

## San Diego, CA to Las Vegas, NV – the long way

Our 5-day roadtrip itinerary – Mr & Mrs Romance

**The drive from San Diego to Las Vegas is probably the best road trip we've ever done.** From desert roads to mountain passes, the Colorado River to the San Andreas Fault, and Route 66 to America's best apple pie... It's the American dream at 70 miles an hour!

Everything you've seen in the movies – the road stops, the winding blacktop, that flying yellow line flying down the middle of the road – it's all true.

To make it as easy as possible for you to follow the same trip as us, here are the basic details of each day of our trip. For more details, [this is our full story](#). If you've printed this up, search for 'San Diego to Vegas' on our site. 😊

## San Diego, California to Las Vegas, Nevada

Our 5-day roadtrip itinerary

### Day 1-2: San Diego – Julian – Palm Springs

*Driving time: 3h 15m*

1. Julian is on the 79 going north from San Diego. There are many places to visit in this area, but Julian does the best pie!
2. Continue on the 79 to Aguanda.
3. Take 371 to its end.
4. Turn right on 74, which gets pretty windy, and follow it to the end.
5. Turn left on the 111 until you hit Palm Springs.

#### **Accommodation:**

Ace Hotel, Palm Springs

The Saguaro, Palm Springs

The Parker, Palm Springs if you're looking for something more up-market.

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## Notes:

- From San Diego it's a little over an hour to the little town of Julian – home of award winning pies and some very cute houses! Our pie recommendation: the Julian Pie Company.
- The road heading out of Julian into the desert is a good one, crossing the Santa Rosa – San Jacinto Mountains, and about half an hour out of Palm Springs, there's some good hairpin driving.
- We stayed 2 nights in Palm Springs as it rained like mad our first day! It's an odd town but with some amazing houses and a surprisingly friendly, village feel.

## Day 3: Palm Springs – Joshua Tree National Park – Twentynine Palms

*Driving time: 1h direct, infinitely longer via Joshua Tree National Park*

1. Drive in via the West Entrance Station (cost to enter: \$15)
2. Drive the North West Loop with detour down to Keys View to see the San Andreas Fault Line.
3. Exit park on the northern border of Joshua Tree to Twentynine Palms.

## Accommodation:

Best Western Gardens on the edge of town.

Twentynine Palms Inn on the eastern end of town on Inn Avenue – highly recommended and wish we'd stayed here instead.

Also dinner here is excellent.

## Notes:

- We didn't leave much time to explore Joshua Tree so we took the 62 to Alta Olma Drive and the Joshua Tree Visitors' Center. With more time, you can explore much further into the park.
- Other dinner suggestions in Twentynine Palms are: Bistro Twenty-Nine, Edchada's Mexican, The Rib Co, Rocky's New York Pizza and Red Lotus Thai and Vietnamese Restaurant.

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## **Day 4: Twentynine Palms, CA – Route 66 – Amboy, CA – Needles, CA – Oatman, AZ – Bullhead City, AZ – Laughlin, NV**

*Driving time: 2h 30m direct to Laughlin. Via above locations, it's a half-day drive.*

1. Take Amboy Road north from Twentynine Palms to Route 66 (aka the National Trails Highway)
2. West on 66 is the Amboy Crater – an extinct volcano you can climb.
3. East on Route 66 to Amboy township, and Roy's Motel and Café – a classic Route 66 photo op.
4. Take Route 66 as far east as you can – it's not a maintained road any more, so many parts of the road are impassable or closed.
5. At Needles, cross into Arizona over the Colorado River and refuel (it's much cheaper than in California!)
6. Head north on the 95, then turn right on the 153 to historic Oatman.
7. From Oatman, find Route 66 again and head back south. 66 is now called Route 10 here, but it's the best part of 66 going through mountains.
8. Go back past Needles on the 40 and drive straight along the tri-state border to Bullhead City – there are plenty of dinner options here.
9. Cross the river to Laughlin, NV. This is a casino town and the accommodation is much cheaper than in Bullhead.

### **Accommodation:**

Stay in a casino for a great hotel rate. We stayed at the Aquarius Casino Resort and paid the extra \$10 for a great river-view room.

### **Notes:**

- Oatman used to be a mining town and produced a lot of gold until the mid-1930s. At its height 10,000 people lived here. Now it's all but a ghost town, but is popular with tourists... and feral donkeys from the old mines.
- Going north through Oatman on Route 66 is apparently even better than heading south, with sharp hairpins and steep elevations. But this would've taken us too far east. For more information on Route 66 from Santa Monica Pier all the way to Chicago, Illinois, check out [RoadTripUSA.com](http://RoadTripUSA.com)
- Laughlin is kind of Vegas 25 years ago – but not in a good way. The casinos are smoky and dingy, but the hotels inside are pretty good.
- In Laughlin, make sure you check out the Colorado Belle Casino – it's in the shape of a giant paddle steamer – and the Pioneer Hotel and Gambling Hall for its sheer cheesiness. The Golden Nugget is worth looking at too.

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## Day 5: Laughlin – Las Vegas

Driving time: 1h 30m

The 95, the 582 then the 592 lead you through the Mojave Desert straight to the famous Las Vegas Strip where your next adventure begins!

### Accommodation:

We stayed at the Delano – a fantastic hotel that'll make your time in Vegas so much more memorable. Here's [our full review of the Delano](#) and also its beautiful restaurant, [The miX](#).

### Notes:

- The drive from Laughlin to Vegas is straight forward enough, but its here you'll see some classic Nevada desert views.
- For more on what we did and where we stayed in Vegas, search 'Las Vegas' on the blog or [click here!](#)

Here's a map of where we went – the fully interactive version is on the blog post. [Click here and it'll take you to the post.](#)

