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# TRAVEL TALES

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE JEWISH TRAVELLER

By **MIKE COHEN**

**LAS VEGAS:** Would you believe that Las Vegas ([www.lasvegastourism.com](http://www.lasvegastourism.com)) is the fastest growing Jewish community in the United States? There are over 70,000 Jews and 19 synagogues and many Jewish organizations in the area, as well as Jewish delis and kosher restaurants. Many larger markets feature kosher fresh meats and kosher food sections. There are also two Las Vegas Jewish newspapers. Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman is Jewish. She succeeded her husband, Oscar. Thousands of Jews reportedly relocate to Las Vegas every year. There are many Jewish activities and social events that bind the Las Vegas Jewish community together. Last January, the 14th annual Las Vegas Jewish Film Festival took place, providing insight into Jewish identity, history, and culture, and promoting solidarity with Israel and the remembrance of the Holocaust.

**WHERE TO STAY:** Looking for a place to stay? We took the advice of prominent Montreal Jewish businessman Mitch Garber and chose Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino ([www.planethollywoodresort.com](http://www.planethollywoodresort.com)). Accommodations here are fit for the celebrity A-List, and perfect for Hollywood buffs. Every one of its rooms and suites features one-of-a-kind movie memorabilia set against a backdrop of stylish, mod-

ern luxury. If you're a hardcore Hollywood fan, the Panorama Suites will truly feel like heaven on earth. Measuring 1,255 square feet and offering a 180-degree view of the Strip, each Las Vegas room features its own Hollywood theme. Our featured actress was Demi Moore. The floor plan includes a master bedroom with a 36-inch plasma television and separate living area, a master bathroom with oversized soaking tub, a separate dining area with refrigerator and wet bar, and a 52-inch plasma television in the living area. An additional bedroom and bathroom with 500 square-feet can be

*(Please turn to page 21)*

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**Jew vs Jew  
In Rockland County**

Rockland County, about 30 miles north of midtown Manhattan, has had a rough few years. It's been named New York's most fiscally stressed community and home values are down some 18 per cent.

Jews make up about one-third of the county's population of 320,000 but it's the rapidly growing Hasidic community that is causing friction, not only between the Orthodox and their non-Jewish neighbours but with Reform and Conservative Jews as well. The Hasidic have made life so uncomfortable for the non-Orthodox that many have moved away. Conservative and Reform synagogue membership is dwindling and the one non-Orthodox Jewish day school has seen its enrolment plummet.

But the Hasidic antics are not just causing problems for Jews. The Orthodox have become a powerful political machine and the struggle over the funding decisions of East Ramapo Central School

District has brought matters to a head.

The ultra-Orthodox control the majority of seats on the board. Somehow the local yeshivas are prospering while elementary schools don't have budgets for assistant principals, art classes, social workers or after school sports. And the community, Jew and Gentile, has had enough. While Reform and Conservative Jews, who for years stayed silent, may not support comments describing the Orthodox as "locust swarms of non tax paying looters", they do believe that the "financial abuse of Rockland by the Hasidic-Orthodox community", must stop.

Emboldened Reform and Conservative Jews have also decided that the time has come to stop apologizing for all the "bad stuff" people read about Rockland County. The local Jewish Federation, along with Reform and Conservative leaders, has launched a campaign to stop the exodus from Rockland and to convince Jews living elsewhere that their county is really "a beautiful place to live."

**TRAVEL TALES**

*(Continued from page 8)*

added to any Panorama Suite. We really appreciated the individual privacy this arrangement facilitated. There were three, count them "three," bathrooms. You can connect two WiFi devices at no charge. The connectivity is fast and reliable.

**BOOKING A SHOW:**  
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WHERE TO DINE:  
Having previously experienced TAO Restaurant in New York City, our party had only one dining spot in mind for Las Vegas and that was the 40,000 square foot, \$20 million design-driven dining and entertainment complex TAO at The Venetian-Resort-Hotel Casino ([www.taolasvegas.com](http://www.taolasvegas.com)). TAO opened in New York City in 2000 and has retained its status as a hot spot, attracting celebrities and sports figures and catapulting the restaurant and lounge to iconic status. TAO Las Vegas, which debuted in 2005, is a multi-faceted and multi-story "Asian City" housing a restaurant, banquet facilities, ultra-lounge, nightclub and a seasonal beach. The restaurant features a twenty-foot Buddha that "floats" peacefully above an infinity pool complete with Japanese Koi. Corporate Executive Chef Ralph Scamardella showcases a menu incorporating culinary components from China, Japan and Thailand, along with a full sushi bar and perfectly paired cocktails to complement the authentic Asian cuisine. A number of the co-owners of TAO are Jewish: Richard Wolf, Noah Tepperberg, Jason Strauss and Paul Goldstein. For reservations readers can call 702-388-8588.

*Mike Cohen's email address is [info@mikecohen.ca](mailto:info@mikecohen.ca). Follow his travels at [www.sandboxworld.com/travel](http://www.sandboxworld.com/travel) and on Twitter @mikecohencsl*

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