Ken Ritter | Associated Press

Family vacation ideas this summer: Park City, Orlando, Las Vegas

With many COVID restrictions lifted, families are looking for places to travel this summer. Here are a few family-friendly vacation ideas.

Staff Video, USA TODAY

LAS VEGAS — Even the chips have chips at the newest casino resort on the Las Vegas Strip.

Resorts World Las Vegas , a $4.3 billion resort that opened its doors to the public Thursday, lets card players bet with house chips implanted with sensors at tables that take cashless transactions and track every bet, split, double-down and side wager.

“It’s all RFID,” casino operations chief Rick Hutchins said, referring to radio-frequency identification technology built into the first new Las Vegas resort to open since 2010. “The table knows exactly what I’m betting.”

Cashless technology was retrofitted in recent years at existing properties. It was made part of Resorts World from the start, executives told reporters during a preview tour Tuesday.

“We're really excited," property President Scott Sibella said. “It's been a decade since a property like this has opened. We kind of broke the mold.”

The Strip's newest casino

The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas debuted in 2010. Among other major Strip resorts, The Bellagio opened in 1998, Wynn Las Vegas in 2005 and Wynn's Encore tower in 2008. MGM Resorts' multi-resort City Center complex opened in 2009 at an overall cost of $1.6 billion.

Resorts World is expected to boost a tourism-dependent local economy battered by the coronavirus pandemic but rebounding since closures imposed in March 2020 were lifted and travel restrictions eased.

Customers who are vaccinated against COVID-19 do not have to wear masks, according to local and state regulations. Employees at many businesses still do.

“Resorts World is certainly a contributing factor to the expectation for improved economic conditions during the second half of 2021,” said Jeremy Aguero, principal at Las Vegas-based Applied Analysis.

“Historically, the opening of new, large-scale resorts has tended to grow the tourism sector and the Las Vegas economy,” Aguero said. “Visitors staying at Resorts World will benefit the entire market, and Resorts World will undoubtedly benefit from visitors staying in the region’s 146,000 existing hotel rooms that will want to experience all the new property has to offer.”

Cashless wagering

At a blackjack table, Hutchins said players still can use cash. But those with member rewards accounts and wireless wallets will be able to scan their phones with the dealer instead of visiting casino cages.

“I have $25 on the spot, the RFID chip knows that, and the (table) antenna underneath it. And if I bet these side bets, it also knows that as well,” Hutchins explained. “I can cash out at the table, I can walk with my chips, I can get a (paper ticket-in ticket-out voucher) here, or I can put it back on my (cellphone) wallet.”

Slot machine players who have the app also can scan cellphone QR codes to play.

A player's stake will be spendable throughout the resort — except sports wagering, which is handled under a different regulatory process by the Nevada Gaming Control Board.

What does the casino look like?

The immense high-ceiling main gambling floor is longer than two football fields and honeycombed with slot machines. It's the gambling centerpiece.

Marbled halls lead to separate registration entries for three Hilton-branded hotels. They total 3,506 rooms in two curved red-colored towers.

A hall leading to self-parking displays some of collector Michael Fux's whimsically colored Rolls Royce sedans.

A Sky Casino salon is on the top 66th floor. A nearly ground-to-roof LED facade faces the Las Vegas Strip.

Resorts World: The Las Vegas Strip's first new hotel-casino in a decade, is now open. Look inside.

Las Vegas buffets: Self-serve is back, but the 'buffet capital' isn't back to normal

Parts of the complex are still under construction, including developer Elon Musk's underground Tesla vehicle transit system that will connect with the nearby Las Vegas Convention Center.

For now, the daytime view beyond the resort's infinity pool is of tractors and trucks and landscape grading operations. At night, the view will be the lights of the Strip.

Six years in the making

Malaysia-based Genting Group, an operator of resorts and casinos around the world, bought the big 88-acre (35.6-hectare) property in 2013 from Las Vegas-based Boyd Gaming for $350 million. Construction began in May 2015.

The site used to be the Stardust, an iconic Las Vegas landmark that opened in 1958 as the largest hotel in the world, at 1,500 rooms. Its 32-story tower was imploded in 2007.

The Stardust's smoky mirror-walled casino was a playpen for "Rat Pack" members including Frank Sinatra. Its showroom hosted comedians Don Rickles, Tim Conway and Phyllis Diller; groups like The Temptations and Four Tops; and the duo Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme. Wayne Newton was the resident headliner at the 920-seat Stardust Theater before the casino closed in 2006.

What sort of entertainment can I find at Resorts World?

Celine Dion will open the new 4,700-seat Theatre at Resorts World, still under construction, on Nov. 5, said John Nelson, senior vice president of AEG Presents, the venue manager. Residencies by Carrie Underwood, Katy Perry and Luke Bryan will follow.

DJs including Zedd and Tiësto will headline at the 2,000-capacity Zouk Nightclub and the outdoor AYU Dayclub.

At the hotels, amenities increase from the 1,774-room Las Vegas Hilton at Resorts World to the 1,496-room Conrad Las Vegas and the exclusive 236-suite Crockfords, where general manager Whitney Mulaj noted its tie to the luxury LXR Hotels brand.

Each hotel has a separate lobby.

"We're using completely ticketless technology," said Prescott Yee, front office director for Resorts World. When guests arrive at valet parking, they will receive a digital QR code letting them bypass registration and go straight to their room.

“No more tickets. No more paper,” Yee said. “That is the essence throughout the entire guest experience.”

The design shows the rising importance of room rentals, conference space, entertainment, dining and shopping to a tourism destination where Aguero said non-gambling revenues in fiscal 2019-2020 accounted for more than 70% of revenue. Twenty years ago, gambling accounted for 60% of revenues.

How technology impacts the experience

Hutchins, at the blackjack table, said everything a guest does will be bundled into the Resorts World mobile app. Wireless connectivity and a customer’s cellphone also eliminate the need for a physical member rewards card, he said.

“The things that you do within the property, we’re going to be able to recognize you, reward you for that, or incentivize you,” the casino operations chief said.

“If you ate at the steakhouse, maybe you want a dessert at Wally’s later,” Hutchins said, referring to one of the resort’s nearly 40 restaurants and eateries. “We’ll be able to serve up a badge digitally that says. ‘Hey, try a dessert on us.’”

Read more https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/destinations/2021/06/26/resorts-world-las-vegas-opening-cashless-technology-rfid-casino-floor/5357347001/