Tampa via Spirit Airlines, and from there it's just a 20 minute ride to the Borgata. We will definitely be back, and maybe next time we will tackle that \$40 hamburger.

If You Go...

The Borgata - 1 Borgata Way, Atlantic City, NJ 08401; 1-866-MY BORGATA; www.theborgata.com
Great American Trolley Company - 609-884-0450; www.gatrolley.com
Historic Gardner's Basin - 609-348-2880; www.gardnersbasin.com
Miss America Pageant - www.missamerica.org
Spirit Airlines - www.spiritair.com
Atlantic City Convention/Visitors Bureau - www.atlanticcitynj.com/