



Bryce and Zion Hiking Trip Notes
June 3 – 11, 2011

Loudean and I were going to Mt Rainier until the schedule interrupted her schooling so she chose this hiking trip instead. Soon we had Christy, Sofia and Marty coming with us and eventually we were joined by three more hikers through Timberline Adventures: Dwayne, daughter Caroline and Peter.

Was it a good trip? Here's from Sofia who 'Made It to The Top': "Angel's Landing made it a thrill of a lifetime." Those are Angel's Landing pictures as the header above. See Refrigerator Canyon first, then the switchbacks of Walters Wiggles, then some of the route up to the very top. It was only from about 8am to 1:30pm but it was intense.



Backing up to the start: We all joined up in Las Vegas where I'd spent a couple days before being picked up and driven first to Bryce for two nights then Zion for three nights.

Las Vegas

I won't repeat my Las Vegas adventures because they so mimicked my January trip that you can see at: http://libertyladies.weebly.com/uploads/3/4/8/4/3484697/boulder_city_nv_trip_notes_1-11.pdf I explored and renewed acquaintances from the Bellagio past the Wynn and Encore hotels the first day and the opposite end to Mandalay Bay the next day. My common sense told me to stay off my feet more but adrenalin kept me going with the only sit down being champagne in Encore and a dinner in Paris's French bistro.

Our basic itinerary:

Sunday – In Bryce hiking Rim Trail to Observation Point with a 200' elevation gain and about 1 ½ miles.

Monday – Still in Bryce for Queens Garden, Peek-a-boo loop and Wall Street with a 1800' elevation gain and about 7 ½ miles.

Tuesday – Bryce's Fairyland Loop with 1300' elevation gain and 8 miles. Then we drove about 3 hours to Zion.

Wednesday – In Zion for Emerald Pools and Riverwalk to the Narrows for 500' elevation gain and 6 miles.

Thursday – Zion's Observation Point overlooking the valley and Angels Landing for 2200' gain and 8 miles. This was our most difficult hike by miles and elevation.

Friday – Finishing up at Zion's Angels Landing with 1500' gain and 6 miles before driving back to Las Vegas. This was clearly our toughest and most technical hike/climb and absolutely the headline of the trip. T-shirts were purchased that said "I made it to the top" even though we liked better the



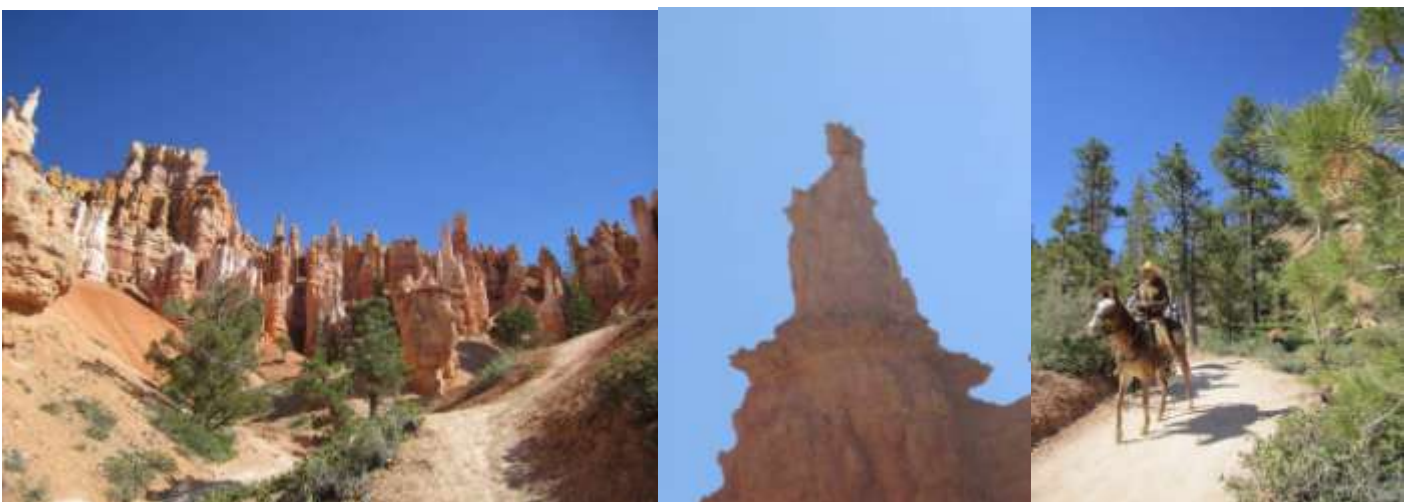
alternate shirt. I was totally willing to buy the “NOT” shirt but Loudean and Christy bought the “I made it to the top” the day before so they’d be sure of success. They did!

My return trip to Las Vegas was cut short by our good friends’ wedding on Saturday; it was important enough to me to get up at 3:45am for an early flight.

Photo journey:



Marty and Sofia; Diana, Christy and Loudean; our Bryce cabin for two nights



Queens Garden and the rock formation representing the Queen. There were horseback and mule trips available but I much prefer to see the parks on my own feet. Hikers agree that by traversing on our own feet we “own the ground.” Yet I’d bet that the real backpackers and campers would say that us day hikers didn’t see nearly enough either!



I would admit to feeling like a 'queen' in the garden with much gratitude that the body allowed me to make this hike.



Within the beginnings of Wall Street canyons and then up on the top looking down at the switchbacks that would bring us to the top of a very steep climb.

Animals of the canyon – from the visitors center displays





Ebenezer Bryce – it would be the Mormons and the Bryce family who mainly brought about the building on the Bryce Canyon area. The animals would have been much more available to the eye then but we did see quite a few though often in the distance or hearing the calls.

Fairyland – I had hiked a couple days in Bryce in years past and might have told you that I'd 'seen it' but then came this Fairyland Loop hike and the realization that there was still a lot more that I would leave behind unseen. It's something like looking over the edge of the Grand Canyon and saying 'I've seen the Grand Canyon.'



Fairyland is stretched out more with distinctly different terrain from one moment to the next. Its formations were worthy of the separate notice they get when hiking there.



There were castles, peoples, sculptured trees and lots for the imagination.





While there were many 'windows' and 'arches' I only saw one 'cat' and one 'heart' that day.



We met up with a family of seven children and upon talking to daddy and later mommy I learned that the seven children would soon be eight and that they were locals who came to the trails often with all the children from infant size on up. Presumably they are Mormons? We took a side trip to see Tower Bridge and the windows from below.

We would reluctantly leave Bryce especially now realizing that there was so much more to see. But Zion National Park called. Here are some internet panoramas on Bryce National Park and detailed information from the NPS web site.

Thank you Nola for my Fairland picture: It really is!



Info from the web



Bryce Canyon is, in the strictest sense of the word, UNIQUE – nowhere is anything else even similar! What is Bryce Canyon? Words confound when no comparable exist. A cave without a ceiling? A forest of stone? Even 'canyon' is misleading since Bryce is carved by freeze-thaw cycles, not a river. Yet, 'world's largest pothole' is neither adequate nor flattering. (from nps.gov)

History - Bryce Canyon is a small national park in southwestern Utah. Named after the Mormon Pioneer Ebenezer Bryce, Bryce Canyon became a national park in 1928.

Bryce is famous for its worldly unique geology, consisting of a series of horseshoe-shaped amphitheaters. The erosional force of frost-wedging and the dissolving power of rainwater have shaped the colorful limestone rock into bizarre shapes including slot canyons, windows, fins, and spires called "hoodoos." Tinted with colors too numerous and subtle to name, these whimsically arranged rocks create a wondrous landscape of mazes, offering some of the most exciting and memorable walks and hikes imaginable.

Ponderosa pines, high elevation meadows, and fir-spruce forests border the rim of the plateau and abound with wildlife. This area boasts some of the world's best air quality, offering panoramic views of three states and approaching 200 miles of visibility. This, coupled with the lack of nearby large light sources, creates unparalleled opportunities for stargazing.

Those Who Came Before - One of the first questions people ask when visiting the rugged wilds of southern Utah is, "Who would live here?" The answer is, "Many different cultures over thousands of years."

A recent archaeological survey of Bryce Canyon National Park and the Plateau shows that people have been marveling at Bryce's hoodoos for at least 10,000 years. It is suspected that throughout history, just as today, most people were just passing through. Bryce Canyon winters are so harsh that even modern year-round habitation is difficult. Yet Paleoindians hunted huge mammals here at the end of the Ice Age. Pueblo peoples hunted game in the forests and meadows of the plateau. Paiutes frequented the plateau to harvest pine nuts and conduct broad scale rabbit hunts called rabbit drives. Mormon pioneers diverted water from the plateau top into the valley below by digging a 10-mile (16 km) long irrigation ditch through the forests and rocky cliffs of what would later become the park. Their efforts made the dry valleys below the cliffs of Bryce suitable for agriculture, and gave them reason to name the town of Tropic, Utah.

Later in 1924, designation as a national park put Bryce Canyon on the map. But it was the Union Pacific Railroad and the Civilian Conservation Corps that made Bryce accessible to modern day travelers. Such

improvements quickly made Bryce Canyon first a national attraction, and later an international "must see." Today 1.5 million people come each year to see this little park with enormous appeal. .

Moving onto Zion National Park

I'd been to Zion before also, both biking and hiking. Some of these hikes were repeats, some new, all absolutely delightful and I would never hesitate to do them again – if I could. And as you'll see, one of the hikes is a particular test of not only skills but endurance and emotions.



The center of the valley from my balcony; one of the historically well preserved cabins; the Lodge.



On my prior trip to Zion we also climbed Angel's Landing and the Virgin River was the site of my baptism thereafter. I was only willing to get into the water because it had been a record 117 degrees that day. This time the Virgin River was overflowing the banks with very strong and muddy current and no one would get into it despite the record high of the year of anywhere from 91 to 96 degrees depending on which source you checked. The day we left the Las Vegas newspaper claimed a record high of the year.



Our hot, dry and dusty trek up to Emerald Pools had plenty of takers who wanted to put their feet into the water, and then when coming down to the middle pool and walking under the waterfall had hikers staying for the shower.



There's Loudean enjoying the waterfall; then Kristy in a Karate Kid pose perched high on a boulder but not as high as we'd hike in a couple days. We all took pictures of sunglasses wearing puppy in the backpack and learned he had his own Face book page.



This bridge across from the Grottos would be the beginning and the end of two hikes. It crossed the Virgin River that had gotten well out of hand. One afternoon we took the shuttle (no cars allowed in Zion) to the Temple and walked the River Walk Trail to the beginning of the Narrows hike which was not to be. The water flow was something well over 640 gallons per second whereas it has to be closer to 100 gallons per second to allow hikers into the narrows. This rocky area had been barely covered with clear water on my last trip into the Narrows.



Up to Observation Point

With still another warning sign to start the trip, it wouldn't be the last of these signs as we'd see it again on our way up Angel's Landing. I'd say it was particularly pertinent to Angel's Landing which Tom dubbed as Devil's Landing.



By the end of the day we would find ourselves on the top of the peak looking down at the famous Angel's Landing. That's me in the third picture – surprisingly with steady enough legs to strike a yoga tree pose.



The terrain of the day would dramatically change from forest to desert to wet canyon and to desert again. Some of the pathways were narrow with steep drop offs making us stick to the canyon wall as a security blanket.



Most of us scooted up and out to the edge to get our pictures taken as much to prove we made it to the top but some hikers had more common sense and stayed away from the edge. It was a very long way down. The trees and vines were silver and dwarfed on top.

Angel's Landing

This reminded me of Yosemite's Half Dome in that cables or chains are needed. Fortunately it was a shorter day and equally fortunate was that not one of our hikers had a melt-down. Of our eight, four WOMEN made it to the top. I believe that was our same number on my only other climb up. This climb seemed hugely longer than I remembered. Is it like delivering a baby that you forget? Or is it

age related?



Starting out at 8am, we would be on the top of that peak by noon. First we hiked through Refrigerator Canyon with fairly steep but flat surfaces before heading up Walters Wiggles. This long hike up is the subject of a poster once purchased, matted and framed and still with a prime spot in my office at home.



Once done with Walter Wiggles and his 22 switchbacks, hikers arrive at Scouts Landing. I stayed awhile and zoomed in on the crazy hikers thinking they could make it up that steep rocky slope that required chains as hand holds to get up. The top looked within sight but little did I know or remember how many false summits I'd see that day. See those little ants on the hillside?



That's Caroline our 20 year old fast hiker but she would soon wisely cop-out. Sofia is starting up the first of the chains and would surprise herself by making it to the top. We'd probably both admit that we only did it with the help of our guides talking us through each step. That's Steve assuring me that

I could make it and come on up the water is fine. If I asked him once, I asked him a dozen times: "Are you sure you're okay getting me down off this climb?"



It could be a long fall from here and Steve reminded us not to get cocky once we got to the top. But once at the top some of us were even more nervous about going down but that turned out to be not as difficult as expected. Steps going up were often too steep for our short legs. Going down simply required strapping our poles to our back and scooting down on our fanny.



Success! We're down and very proud of ourselves and calling each other super women!



That's Loudean in pink, leading the descent, followed by Nola the leader, then Sofia, followed by Steve the leader.

The memento!

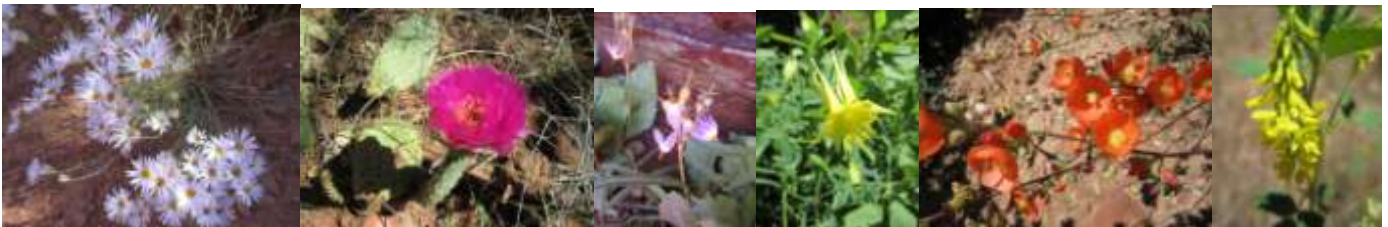
And now to reinforce how I thought this was a doozie and how proud I was of getting UP and DOWN – here's my framed and matted poster from my earlier trip. See Refrigerator Canyon, then Walters Wiggles, then Scouts Landing, and finally the top, but which is actually lower than the mountain across the canyon. That's Observation Point where we hiked the day before.



You'll note that my framed poster has Yosemite's Half Dome picture tacked up on the top waiting to be matted and framed or waiting for a wall to put it on maybe.

Flowers

While they aren't for everyone, here's a bit of a collection to give you an idea that this was a good time of year to be hiking if you enjoy flowers. I started trying to name them thinking I knew many but found that wasn't so and besides who cares what they are called – they are lovely. And the plethora of flowers helped make up for the dearth of them in my Death Valley hike and again on the Big Bend hike, both of which are noted for seasonal flowers but were suffering drought.





Zion National Park from the web



History - Utah's First National Park - Massive canyon walls ascend toward a brilliant blue sky. To experience Zion, you need to walk among the towering cliffs, or challenge your courage in a small narrow canyon. These unique sandstone cliffs range in color from cream, to pink, to red. They could be described as sand castles crowning desert canyons.

In a Haven of Habitats: Almost 12,000 years ago Zion's first peoples, who are now almost invisible, tracked mammoth, giant sloth and camel across southern Utah. Due to climate change and overhunting these animals died out about 8,000 years ago. Humans adapted by focusing on mid-sized animals and gathered foods. As resources dwindled 2,600 years ago, people tuned life-ways to the specifics of place. Such a culture, centered on Zion, differentiated over the next 1,500 years into a farming tradition archeologists call Virgin Anasazi.

Zion's geology provided these and later pioneer farmers a combination rare in the desert: a wide, level place to grow food, a river to water it, and an adequate growing season. On the Colorado Plateau crops grow best between 5,000 and 7,000 feet, making Zion's elevations -- 3,666 to 8,726 feet -- almost ideal. Differences in elevation also encourage diverse plants and animals; mule deer and turkey wander forested plateaus; bighorn sheep and juniper prosper in canyons.

The Anasazi moved southeast 800 years ago, due probably to drought and overuse. Soon after, Paiute peoples brought a life-way fine-tuned to desert seasons and thrived. In the 1860s, just after settlement by Mormon pioneers, John Wesley Powell visited Zion on the first scientific exploration of southern Utah. By hard work and faith pioneers endured in a landscape that hardly warranted such persistence. Flash floods destroyed towns and drought burned the crops. Only the will to survive saw Paiute, Anasazi, and European descendants through great difficulties. Perhaps today Zion is again a sanctuary, a place of life and hope.



The van's mascots owned by Steve and Nola

These little stuffed animals sit on the van's dash or sun visor.

And to this I'll say goodnight and get on with my next adventure: Marie arrives in two days and stays through the end of the month. We will venture or adventure off to Boston.



Itinerary

Fri Jun 3 - Diana

9:00am Depart Newark EWR via CO#568

11:31am Arrive Las Vegas LAS

Shuttle Free shuttle by Fairfield Inn – after collecting bags, call for shuttle

Hotel Fairfield Inn Las Vegas Airport (within 1 block of host hotel)
3850 South Paradise Road, Las Vegas 89169 Tele 702 791 0899

Host hotel La Quinta, 3970 S. Paradise Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89109 Tele 702 796 9000

Sat Jun 4 – Loudean

6:00am Depart Kansas City MCI via US Air#595

8:49am Arrive Las Vegas LAS

- Christy

6:25am Depart Kansas City MCI via Cont#6852 thru Denver

8:15am Depart Denver via Cont#6845

9:18am Arrive Las Vegas LAS

- Sofia and Marty

1:30pm Arrive Las Vegas LAS from Philadelphia

Tour Info: Airline service to Las Vegas; Timberline van shuttle between Las Vegas and Bryce prior to tour and from Zion to Las Vegas following tour. Tour Cost: \$2,095 includes all lodging, all meals, park entrance fees, van shuttles, leaders, trail maps & narratives

Overview: Southern Utah is a geologic fantasyland that offers some of the most fascinating and breathtakingly beautiful landscapes to be found on this planet. Nowhere is nature's workshop so dramatically displayed, where time is inconsequential and the artistry will always be a work in progress.

Thankfully, much of nature's handiwork in the region lies within the protective confines of a series of national parks and monuments that are remarkably accessible for those ambitious enough to set forth on foot to explore their wonders. We'll explore the heart of Utah's "color country" in the context of our Bryce/Zion Hike.

Summary Daily Itinerary

Day 1	Group assembles at Bryce Canyon National Park (van shuttle from Las Vegas); Rim Hike (3 miles); overnight at Bryce Lodge or Ruby's Inn	3 miles
Day 2	Bryce Canyon National Park: Queen's Garden, Navajo, Peekaboo Loop (9 miles); overnight at Bryce Lodge or Ruby's Inn	9 miles
Day 3	Bryce Canyon National Park: Fairyland Loop (8 miles); van shuttle to Zion; overnight at Zion Lodge	8 miles
Day 4	Zion National Park: Kolob District/Double Arch Alcove (Middle Fork Taylor Creek) (6 miles); afternoon: Narrows of the Virgin River (3 miles); overnight at Zion Lodge	9 miles
Day 5	Zion National Park: Observation Point (8 miles - 2,200' elevation gain); overnight at Zion Lodge	8 miles
Day 6	Zion National Park: Angels' Landing (5 miles) or alternate; van shuttle return to Las Vegas	5 miles

Total Hiking Mileage - 42 miles

Sun Jun 5– Day 1

8:30am Van Shuttle to Bryce. We'll tour several of the overlooks along the Rim Trail and watch the sun set from Sunset Point. We'll spend our first of two evenings at Bryce

Hotel Bryce Canyon Lodge, Bryce National Park, Bryce UT 84764 - 2 nights
Tele 435 834 5361

Mon Jun 6- Day 2

We'll begin our trek into the canyon along the Queen's Garden trail complex in the early morning. Early into this hike, you'll understand that those who view Bryce only from the rim overlooks are without a clue as to what Bryce is all about. Each bend in the trail reveals a view more spectacular than the last. The towering hoodoos and peek-a-boo windows are everywhere. Before we're finished, we will have done not only Queen's Garden, but also the entire Navajo and Peekaboo loops and returned to the rim through awesome Wall Street (8 miles).

Tue Jun 7 – Day 3

We'll hike the Fairyland Loop (9 miles) with its magnificent views of the Sinking Ship, Tower Bridge, and the Chinese Wall and then head to Zion

Hotel Zion Lodge, Springdale, UT 84717 – 3 nights

Wed Jun 8 – Day 4

Without a doubt, Zion is a hiker's fantasy with a large and varied selection of trails that will captivate the imagination of participants of all levels. We're headed for the Kolob Terraces region in the remote northwest corner of Zion. We'll trace the course of the La Verkin Creek through stands of oak and big-tooth maple and return by way of Lee Pass (6 miles).

It's then back to Zion early afternoon in time for a visit to the Narrows of the Virgin River. We'll wade through the shallow river bed upstream at least far enough to sense the awesome beauty of this narrow corridor through which the Virgin flows (3 miles).

Thu Jun 9 - Day 5

We'll climb from the floor of Zion Canyon through Echo Canyon to awesome Observation Point, the highest accessible promontory in Zion. The views from Observation Point are incredible. Far below, the Virgin River winds through Zion Canyon towards its ultimate rendezvous with the Colorado; massive sandstone temples line the Virgin corridor. From our vantage point, we look down on famed Angel's Landing with its swarms of hikers (8 miles).

Fri Jun 10 – Day 6

The Zion experience requires a visit to fabled Angels' Landing and that's our plan on our final day (5 miles). We'll finish by noon, head to the Pioneer in Springdale for lunch and then return to Las Vegas.

Hotel Fairfield Inn Las Vegas Airport (within 1 block of host hotel)
3850 South Paradise Road, Las Vegas 89169 Tele 702 791 0899

Sat Jun 11 – Diana

6:45am Depart Las Vegas LAS via CO#569
2:40pm Arrive Newark EWR

Afternoon wedding in Sea Girt

Sat Jun 11 – Christy

9:42am Depart Las Vegas LAS via Frontier Airlines # 762 to Denver
1:20pm Depart Frontier Airlines #1017 to Kansas City
3:50pm Arrive Kansas City MCI

- Loudean

9:50am Depart Las Vegas via US Air #327 thru Phoenix
12:35pm Depart Phoenix via US Air# 2920
5:06pm Arrive Kansas City

- Marty and Sofia

Late night Red Eye flight from Las Vegas returning home

Packing:

Old sneakers recommended instead of water shoes for Zion's Narrows hike

Tourist

<http://www.nps.gov/zion/index.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/brca/index.htm>

Frommer's Favorite Experiences

- Strolling on the Strip after Dark: You haven't really seen Las Vegas until you've seen it at night. This neon wonderland is the world's greatest sound-and-light show. Begin at Luxor and work your way past the incredible hotels and their attractions. You'll pass the gotta-see-it-to-believe-it New York-New York on your way, and if your strength holds out, you will end at Circus Circus, where live acrobat acts take place overhead while you gamble. Make plenty of stops en route to take in the Sirens show at Treasure Island, see The Mirage volcano erupt, take a photo of the full moon over the Eiffel Tower, and marvel at the choreographed water-fountain ballet at Bellagio.
- Casino-Hopping on the Strip: The interior of each lavish hotel-casino is more outrageous and giggle-inducing than the last. Just when you think they can't possibly top themselves, they do. From Venice to Paris, from a rainforest to a bit of Paris, from New York City to the ultraluxurious Wynn Las Vegas, it is all, completely and uniquely, Las Vegas.
- Spending an Evening in Glitter Gulch: Set aside an evening to tour the Downtown hotels and take in the overhead light show of the Fremont Street Experience. Unlike the lengthy and exhausting Strip, here you can hit a dozen casinos in about 5 minutes.
- Binging at Buffets: Many are no longer the very best of bargains, but there is something about the endless mounds of food that just scream "Vegas" to us.
- Taking a Creative Adventures Tour: Char Cruze of Creative Adventures (tel. 702/893-2051; www.creativeadventuresltd.net) provides personalized tours unlike anything offered by a commercial tour company, full of riveting stories and incredible facts about both natural and artificial local wonders.
- Marveling at the Liberace Museum: It's not the Smithsonian, but then again, the Smithsonian doesn't have rhinestones like these. Only in Vegas.
- Visiting the Dolphins at The Mirage: This is a most un-Vegas experience. Watch these gorgeous mammals frolic in their cool blue pool. If you're really lucky, they'll play ball with you.

- Playing Penny Slots: Even the most budget-conscious traveler can gamble for hours. Penny slots used to be as rare as a non-silicone-enhanced showgirl, but now they're in all the major casinos.
- Shopping the Big Three Casino Arcades: Take what Napoleon called "the greatest drawing room in Europe," replicate it, add shops, and you've got the Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian -- it's St. Mark's Square, complete with canals and working gondolas. It's now connected to its sister property, The Palazzo, where it is not themed, but is still quite impressive, with envy-inducing designer stores. Then there are the Forum Shops at Caesars Palace, which replicate an ancient Roman streetscape, with classical piazzas and opulent fountains. Don't miss the scary audio-animatronic statues as they come to glorious, cheesy life. And while Miracle Mile at Planet Hollywood is no longer the Middle Eastern-themed souk of our dreams -- it's now sort of a glitzy generic mall -- the variety of shops makes it one of the better hotel shopping experiences.
- Being Amazed by Cirque du Soleil's O, KÀ, and Mystère: You haven't really seen Cirque du Soleil until you've seen it performed in a showroom equipped with state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems and a seemingly infinite budget for sets, costumes, and high-tech special effects. It's an enchantment.
- Seeing Your Favorite Headliners: As soon as you arrive in town, pick up a show guide and see who's playing during your stay.
- Finding the Worst Lounge Shows: Some feel this is the ultimate Vegas experience. Be sure to watch out for Mr. Cook E. Jarr.
- Red Rock Canyon and Valley of the Fire State Park: No money-grubbing business person caused these awe-inspiring desert rock formations to be built, and they will be standing long after Vegas.