



ALCATRAZ EAST

★★★ CRIME MUSEUM ★★★

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“The House Always Wins”: Alcatraz East Crime Museum Unveils New Temporary Exhibit on the Mob’s Role in Building Las Vegas

Alcatraz East Crime Museum is putting the mob’s influence on “Sin City” in the spotlight

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. (March 9, 2026)– Those who love Las Vegas will not want to miss the new temporary exhibit opening at the Alcatraz East Crime Museum. The exhibit titled “The House Always Wins: How the Mob Built Vegas,” opens on March 13, 2026, and will run through July 3, 2026. The display will feature some authentic artifacts and commemorate the 95th anniversary of Nevada’s legalization of gambling, which opened the door to the oasis in the desert that so many visit today.

"Millions of people visit Vegas each year and have likely left a few dollars behind in the slots or on the tables," said Ally Pennington, artifacts and programs manager at Alcatraz East Crime Museum. "What some people may not know is the role the mob had in building the Vegas we know today."

On March 19, 1931, the state of Nevada legalized gambling in an attempt to lift the state out of the Great Depression. While gambling became legal that day, it had been a common practice in the area for years before that. Once it was legal, mobsters from other states saw it as an investment opportunity and began funding some of the casinos. They also moved the gambling houses from all downtown to what became known as the strip, as they built luxurious hotels and, later, mega resorts. They also offered venues that hosted some headliners we still talk about today, including the Rat Pack and Liberace.

The new temporary exhibit will feature information and artifacts related to Nevada’s legalization of gambling. The artifacts include an ashtray from the El Rancho Casino, a bowtie once owned by mobster Meyer Lansky, and a clock from gangster Allen Smiley. Guests will learn that, long before the city became the mega-adult playground it is today, it was a small desert stop for travelers heading west. They will also learn about how a 20th-century land auction planted the seeds of “Sin City.”

"You won't want to miss the temporary exhibit," Pennington said. "Whether you have been to Vegas or not, you can't help but be fascinated with its rich history and mob ties."

According to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, over 41 million people visited the city in 2024. Nearly 6 million visitors attended conventions. The city has over 150,000 hotel rooms, with an average 80% occupancy rate. During 2024, commercial casino-resorts on the Las Vegas strip reported a total gaming revenue of \$8.62 billion, according to the American Gaming Association.

The museum features over 100 exhibits and interactives, as well as four temporary exhibit spaces, showcasing many famous items, including Al Capone's rosary, Ted Bundy's dental molds, and Charles Manson's acoustic guitar. This top museum is open daily at 10 am. The last tickets are sold 60 minutes before closing. These interactive experiences are available for an additional fee for birthday parties, school groups, scouts, team building, or other [special events](#). To get a discounted rate for groups of 15 or more, complete the [online form](#) and allow up to 72 hours for confirmation. For more information about tickets, discounts, [temporary exhibits](#), and all the museum has to offer, visit the website: <https://www.alcatrazeast.com>.

Alcatraz East Crime Museum has updated its board of crime experts, which includes Derwin Bradley, a retired master police officer; James R. Knight, a crime writer; Robin Maynard, a certified crime scene investigator in Florida; Derek Newport, a law enforcement veteran who worked for the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation for 20 years; and Judge Belvin Perry, Jr., who presided over the notorious case against Casey Anthony, among others.

About Alcatraz East

Alcatraz East is the most arresting crime museum in the United States. Guests of all ages can embark on a unique journey through the history of American crime, crime-solving, and the justice system. Through interactive exhibits and original artifacts, Alcatraz East is an entertaining and educational experience for all ages - so much fun it's a crime! This family attraction is at The Island's entrance, 2757 Parkway, Pigeon Forge, TN. The last ticket is sold 60 minutes before closing. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.alcatrazeast.com.

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Source:

American Gaming Revenue. *Nevada*. February 2025.

https://www.americangaming.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Nevada_Overview.pdf

Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. *Las Vegas Historic Tourism Statistics*.

https://res.cloudinary.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1740683821/clients/lasvegas/Las_Vegas_Historical_1970_to_2024_143e51ff-0c5d-4878-a682-9a85c2925c59.pdf