

# Atlantic City’s Borgata radiates energy, luxury

This hotel is full of temptations



ROCHELLE LASH  
CHECKING IN

Gliding through the towering glass doors of the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa is like going through Alice in Wonderland’s looking glass.

If you have spent the day outdoors, you have enjoyed the folksy charms of the Atlantic City boardwalk and the sporty, breezy beachfront. But once you enter the Borgata, you’re in for an energized experience that blends the brassy action of Las Vegas and the ornate decor of an Italian palazzo.

Through the looking glass and past the splendid, artful lobby, one’s next encounter is the raucous, jangling world of the Borgata Casino, a 24-hour circus of blinking slot machines, whirring roulette wheels and intense blackjack tables, spreading over an area more than twice the size of a city block. Leggy cocktail waitresses in black fishnet stockings and flirty skirts sashay around, delivering free cocktails to titanium-level players. It was only 3 p.m. when I arrived, and the music made me break into a mid-afternoon dance as I wandered through the gaming action.

High on life and feeling lucky, I wanted to bet it all — the RRSP, the savings account, the condo. But I’m only good for a loonie in the slots and a sawbuck on the craps tables — plus, I was saving my mad money for other follies. There is no shortage of temptations at this city-within-a-city.

Atlantic City is within a five-hour drive of one-third of the U.S. population, and the Borgata is one of the largest hotels outside of Las Vegas. It has 2,000 guest rooms and suites, 14 shops, its own online store, a grand indoor pool, Spa Toccare and 13 restaurants, including two affiliated with celebrity chefs: Wolfgang Puck’s American Grille and Bobby Play Steak.

The hotel’s big-time show venues have hosted the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney, Rihanna and Gwen Stefani.



The deluxe Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa in Atlantic City has a Mediterranean-inspired swimming pool.



The hotel’s dramatic Italianate lobby has a backdrop of the casino’s slot machines.

Coming headliners include the British band Yes (April 4), Jerry Seinfeld (April 5), Frankie Valli (April 11 and 12), Howie Mandel (July 25) and Chicago (Aug. 22).

I didn’t think I would warm to the everything-in-one-hotel concept, but I found it totally relaxing. There was no need for a car or cabs, and I enjoyed the best of food, shopping and spa life, only an elevator ride away.

The Borgata recently spent \$50 million renovating its

rooms, which now sport a sleek, classic contemporary look and top-drawer everything. Fine Egyptian cotton sheets cover custom-made Sealy mattresses. The lavish marble bathrooms have glassed-in rain showers and all-natural toiletries by Lather of California.

The look is a sophisticated, modern palette of high gloss and metallics, with a desk and dresser in black lacquer and handsome tweed upholstery shot with pewter. The wow

factor is the floor-to-ceiling window panorama; in some rooms you get a soothing, infinite view of the Atlantic Ocean.

The most appealing aspect of the Borgata is that you can live large when you are at the top of your game and can enjoy the hotel’s five-star facilities when you’re down.

At the high end, you might charter a private 30-passenger jet from Fly Borgata, dine on Kobe beef at Bobby Play Steak and sip one of 100 pre-

mium tequilas at Gypsy Bar. Shoppers can splurge on Italian leather at Just Cavalli, bibelots of Swarovski crystals or a cashmere sweater at Hugo Boss. At the intimate nightclub mur.mur (the stylized typography spells cool and contemporary), a DJ spins house music and a bottle of Grey Goose will set you back \$340.

The stakes get higher: I’m told there are poker games in Borgata’s High-Limit Lounge where the minimum buy-in might be \$10,000.

Win or lose, you are due for an escape to Borgata’s Spa Toccare. You can bliss out in whirlpools, saunas and steam rooms and indulge in such treatments as Rock Your Senses, a perky circulation-booster that combines massage and aromatherapy.

If your bankroll is bitsy, you still have options. No need for the expensive spa — the Borgata’s indoor swimming pool is a beauty, surrounded by Mediterranean-style gardens and waterfalls, and it has its own whirlpool.

There are more savings. At Borgata eateries including N.O.W., Lettuce Head and the Metropolitan, you can dig

## IF YOU GO

Atlantic City is an eight-hour drive from Montreal via N.Y. Highway 87 south to New Jersey Garden State Expressway. US Airways flies Montreal to Philadelphia, which is a one-hour drive from Atlantic City.

**Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, 1 Borgata Way, Atlantic City, N.J.:** 866-MY BORGATA/866-692-6742, 609-317-1000, theborgata.com.

**Prices fluctuate:** 1,566 classic rooms, \$89-\$109 U.S. Sun.-Thurs. or \$199-\$379 Fri.-Sat., for two; 400 suites, \$179-\$559 Sun.-Thurs. or \$320-\$650 Fri.-Sat.; with indoor pool, whirlpools, summer gardens, 24-hour concierge. Extras: meals, Spa Toccare, Pump Room fitness centre (\$12), Internet (\$9).

**Spa Toccare:** 31 treatment rooms, the Salon, the Barbershop, whirlpool, sauna, steam; access without treatment: \$40 for guests; Rock Your Senses massage, \$150.

**Atlantic City tourism information:** 888-AC-VISIT/888-228-4748, 609-348-7100, atlantic-citynj.com.

into tapas, salads, Asian food, omelettes, burgers or gourmet sandwiches, all for \$5 to \$10.

At Vintage, a wine boutique, Borgata’s sommeliers offer free tastings Saturdays from 4 to 7 p.m.

For dinner, it’s hard to beat Wine-Down Wednesdays at Fornelletto, the Borgata’s Italian trattoria where \$20 will buy a glass of sangiovese and Angus beef sliders or a Bellini cocktail and a fennel-sausage pizza.

There is no last call at the Borgata. The casino, the B-Bar and some eateries operate 24 hours a day. If you have to feed a shopping addiction at 2 a.m., the Borgata Collection sells beach bags and yoga pants.

Hold that elevator.

The writer was a guest of the hotel, which did not review or approve the story.

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