

**VEHICLE THEFT
CLAMPDOWN**

**AMA WINTER
ROAD RESCUE**

**SEASON-SAVVY
TRAVEL TIPS**

Westworld

November 2005 \$2.95

Alberta www.ama.ab.ca

Your  Magazine

It's VEGAS, Baby!

A Sure Bet for the Surreal

Ready ⁴ Adventure?

- Alberta Winter Wows
- Wapta Icefield Trekking
- Borneo Ape Watching
- Cape Horn Cruising

AMA'S MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS
YOURS TO ENJOY - FREE
COMING TO YOUR HOME 5X A YEAR

PM4065475

I play poker twice more at the Imperial during my stay, but am unable to recapture the magic of my first session. The calibre of play is better and the cards never run as hot again. Any money I make gradually bleeds away. It dawns on me that my mermaid-blessed debut is going to be the highlight of my trip. But then late on my last day, just like in every poker movie, one dramatic hand suddenly emerges. I'm dealt a pair of aces and bet them hard, only to find myself being raised by two maniacs after an innocuous, unsuited six, four, nine flop. (One had paired his six and four and the other foolishly figured he was leading with two nines.) By the insistence of the raises, I knew I was trailing, but I caught a break when tens rolled over on fourth and fifth street, giving me the boss two pair. I won about \$100. "Monstahhh pot," said the dealer, sweeping a mountain of chips in my direction. Making it even sweeter, the raiser with the low pairs was an obnoxious loudmouth from Boston, who only minutes before had been lecturing the table on the over-rated value of pocket aces.

On the strength of my startling first-day performance I left Vegas with a \$100 profit and a glow that was not entirely

sun-induced. Yet looking back, it wasn't simply the winning that made the experience so rich. The trip, much like the game of Hold'em, was a series of revelations. Vegas, I learned, was one of the rare places with the power to banish time, and not just by removing all the clocks from its casinos; a place that encourages you to live in the moment and indulge in fantasy. Casino poker was mine, and the dream unfolded in style. I loved

the disarming camaraderie I found among the players at the Imperial, the eccentric charm of the dealers and the hypnotic swirl and clatter of chips and cards. Against all odds, alone in the weirdest city of them all, I felt right at home. ▣

Vancouver-based freelance writer Kerry Banks's latest sports book, *The Unofficial Guide to Basketball's Nastiest and Most Unusual Records*, was released this fall (Greystone Books; \$15.95).

insider tip ↓

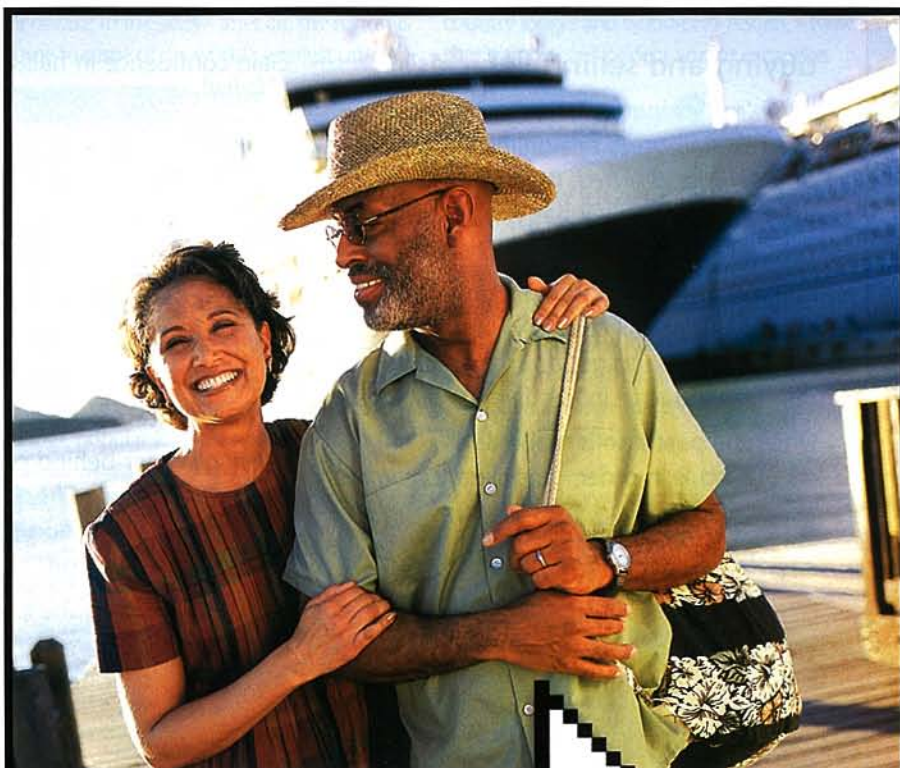
Ready to try your luck on a great Vegas deal? Check online for last-minute Las Vegas travel specials – whenever the urge strikes you – at www.ama.ab.ca/go/travel.

the fixer

Half a million visitors descend on Vegas each week, and virtually all of them want to spend money, have a good time and do it all within a few blocks on one street – Las Vegas Boulevard South, a.k.a. the Strip. Competition to get into the hottest clubs, restaurants and shows, or even to book tee times at the city's best golf courses, is fierce, which is where Steven Striker comes in. The man the *Today Show* called "the ultimate insider" in Vegas can get you past the lines and into the best seats without a hassle.

A third-degree black belt in karate and a former competitor on the martial arts circuit, the Vegas Insider founded Striker VIP after spending 20 years promoting pro athletes and working with sports organizations such as the NFL's San Francisco 49ers. Its mandate is simple: athletes and movie stars always receive the royal treatment, so why not give the average Joe the same opportunity when visiting Glitter City? Services range from VIP access to nightclubs to prime seats to any show, from helicopter rides over the Strip to bachelor parties and private guides.

Details: Striker VIP Inc. (702-895-8426; striker@strikervip.com or www.strikervip.com). □



Book your cruise vacation online with us

www.ama.ab.ca/go/cruise



**Alberta
Motor
Association**

Travel Services