

The Rise of Atlantic City Casino Resorts

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 10 November 2022 13:45 -



Photo William Santos

Atlantic City is synonymous with gambling and the fun and excitement of casino resorts. However, the city has a storied past filled with ups and downs. From the city's Golden Age during the Prohibition era to its modern rebuilding, Atlantic City has had a tumultuous existence.

In this article, we'll explore the rise of Atlantic City casino resorts.

The History of Atlantic City

Atlantic City has had a long history as one of America's favorite resort towns. But the most significant event in the city's development was when the railroad opened in 1854.

The railroad was the brainchild of a doctor named Jonathan Pitney who thought Atlantic City would be the perfect location for a health resort. With this in mind, he convinced investors to build a rail line from Philadelphia all the way to [Atlantic City](#).

Though the United States Hotel never actually became a health resort, it was the largest hotel in the country. Owned by the railroad company, it could hold up to 2,000 guests in its 600 rooms. From there, more hotels were constructed.

As hotel construction flourished, tourism became the city's lifeblood and continued to influence

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its development. In the 1870s, the famous Boardwalk was constructed to keep sand away from hotel lobbies. At the time, the Boardwalk was a seasonal structure that looked very different from what it is today.

The city continued to grow over the decades, and it wasn't until the early 1900s that Atlantic City saw its first boom in hotel creation. Many NJ casinos and restaurants are still located in these historical resorts that ultimately put the city on the map.

Prohibition and Gambling in Atlantic City

Another event that played a massive role in the development of Atlantic City was Prohibition. The city was already a premiere vacation destination by the beginning of Prohibition in 1920. Its popularity with tourists explains much of what happened during the Prohibition era. Not wanting to deny tourists anything they could provide, establishments in Atlantic City didn't always play by the rules.

Law officials' lack of enforcement of the alcohol ban only increased Atlantic City's popularity. The city quickly became known as a hotspot for anyone seeking alcohol. And that's not the only law the city played fast and loose with.

New Jersey had always been one of the friendlier states regarding gambling, and Atlantic City took that to the next level. Throughout the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, gambling was largely prohibited. But that didn't stop Atlantic City, as multiple illegal casinos, slot machines, and other gambling rackets operated across the city.

During this era, Atlantic City became known as "The World's Playground," an image that city officials tried hard to maintain. However, all good things eventually come to an end, and the city's popularity declined in the wake of World War II.

Legalization of Gambling

The once thriving resort town was in economic decline in the decades following the war. As some of the city's famous hotel resorts closed or were repurposed, crime and unemployment increased.

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However, in the 1970s, city officials came up with an idea to return Atlantic City to its former glory: legalizing gambling in the entire state of New Jersey. At the time, Nevada was the only other state that had legal casinos.

After much effort and one failed referendum, voters decided to [legalize gambling in New Jersey in 1976](#). The first legal casino resort to open was Resorts Atlantic City. It still operates at the exact location that first opened in 1978.

This push toward legal gambling paid off, and the city experienced another boom in construction in the 1980s. Only this time, casinos and casino resorts were being built, not just hotels. By the end of the decade, Atlantic City was home to 12 casinos.

After the building boom, the city saw increased tourism again, and Atlantic City's future looked bright. By 2000, the city's casinos brought in \$4.2 billion in revenues. Revenues continued to grow until they peaked at \$5.2 billion in 2006.

Atlantic City's fortunes started to fall due to other states legalizing gambling and the bankruptcy and closure of many popular casinos. Once people no longer needed to travel across state lines to gamble, the city's tourism suffered.

By 2014, one-third of the city's famous boardwalk casinos had closed. However, Atlantic City never stays down for long.

A City on the Rebound

Toward the end of the 2010s, Atlantic City was ready for its comeback. This modern resurgence has happened thanks to new casinos coming to the area and new management taking over failed ventures.

The opening of the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in the former Trump Taj Mahal and the re-opening and rebranding of Revel Casino as Ocean Resort Casino were hugely influential to the area. Both of these openings occurred in 2018.

