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**Vegas and the Ride of a Lifetime**

**By Caterina Christakos**

**Vegas and the Ride of a Lifetime**

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Most people envision Las Vegas as one big casino. Admittedly I was one of them, until I undertook the ride of a lifetime. Imagine soaring hundreds of feet above canyons of red and orange, walking over rocks that been sculpted by mother nature herself and floating down a river of dreams. These are the images that I will carry with me forever when I think of Las Vegas, Nevada.

After taking a break from about twelve hours of straight gambling, my father and I looked at each other and thought there must be more to Vegas than jangling slot machines and endless booze. So we asked our friendly concierge, at the Mandalay Bay Resort, for some suggestions and he arranged for the champagne lunch helicopter tour to the Grand Canyon.

Wonderful we thought, it looked good in the movies, might as well give it a shot. Neither of us was prepared for the adventure that we were about to take.

The helicopter company sent a limo to pick us up at the hotel. The ride lasted about five minutes then we were dropped off at the helicopter launch. Fellow passengers from all over the world chatted and waited for our journey to begin.

Moments later we took off for one of the waiting helicopters, with our pilot leading the way. Attractive and intelligent, in a boy next door kind of way, he quickly showed us how father and I ended up in a helicopter of our own because several of the other passengers decided to just fly over the canyon. The tour we chose actually had us landing on the bottom.

We soared for about a half an hour over a canvas which included every color imaginable painted by dessert, mountains and the Colorado river. Within thirty minutes of smooth flying we were over the canyon and able to see the landing pad, set in the middle of tumbleweed, mountains and cacti. As we disembarked the pilot helped us climb down the stone and dirt pathway to a little boat dock, where we met a family from Britain that would be our companions on our champagne lunch down the Colorado

river.

The boat captain was a tiny oriental man with sparkling eyes and a rich sense of humor. He handed out our picnic baskets and regaled us with stories of how the Grand Canyon was created. He also had the sense to stop periodically and help us get the most amazing shots of the canyon. He seemed to know every rock and ridge and was able to point out eagles and faces carved into the rock by millions of years of erosion.

At the end of our Las Vegas helicopter tour we flew back to the original launch and took our limo back to the hotel, content, awestruck and absolutely certain that we would return to Las Vegas, the Grand Canyon and our Las Vegas helicopter tour.

Caterina Christakos is an international travel writer. For more free articles on Las Vegas go to

## **String Quartet vs. Jazz for Your Las Vegas Wedding Music**

**By Renae Judkins**

Las Vegas weddings have been known for their tackiness as long as Las Vegas drive thru weddings have existed, but Las Vegas weddings are quickly becoming more elegant with brides spending more on their Las Vegas nuptials. With this includes their choice of Las Vegas wedding music and Las Vegas wedding musicians.

We spoke with Chandler Judkins, president of Las Vegas Wedding Music, the number one live musician contracting company in Las Vegas and he had a lot to say about a new trend among Las Vegas couples.

"Las Vegas couples aren't choosing string quartets as much as they used to," Judkins said. "Jazz is more of the choice for their Las Vegas wedding music."

The reason for choosing jazz more than strings for Las Vegas weddings is simple according to Judkins. "They want something different. That's usually why they're getting married in Las Vegas in the first place."

Strings are still a popular Las Vegas wedding music choice and oftentimes Las Vegas couple will pair up the two, having strings for the ceremony and jazz for the cocktail hour and reception afterward.

A Las Vegas jazz quartet can be the perfect solution to create elegance, class, dancing and swinging, and all at a reasonable price. Las Vegas Wedding Music's jazz groups start as low as \$500 for a few hours, and no minimum time is required. Las Vegas Wedding Music's musicians often show up to play for a 15 minute wedding ceremony and then go home.

Las Vegas Wedding Music is so flexible with price, timing, groups, song requests list and more because according to Judkins, music is his passion and he wants to share that passion through his

company Las Vegas Wedding Music.

"Couples getting married in Las Vegas often don't realize that live musicians can be contracted for as little as a Las Vegas dj can be hired," Judkins said. "Our goal here at Las Vegas Wedding Music is to promote live music. We want our brides to walk down the aisle to the real thing, not a distorted version of 'Canon in D.' "

Judkins is a professional musician himself and oftentimes plays with the Las Vegas jazz groups. Live sound demos of the Las Vegas string quartet and the Las Vegas jazz groups can be found at Las Vegas Wedding Music's site: [LVWeddingMusic \(dot\) com](http://LVWeddingMusic.com).

Las Vegas Wedding Music also offers other Las Vegas wedding music packages for couples getting married in Las Vegas who want something different for their Las Vegas wedding. Singers, harpists, top 40 bands, mariachi groups, impersonators and more are available.

Las Vegas Wedding Music can work with nearly any budget and their packages start as low as \$250.

Renaee earned her journalism degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

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