

River Phoenix

The Gallinas River revitalization project brings more places to gather and reflect in Las Vegas.

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 A Gallinas River revival makes Las Vegas more family friendly. Photography courtesy of Visit Las Vegas.

LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO RESIDENTS and visitors have long appreciated the **Gallinas River Walk**, whether for an intimate stroll or the vibrant annual RiverFest. Recent revitalization along it will nurture even more of those magical moments.

"I'm hoping the project will increase our sense of *querencia*, the Spanish concept of love and connection to the place where you live," says Lea Knutson, executive director of Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance, which is partnering with the City of Las Vegas on the project.

The multifaceted approach will restore the river's natural path while also establishing recreation outlets along its banks. To date, approximately one mile of the river, from Bridge Street to Independence Avenue, has been restored with more than 30 new pools, falls, and meanders, as well as a duck pond and riparian trees and shrubs. It has led to an exponential increase in park usage by people, birds, and fish, Knutson says. Progress on the Unity Orchard, a grove of apple and native trees, will continue this summer, along with the installation of park benches and interpretive signs. "We're bringing together culture, history, and tradition with ecology, tourism, and community development," Knutson adds.

The \$6.5 million eco-rejuvenation project dovetails with Las Vegas's rich history. Guests at the historic **Plaza Hotel** can jog just a few blocks to the trails for their morning workout. After a farm-to-table meal from Prairie Hill Café, visitors can mosey through the sculpture garden (a partnership with artists from New Mexico Highlands University) or let their kids run off the sugar from the Skillet's churro donut sundae in the natural play area. An amphitheater will host concerts, outdoor classrooms will welcome students, and an enhanced wetland area is expected to draw great blue herons, kingfishers, and warblers. Anglers will even be able to cast a line from the fishing deck.

"There are some places that will be a little bit more developed, and then some areas where you won't even know you're in the middle of a city," Knutson says. "It's about including the people, plants, animals, and river in concert with the landscape that really benefits all of those different pieces."

 Soak in the healing Montezuma Hot Springs, in Las Vegas. Photograph courtesy of Visit Las Vegas.

VEGAS STYLE

Take a dip in the healing waters of **Montezuma Hot Springs**.

Experience the history of the **Santa Fe Trail**, which winds through the town's original Plaza.

Enjoy live music in the Plaza gazebo during Fridays al Fresco from May through October.

Gather with motorcyclists from across the nation at the **Rough Rider Motorcycle Rally** the last weekend in July.

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