

Destination: Spotlight 29 Casino

Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians
Coachella, CA



This month *Indian Gaming* magazine visited Spotlight 29 Casino located in Coachella, California, fifteen minutes from Palm Springs. Owned about operated by the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, the 110,000 sq. ft. property offers 2,000 of the latest slot machines, 30 table games, a seven-table poker room, and a non-smoking slot area. In addition to the expansive gaming options, Spotlight 29 Casino offers a variety of dining and entertainment, including a 2,200-seat showroom, further enhancing this exciting property in the California market.

Before our tour began, we learned some history of the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians. Known as Children of the Wolf, the tribe traces its origins back to the Chemehuevi, a peaceful and nomadic tribe whose territory once covered Utah, Arizona, and southern Nevada. In the mid-1880s, the Chemehuevi migrated from the Colorado River Valley to the more remote areas of the Mojave Desert. In 1867, a group of Chemehuevi settled at the Oasis of Twenty-Nine Palms, the present-day oasis of Mara. The Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians are their descendants.

When we arrived at Spotlight 29, we were met by Kari Downs, the property's Executive Host. She began by explaining that the casino is truly a locals property that considers its guests to be family. "The guest is king here,"

she explained. "We want them to feel very comfortable and really enjoy the entertainment experience." Downs explained that she has seen many terrific changes since she began at the property. Her five-person team takes care of the customers and, if a customer hasn't visited the property for a period of time, they check on them to ensure they feel welcome.

"Making a guest feel important and showing them that the casino cares about them is just another aspect of the terrific service we offer," said Downs. With the Bally CMS player system the casino not only can track a guest's play, but they are



JEM Steakhouse, Spotlight 29's fine dining restaurant.

able to see when a guest is on the floor so a casino host can greet them and make sure their visit is going well. Another aspect of the property's exceptional service is the player's club, Club 29. Whether playing slots or table games, guests accumulate club dollars, which can then be applied toward meals or casino shows. "The player's club is truly the heart and soul of Spotlight 29 Casino."

Further tailoring the property to the comfort of its guests, Spotlight 29 is in the midst of a three-phase expansion. As part of the second phase of this expansion, the casino recently added a 2,000-car parking structure, which will dramatically add to the guests' comfort during periods of scorching summer weather. The second phase will add 30,000 sq. ft. to the property, which includes an expansion of the casino floor itself. During the third phase, Spotlight 29 will add a 200-room hotel as well as a full-service spa facility.

We started our tour from the property's front entrance and headed toward the Spotlight Showroom. On our way, we passed the new JEM Steakhouse, Spotlight 29's fine dining restaurant. JEM adds a fresh array of flavors to the property, serving certified Angus beef, fresh seafood, and boasting Coachella Valley's most expansive selection of wines. The restaurant is one of the top venues in the area, offering not only a first-class menu, but also live jazz entertainment on the weekends. The restaurant also houses a bar for relaxing or mixing with friends in an upscale atmosphere.

Next on our tour was the spacious food court, where guests can grab a quick snack or beverage before returning to the gaming action. The food court offers popular fast food options like McDonald's, Checker Box Corner and Jalepeño's Grill. The food court provides casual seating in an open and comfortable environment, the perfect setting for guests in need of a short break from the casino floor.

We passed by the casino's seven-table poker room, which includes Texas Hold 'Em, Omaha and seven-card stud. A refreshing feature of the room is that it provides players with a smoke-free environment, adding to the level of guest comfort. Though the poker room doesn't open until mid-morning, when its popularity demands it the room will stay open on a 24-hour basis.

Our next stop was at the Spotlight Showroom, a 2,200-seat venue that provides space for entertainment such as concerts and sporting events, as well flexible space for tradeshow and conventions. The room is adaptable to

almost any function and even provides large-screen televisions for hosting Pay-Per-View events and screening films. The room has hosted some of the biggest names in entertainment, including ZZ Top, LeAnn Rimes, Kenny Rogers and comedian Don Rickles.

From there we stopped at The Blue Bar, which overlooks the casino floor. Billed as one of Coachella Valley's hottest nightclubs, the venue hosts live entertainment, including DJs, every Friday and Saturday night. The bar also broadcasts sporting events, so sports fans can relax with a cocktail and catch the game. "The Blue Bar is incredibly busy," Downs explained.

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“It’s also very popular with our local clientele, particularly in the evenings.”

Also on the second floor is The Medjool Ballroom, which offers 5,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. The versatile room can be used in its entirety or converted into separate meeting and breakout rooms, making it ideal for meetings, banquets and weddings with enough space for 300 guests. The room is also equipped with a full complement of state-of-the-art audio and visual equipment, which can accommodate any sort of presentation.

From there we looked down on the main casino floor, which presents guests with 2,000 of the latest slot machines spread out over 110,000 sq. ft. of space. The casino offers a wide variety of denominations, including penny, nickel, quarter, \$1, \$5 and \$25. The casino’s 30 table games include blackjack, three-card poker, Pai Gow and mini baccarat, so guests always have a range of gaming options available to them. Non-smoking guests can enjoy 200 of their favorite slots in an enclosed smoke-free environment, which adds another level of guest comfort. The casino is also open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so there is always ongoing gaming excitement.

We made our way down to the main level of the casino floor



The expansive slot floor at Spotlight 29 Casino.

to visit the Casino Bar, which is located in the middle of the slot floor. The comfortable bar offers numerous flat-screen televisions so guests can enjoy sporting events. Guests can also just relax with a cocktail and watch the gaming action surrounding them. Our next stop was Café Capitata, which is the perfect spot for casual, informal dining. Totally renovated in 2005, the venue is a unique, 24-hour café that includes a five-station buffet. Guests can enjoy dishes ranging from American and Asian to Italian and Mexican, as well as a soup/salad bar and dessert bar.

We were fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with Darrell Mike, Chairman of the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians. He explained that it is his goal to expand tribal operations and business opportunities, as well as to increase economic diversification within tribal business to ensure the economic stability of the tribe and its members. “All of our employees are

family and are given full health and dental benefits,” Mike explained. “If you take care of the tribe and take care of the people you work with, everything else takes care of itself.” All of Spotlight 29’s employees are also well trained in customer service so they can exceed expectations when serving guests.

The Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians gives back to its community in many ways. The tribe also sponsors the Native American Land Conservancy golf tournament, the chili festival, as well as the annual pow wow at the casino. The tribe also established the Theresa A. Mike Scholarship Foundation, which honors the memory of a young woman and new mother whose life was tragically cut short. “The foundation supports the Theresa A. Mike Memorial Scholarship Fund, which helps worthy students in California and other northwest states attend the college of their choice,” said Mike. “Theresa was dedicated to enhancing the trading, culture and future of the tribe and Native Americans everywhere.”

Spotlight 29 Casino was an incredible and delightful property to visit. The amenities are first-class in gaming, dining, and entertainment. The casino’s level of guest service is one of the best we have experienced. Spotlight 29 Casino is the perfect property for California guests looking for a fun and inviting place to play! ♣

For more information about Spotlight 29 Casino, visit www.spotlight29.com.



Café Capitata, Spotlight 29’s 24-hour cafe restaurant.