

history of the international hotel in las vegas

history of the international hotel in las vegas offers a fascinating glimpse into one of the most iconic landmarks on the Las Vegas Strip. Originally opened in the late 1960s, the International Hotel played a pivotal role in shaping the entertainment and hospitality landscape of Las Vegas. It witnessed significant transformations, hosted legendary performers, and set new standards in luxury and service during its prime. This article explores the origins, development, cultural impact, and eventual evolution of the International Hotel. The rich history of this establishment reflects broader trends in Las Vegas' growth as a premier destination for tourists and entertainment seekers. Delving into this history reveals the hotel's importance in Las Vegas' story and its legacy in the world of hospitality.

- Origins and Construction of the International Hotel
- Opening and Early Years
- Entertainment and Cultural Impact
- Ownership Changes and Renovations
- Legacy and Transformation into Westgate Las Vegas

Origins and Construction of the International Hotel

The history of the International Hotel in Las Vegas began with its ambitious construction project in the mid-1960s. At the time, Las Vegas was rapidly expanding as a resort city, and developers sought to create a hotel that would surpass existing standards in size and luxury. The International Hotel was conceived as a massive resort that would cater to the growing influx of tourists and offer unparalleled amenities. The project was spearheaded by prominent businessmen aiming to establish the largest hotel in the world upon its completion.

Planning and Development

The International Hotel was planned to be a 30-story, 1,500-room property, aiming to be the largest hotel in the world at that time. The developers selected a prime location on the north end of the Las Vegas Strip, an area poised for future growth. Construction commenced in 1967, involving thousands of workers and cutting-edge building techniques. The design incorporated a modern architectural style with expansive casino floors, multiple restaurants, and entertainment venues designed to attract a diverse clientele.

Construction Challenges

Despite the ambitious scale, the construction of the International Hotel faced several challenges, including logistical difficulties and budget constraints. Large-scale construction in Las Vegas during the 1960s was complex due to the desert environment and the necessity for advanced infrastructure. However, the commitment to creating a landmark property ensured that the project was completed on schedule, with the hotel opening its doors in 1969.

Opening and Early Years

The International Hotel officially opened in 1969, marking a significant milestone in Las Vegas history. At the time, it was the largest hotel in the world, boasting over 1,500 rooms. Its opening was a grand event, attracting media attention and visitors eager to experience the newest luxury resort on the Strip.

Grand Opening Event

The grand opening was celebrated with a star-studded event featuring top entertainers and lavish ceremonies. The hotel's casino and entertainment offerings were highlights, immediately positioning the International Hotel as a premier destination. Its modern amenities and luxurious accommodations set new standards for guest experiences in Las Vegas.

Early Success and Popularity

During its early years, the International Hotel rapidly gained popularity among tourists and entertainers alike. Its proximity to other major resorts and the quality of its facilities helped it compete effectively in the growing Las Vegas market. The hotel attracted high rollers and celebrities while offering a range of entertainment options to guests, including top-tier shows and dining experiences.

Entertainment and Cultural Impact

The history of the International Hotel in Las Vegas is closely tied to its role as a premier entertainment venue. The hotel became famous for hosting legendary performers and groundbreaking shows that contributed to the cultural fabric of Las Vegas.

Elvis Presley Residency

One of the most notable aspects of the International Hotel's history was the residency of Elvis Presley. In 1969, Elvis began a series of sold-out performances that drew unprecedented crowds. His engagement at the International Hotel is often credited with revitalizing his career and establishing the concept of long-term Las Vegas residencies for major artists. These performances were a major draw for the hotel and significantly boosted its profile worldwide.

Other Legendary Performers

Beyond Elvis, the International Hotel hosted a wide array of renowned entertainers, including Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand, and Sammy Davis Jr. The hotel's theaters were state-of-the-art, allowing for elaborate productions that attracted audiences from across the country. This emphasis on high-caliber entertainment helped solidify the International Hotel's reputation as a cultural landmark on the Strip.

Impact on Las Vegas Entertainment Industry

The success of the International Hotel's entertainment offerings influenced how other Las Vegas resorts approached live performances. The hotel's model of securing exclusive residencies and investing in quality production raised the bar for entertainment in the city. This legacy continues to shape Las Vegas as the entertainment capital of the world.

Ownership Changes and Renovations

Throughout its history, the International Hotel underwent several ownership changes and renovations, reflecting shifts in the Las Vegas hospitality industry and adapting to evolving market demands.

Initial Ownership and Management

The hotel was initially owned and managed by a consortium of investors focused on establishing a strong presence in the Las Vegas market. Early management emphasized luxury and entertainment, which helped the hotel achieve profitability and prominence quickly.

Transition to Hilton Ownership

By the late 1970s, the International Hotel was acquired by Hilton Hotels Corporation. This transition marked a new era for the property, as Hilton invested in extensive renovations and rebranding efforts to align the hotel with its global standards. The affiliation with Hilton helped attract a broader clientele and integrate the hotel into an international network of luxury resorts.

Renovation Highlights

Several key renovations occurred under Hilton's ownership, including:

- Expansion of casino and gaming areas
- Modernization of guest rooms and suites
- Upgrades to dining facilities and entertainment venues

- Enhanced convention and meeting spaces

These improvements ensured that the hotel remained competitive amid the rapid development of newer resorts on the Strip.

Legacy and Transformation into Westgate Las Vegas

The history of the International Hotel in Las Vegas culminates in its transformation into what is now known as the Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino. This change reflects the hotel's ability to evolve with the times while preserving its foundational legacy.

Rebranding and Modern Identity

In the 1990s, the hotel was renamed the Las Vegas Hilton and later became the Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino. The rebranding efforts aimed to modernize the property's image and appeal to contemporary travelers. The Westgate continues to operate as a full-service resort, maintaining many elements of the original International Hotel's grandeur.

Preservation of Historical Significance

While the name and ownership have changed, the legacy of the International Hotel remains integral to the identity of the Westgate property. The site's historical significance is recognized by industry experts and fans of Las Vegas history alike. It stands as a testament to the transformative power of entertainment and hospitality in the city.

Current Role in Las Vegas

Today, the Westgate Las Vegas continues to serve as a key player on the Strip, offering gaming, accommodations, and entertainment. Its roots as the International Hotel provide a rich backdrop that enhances its appeal to visitors interested in the heritage of Las Vegas. The property remains a symbol of innovation and prestige in the competitive resort market.

Frequently Asked Questions

When was the International Hotel in Las Vegas originally opened?

The International Hotel in Las Vegas originally opened in 1969.

Who was the original owner of the International Hotel?

The International Hotel was originally owned by Kirk Kerkorian.

What was significant about the International Hotel's size when it opened?

At the time of its opening, the International Hotel was the largest hotel in the world, boasting over 1,500 rooms.

Which famous entertainers performed at the International Hotel during its early years?

Elvis Presley famously performed at the International Hotel during its early years, marking a major highlight in the hotel's history.

What is the International Hotel now known as?

The International Hotel was renamed the Las Vegas Hilton, and later became the Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino.

How did the International Hotel impact Las Vegas tourism in the 1970s?

The International Hotel helped elevate Las Vegas tourism in the 1970s by attracting big-name entertainers and offering luxury accommodations, setting new standards for the hospitality industry in the city.

What architectural features distinguished the International Hotel when it was built?

The International Hotel featured a modernist architectural style with a towering 30-story structure and a large showroom, which were innovative for Las Vegas hotels at the time.

Additional Resources

1. The Rise and Fall of the International Hotel: Las Vegas' Landmark Legacy

This book chronicles the history of the International Hotel from its grand opening in 1969 to its eventual transformation. It explores the hotel's impact on the Las Vegas skyline and its role in shaping the city's hospitality industry. Featuring rare photographs and firsthand accounts, the narrative captures the glamour and challenges faced by this iconic resort.

2. International Hotel Las Vegas: The Birth of a Casino Giant

Delving into the origins of the International Hotel, this title highlights the visionaries behind its creation and the innovative design that set new standards in Las Vegas. The book examines how the hotel quickly became one of the largest and most luxurious resorts of its time. It also discusses the

celebrity performances that made it a premier entertainment destination.

3. Legends of the International Hotel: Stars, Scandals, and Showbiz

Focusing on the entertainment history of the International Hotel, this book details the legendary acts that graced its stages, including Elvis Presley's famous residency. It uncovers behind-the-scenes stories of glamour, scandals, and the evolving Vegas entertainment scene. Readers gain insight into how the hotel helped define the city's reputation as the entertainment capital.

4. From International Hotel to Las Vegas Hilton: A Transformation Story

This book traces the transition of the International Hotel into the Las Vegas Hilton, exploring the changes in ownership, branding, and strategy. It provides an in-depth look at how the resort adapted to Las Vegas' shifting market demands over the decades. The narrative also highlights key renovations and expansions that kept the property competitive.

5. The Architecture and Design of the International Hotel

An architectural study of the International Hotel, this book showcases the innovative design elements that distinguished the property. It examines the work of the architects and designers who contributed to the hotel's unique aesthetic and functionality. The book includes illustrations, blueprints, and commentary on the influence of the hotel's style on future Vegas resorts.

6. Casino Culture and the International Hotel Experience

Exploring the casino operations and guest experience at the International Hotel, this title offers insights into the gaming culture of Las Vegas during the hotel's heyday. It discusses the strategies used to attract high rollers and casual visitors alike. The book also touches on the social dynamics and customer service practices that defined the hotel's reputation.

7. International Hotel Memories: Stories from Employees and Guests

A collection of oral histories and personal anecdotes, this book captures the human side of the International Hotel. Employees, performers, and guests share their experiences, providing a rich tapestry of life inside one of Las Vegas' most famous resorts. The narratives reveal the hotel's impact on individuals and the broader community.

8. The Economic Impact of the International Hotel on Las Vegas

This book analyzes the economic significance of the International Hotel in the development of Las Vegas as a major tourist destination. It covers job creation, tourism growth, and the hotel's role in attracting investment to the city. The study also considers the broader implications of large resorts on the local economy.

9. The International Hotel and the Evolution of Las Vegas Entertainment

Focusing on the hotel's place within the broader entertainment evolution of Las Vegas, this book explores how the International Hotel influenced show production, celebrity culture, and nightlife. It highlights pivotal moments and performances that mirrored the changing tastes of audiences. The book connects the hotel's legacy to contemporary Vegas entertainment trends.

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