

TOP 5

DRIVING-DISTANCE
HIKES

Believe it or not, there are actually many great hiking trails, ranging from wheelchair-accessible to full-day strenuous, all within a short drive of Las Vegas. It was difficult to narrow it down to only 5! (All mileage is round trip) - Kinesiology Ph.D. candidate Kristyne Wiegand

1. For the most out-of-this-world scenery: Fire Wave at Valley of Fire State Park



Photo: <http://www.yourhikeguide.com/valley-fire-state-park/>

This is an easy 1.25-mile hike deep in Valley of Fire that allows you to walk on a surreal striped sandstone formation. It's not really visible from the road or trailhead, so when you finally stumble onto it, it's breathtaking. Bonus: Valley of Fire State Park is somewhat of a hidden gem—not only is it like driving through Mars, but there are tons of smaller hikes throughout the park. The park is about 50 minutes northeast of Las Vegas—to stretch it out to a longer trip, try the Hoover Dam to Valley of Fire drive for a full day of fantastic views. Note: as this is a state park, there is an entrance fee.

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2. For great views of the city: Lone Mountain in northwest Las Vegas

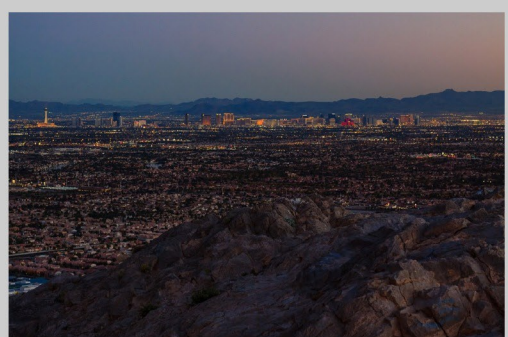


Photo: <http://www.mineral2.com/travel/thanksgiving-parts-ii-iii/>

This is a moderately-strenuous 2.2-mile hike that is all incline. It's not a trail marked with any signage, but instead consists of a well-worn wash path. You can either park at Lone Mountain Regional Park and loop around the base of the mountain to the trailhead on the northwest side, or drive up Alexander Road to Vegas Vista Trail Road and park there. There is a path that ascends the mountain from the southwest side, but it is a bit more difficult and less worn. This hike is great during the day, but even better at night—when you reach the top, you can view the whole city.

3. For enthusiasts: Wheeler Peak in Great Basin National Park



Photo: <http://www.naturalbornhikers.com/WheelerPeak/WheelerPeak.htm>

Great Basin National Park is a beautiful, sprawling, infrequently visited NP located in eastern Nevada near the Utah border, about 5.5 hours north of Las Vegas. Wheeler Peak is the second-highest peak in the state of Nevada, and the 8.6-mile hike to the summit is not well suited for novice hikers. Starting at 10,000 feet and climbing to over 13,000, this hike offers incredible views of the park and beyond. Depending on the time of year, you may encounter snow. In the summer months, thunderstorms frequently form, so it's advised you begin early in the morning so you don't get caught. Camping is available throughout the park, but staying at Wheeler Peak campground (which sits at 10,000 feet) is especially beautiful (make sure to stay up late enough to check out what is arguably the best view of the night sky in the US). Bonus: Check out Lehman Caves!

4. For a surprise ending: Fletcher Canyon at Mt. Charleston



Photo: <http://aroundthebendfriends2.blogspot.com/2011/05/fletcher-canyon-51611.html>

This is a moderate 4-mile hike that begins much like other hikes in the area, but keep going through the canyon to the narrows until you reach the water chute at the end. Water flows regularly through this part of the canyon and has worn down the rock to create a chute. This is an awesome area to explore, test out your climbing skills, or just sit on the rocks and enjoy a picnic. Note: many people turn around too early, so make sure to keep going through the canyon and narrows until you reach the chute at the end!

5. For the heart rate increase: Turtlehead Peak in Red Rock National Conservation Area



Photo: http://www.birdandhike.com/Hike/Red_Rocks/Turtlehead/_Turtlehead.htm

This is a strenuous 4.7-mile hike that climbs 2,000 feet over the first two miles and an additional 800 feet in the last 0.4 mile. Though the entire hike is not easy, the scramble to the summit will really test your fitness level. Through the hike, you are treated to great views of Red Rock. Note: there is an entrance fee to the park.