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**ANY BREAK IS A GOOD BREAK**

**By Laura Glendinning**

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There is something about that extra day tacked onto a weekend, be it a Monday or a Friday, which turns a getaway into a mini vacation. Of course three day weekends are a state of mind. One "three day weekend" trip my boyfriend John and I took to Vegas started on Memorial Day Monday and ended on a Wednesday. We tend to take breaks just before or just after big holidays – you get better rates, better service and a lot fewer crowds. That trip we skipped our usual easy bargain booking for midweek Luxor (always clean, excellent bathrooms) and made a blind Hotwire bid on a Vegas Strip 5 star hotel and ended up in the mind-boggling Venetian for an unheard of price – under \$100 a night including service fees. Lots of California people fly to Vegas, Tahoe or San Francisco, but we seem to end up driving to our breaks, partly because the dog kennel we use is right off the 10 freeway and often on the way, partly because getting on the road means the vacation has already started. When you add up getting to the airport early, parking, waiting to board, being inspected, then collecting baggage at the other end, you are practically at the same number of travel hours. And on the plane, we don't get to eat one of John's patented toasted sandwiches. Somehow, the way he makes the sandwich means I actually eat mayonnaise, a substance I usually detest. Driving against the traffic (everyone else was heading back from the weekend away and oh what a stream of headlights we saw crawling along) we were hypnotized by the flashing lights of an outlet mall/casino combo at the border – Stateline, Nevada – and stopped in. Great bargains for men's wear, not so great for women's wear – but we didn't do a thorough search.

On that Vegas trip, we dragged our battered garment bag, with a freshly broken strap, across the lush marble-floored lobby, looking like refugees. We entered our suite-like room – with its canopy bed, step down tv lounge and huge marble bathroom (two sinks, a shower and a huge tub), pulled out the nice champagne we'd brought along in our cooler, pulled out our travel champagne glasses (if they break we don't care) and put on the plush robes the Venetian provides. A cable movie and champagne shook the dust off the road trip. The next couple of days in Vegas sometimes means the spa for me, for sure the sports bar for John, and our search for the stranger slot machines to play. The "Ripley's Believe It Or Not" slots actually reward you for answering trivia questions. Vegas is not really about thinking, but the times we've played the game we've gotten a few interested onlookers impressed with our ability to pull facts out of our brains. We toyed with the idea of hanging around the machines having a cocktail

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and helping other players answer their bonus questions but decided against it. Along the strip, the Barbary Coast has maintained its original kitsch, sandwiched between lush hotels who doubtless are sporadically trying to buy them out. The tables there are friendly and attract a mixed crowd of fairly low stakes players. Like, a lot of hotels, dealers display where they are from on their name tag. A tall, blond Czechoslovakian dealer at the Barbary Coast took John's blackjack stake away with breathless speed and efficiency. Was she paid by how many cards she dealt? She was so fast that the dealer at the next table actually seemed mad at her for ruining everyone's fun. His attitude was "This is the Barbary Coast, we don't do that here". Good thing the sports book paid off for John phenomenally.

If you're into food, Vegas can be frustrating. Bargain buffets notwithstanding, to-order food is often pricey and mediocre. You can always count on chains for consistency (Vegas has branches of California Pizza Kitchen, Wolfgang Puck's, Chin Chin, and tons more), but part of a vacation is to try

something new. We found two gems last visit. The two new places were both at venerable Caesars, a survivor from the Rat Pack era which keeps re-inventing itself and staying near the top of the competitive heap on the Strip. At the Palm restaurant (also in NY and L.A.) there is a businessman's lunch for \$15.95 – choice of soup or salad, choice of fish or filet mignon (!), and coffee. Wines by the glass are pricey but excellent. One of Caesar's food courts features such offerings as good southern bbq, roasted turkey sandwiches, and above average pastries.

As for dinner, we can't resist our old standby – The Four Seasons' Verandah restaurant. Their three course dinner special for around \$30 is a great deal – cooked by a chef (not a kitchen worker), and always with a carefully designed menu. One night we learned there was most definitely a chef on hand as the man himself – beefy and affable – came out of the kitchen to talk when we had a question about how he made such perfect fish. I still use his halibut recipe – hot pan on the stove top, almost finish the fish, then transfer it to a cold un-oiled pan in a hot oven – but I digress. Even during the very hot summer, night time outdoor dining at the Four Seasons is quite pleasant, as you can sit by the pool. It's hard to come by quiet in Vegas, but here you get it – there is no gambling in the Four Seasons. If you want to gamble after dinner at the Verandah, the hotel is joined to Mandalay Bay by an air conditioned lobby.

We left town the next day, stopping at Caesars, our new casual dining spot, for good coffee for the road – and contemplated a last attempt at the Ripley's slots. We decided to skip it and call it even when we learned the valet parking outside the coffee shop was free. We got on Interstate 15 and joined the weekday throng of truckers headed into California. Traffic was light 'cuz thanks to driving an off time. We cruise to Interstate 10 and can't be at the kennel soon enough for the dogs. I am sure the dogs know when we are getting close but I always call the kennel keeper to warn her. Humans need advance notice for what dogs already know. The sound of an approaching car sets off every dog in the kennel but the barking settles down once the fellas see us and know they are hopping in the convertible and heading home. Bert the shepherd sits in the middle facing forward to make sure we are following the right route. The other two mutts, Buster and Louie, lounge in the back, hanging their heads out the window, the kennel already forgotten. We never make the trip home without a few kids waving and pointing at the funny people with three dogs.

At least picking them up involves a lot less guilt than dropping them off, but sorry boys – there will

always be another three day weekend ahead.

Laura is a travel and screenplay writer living in Los Angeles, CA. She is also content director for [www.threedayweekends.com](http://www.threedayweekends.com), a on-line travel site.

## **Positioned For Success... The Refined Art Of Taking A Chance**

**By Josh Hinds**

ARE YOU IN... OR OUT?

Are you in or out of your comfort zone, that is?

Remember a simple principle: action leads to results.

One decision.

One small action.

One step outside of the comfort zone...

Can be the beginning of a series of decisions and actions that lead to a better lifestyle, a feeling of "I can do this," and a host of other possibilities.

SO WHY NOT TAKE A "STRETCH BREAK"?

A stretch break for success.

A small "break away" from your comfort zone into the world of personal responsibilities.

Much success to you,

Josh Hinds

Written by Josh Hinds of

. Josh is a firm believer in the saying, "readers

are leaders!" -- As such you are invited to learn more about the "Readers Edge" program that teaches you to read both faster and more fluently, which of course translates to greater success in your life.

Details at

Positioned For Success... The Refined Art Of Taking A Chance  
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ANY BREAK IS A GOOD BREAK

How NOT to Return from an Exercise Break  
Regain Your Motivation  
Great Spring Break Destinations

Gate Crash into the Interior Design Industry.  
How to become a Chef!  
How To Find A Topic For Your Ebook  
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Travel Cheap! Travel Well!



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