

-THE BEST SLOTS, TABLES, CASINOS AND EVENTS IN THE US-



ROAD TRIP: THE WAY HOME

BY FOURACEMASTER

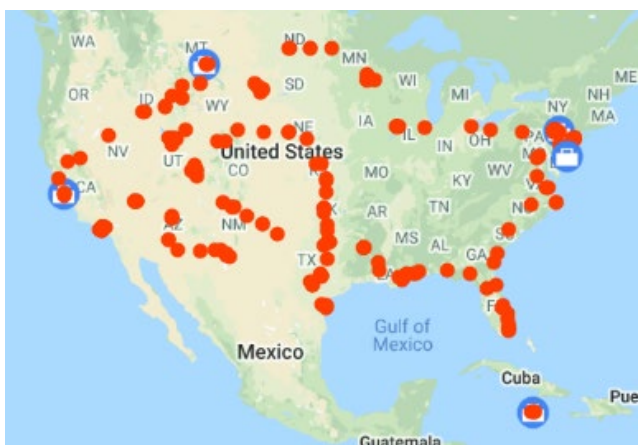
The sun was setting on the Venice Beach Walkway. Two stories above, I passed my friend a refill of her Mimosas and jumped back into the hot tub. In the tower next to us, a bungalow party was in full effect. The extremely dapper, gray-bearded European birthday boy insisted I come over and meet his sexy friends. I was certain one of them was Tori Black. I thanked him but couldn't. This would be my last night and I was busy with my own UN operations over on this 60-yard deck.

I slipped back into the tub and looked to my West Coast Bella. She flipped her long hair back, and it caught the rays of the crimson sun and Malibu hills in the distance. She raised her glass and we toasted. A perfect memory, for long to come, she said, "How can you leave all this?" I took a long moment, conflicted, but regained my composure. I leaned on Biggie for this one, "If I got to choose a coast, I got to choose the East."

All things, good or bad, come to an end, and this unintentional LA reprieve had run its course. I said my goodbyes to my new and old friends and made my peace with the Peaceful Ocean. Destiny and adventure laid ahead.



The Plan



MY TIMING IS PERFECT. My high school crush was into me in my senior summer, I made the move above a fresh cemetery grave - *She was not emo.* I have the most perfect timing in the whole of The Universe. I signed a two-year rental lease in NYC a day before I lost my job. It is an innate power, gifted to me by the gods. It makes sense that I started my return trip right into a pandemic, protests and riots.

Again, it's all my fault, I unleashed The Ultimate Mush on the US (see [here](#) for that full story). He's the one who caused a global pandemic, shut down both my bank account and closed casinos worldwide. Now, I had been in LA for about three months. My budget was in terrible shape and I had to stop throwing money into the wind.

This return trip was pretty much the same as originally planned: Head north, see some northern things, and gamble. Except that last part was going to be a little difficult to execute. Everything was mega screwed up by The Great Wyoming Valley Mush, so I'd have to tweak things a bit.

I planned to hit casinos in extremely low population densities, visit lots more parks and, unfortunately, skip restaurants and bars. That was a big bummer. You really can't get to know a town until you can see people in their social elements. There's was nothing to be done, though. I decided to go as far north until I didn't feel like going north any more, then head East until I hit Yellowstone. After that, I'd play it by ear. All that was left was to pack up the car and go.

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PART I: I SAW SOME THINGS



As with most things in life, a road trip is best run with an idea of where you want to go, not an itinerary. If you say you absolutely want to see XYZ, you might ruin your whole trip over that. That's why I do love traveling with no destination and no obligation - you can feel your way through the adventure.

My first trek was to head up the California Pacific Coastal Highway. I've been pretty far up but never past Calabasas. I thought I'd try to make it via the Pacific to San Francisco from Venice. As a precaution, I blocked The Ultimate Mush on my cell - I feel like I had to do my part to heal the world and my bad luck somehow and TBH this was first on my to do list before gas for my car. I packed up the car and hit the road.

Big Sur, California



The Pacific drive is an adventure in itself. About 3 hours in, the beaches lose their depth, going from giant football fields to just small areas of sand. The access roads I was driving on continued to climb higher and higher, and the Ocean view turned from peaceful sun over water to dramatic rock formations off the windswept and ocean barred coast. There were bridges a skyscraper's length above the canyons and the southern palm trees gave way to the deep green firs of Big Sur.

I must have looked like a complete jack off, my face out the windows, shouting, "Wow," at every new bend in the road, with a new view point to see. This was easily one of the greatest drives I have ever had in my life. I took my time, so much so I only made it to Monterey, which was pretty awesome. Sadly, that town was still completely shut down because of COVID 😞 so I just called it a night.



Twin Falls, Idaho



Next day I popped into San Francisco, which was a ghost town. A quick stop for pizza and onward. I knew I wanted to see some kick ass Redwoods before heading East, but the San Fran's Redwood park shut down and the "real deal" near Eureka was a good six hours away. I flipped a coin, HEADS I would head north, hit up Eureka, Portland and Seattle; TAILS I would start East towards Idaho for the night...

It came up tails, which meant I would be heading through Sacramento and Reno. Although I didn't know it at the time, it also meant I would not be driving into the height of the riots in Portland (I tend to miss a great deal of news when I am road-tripping). My first lucky break. The Mush Phone Block worked!

I stayed the night in the Sacramento Hard Rock (read more about it below) and spent the next day traveling to Twin Falls, Idaho. This town claims to be the Niagara Falls of the west, and it is in fact beautiful. But if you claim you're like Niagara Falls, I expect to see some damn casinos. BIG disappointment. It was the end of May, and Idaho was opening bars that night. Just to be safe, I passed on going out, ate a bag of potato chips in my room and passed out.



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Jackson Hole -> Yellowstone -> Cody, Wyoming



My next stop was Jackson Hole. I took a quick detour to Shoshone Bannock Casino and smoked them (Mush block in full effect!).

The drive to Jackson Hole was awesome and the views were amazing, but Wyoming hadn't fully opened just yet. I stayed in a wonderful lodge and started towards Yellowstone the next day. My target, Old Faithful and some other things.



The drive into Yellowstone from the south approach takes you through another park, The Grand Teton Park. Buy the annual membership for entrance here and it will get you in to every national park out there - \$80 per car. You can also put a second name on it so it's a pretty great deal. Approaching Old Faithful was

awesome. I finally saw some live buffalo in person as opposed to on a machine and the lakes and nature of Yellowstone was a thing to see. So beautiful. On the other hand, Old Faithful didn't quite live up to its name. I waited for an hour, in hail and rain, and the best shot she could give me was a little dribble out the pipe. Lots of sex jokes here but I'll leave those to your imagination 😊



The drive out of Yellowstone east was probably even more beautiful than inward, and when I got to Cody, Wyoming had finally open up bars and restaurants. I ran out and had one cocktail in an empty bar, and went to bed.



Deadwood and Mount Rushmore, South Dakota



After Yellowstone, I hit two towns, Billings, Montana, and Deadwood, South Dakota. I had a blast at both (check out my Deadwood casino review below) and made my way to the last thing I had thought to see - Mount Rushmore.

Mount Rushmore is about a 50-minute drive south of Deadwood or a 30 minute drive west of Rapid Falls. It is an amazing view to see, to look at, to think about the feat of engineering that was accomplished there. Just breathtaking. For about ten

minutes. Then there is absolutely nothing to do unless you want to hike or eat ice cream or read up on history. Honestly, because it was so low on obligation and options, probably one of my favorite stops. I got in my car almost as fast as I got out. A great hit and run!

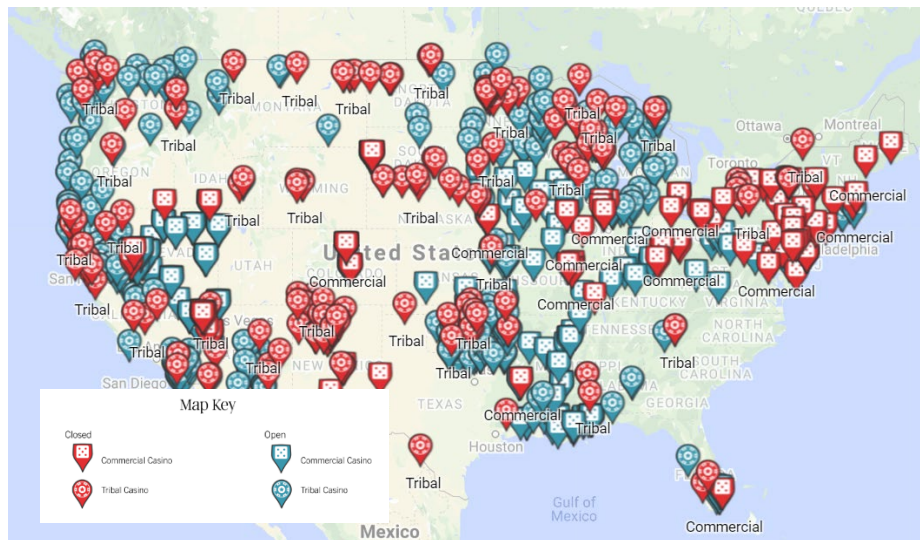
The next few days of the road trip were uneventful. I stopped in Jamestown, North Dakota, Mystic Lake, Minnesota (see my casino review below), Davenport, Iowa, and finally Toledo, Ohio before heading home. Between the pandemic, riots, curfews and closures, most of America was shut down so I'll have to put a pin in those towns for now and come back to them. Oh well, at least I didn't have anything planned so I wasn't too disappointed ;)



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PART II: THE NORTHERN CASINOS

BY FOURACEMASTER



By now you've heard about my infamous bad luck with timing, but as much as I talk about timing, it only seems to fail me when I try to plan it. If I take things as they come, my timing almost always works out perfectly. And this return road trip is a story about perfect timing.

When I hit the road, there was not a whole hell of a lot going on - I was stopping at whatever parks and sites I could see. It took a toll on the mind and my ass. SO MUCH DRIVING. If you've read the sightseeing article, you know when I got to San Francisco, I had to make a decision. Drive to Eureka, see the awesome Redwoods, head to Portland and Seattle, see the final destination of the ultimate gamblers, Lewis and Clark, who braved the uncharted lands to find a route to the west ends of America OR start my trip East towards casinos and home.

I flipped a coin. The awesome trip to the Northwest would have to happen another time and my casino trip would start IMMEDIATELY! I made a beeline for the Hard Rock, just about forty minutes out of Sacramento.

Hard Rock Sacramento, California



The Hard Rock Sacramento Casino is a medium drive away from the Sacramento, closer to the east side of the state, just a little bit more north. Honestly, California it TOO FREAKIN BIG. Just and amazing state. And a PIA when trying to get from here to there. But this casino is well worth the drive. She appears smack in the middle of a small plain, and the western sun bakes everything it touches with a warm glow.

This was my first post-COVID-lockdown stop, and I wasn't sure what to expect, but these peeps weren't fooling around. They had gigantic spacing in the front of the casino, equipped with mask and sanitizing stations on the way in. At the doorway, there were multiple thermal scanners and after some brief questions about where have you been, you're allowed to head on in, mask ON.

Inside, it's much of what you would expect from a Hard Rock. This brand has figured their shit out, and I love it. Even though the masks and spacing put a damper on the environment, the Hard Rock staff did everything they could to keep the mood right and the energy up. They have a great selection of machines (minus the \$2 video poker, Hard Rock we need more \$2 video poker EVERYWHERE) and a beautiful hotel with gigantic rooms, and friendly, cautious staff, which really made me feel safe here. I spotted a Super Times Pay Triple Double Bonus Poker machine. This was one of my favorite machines in the world.

Everything was perfect, except for the gigantic Karen sitting two spots away and her bad luck.

Her mask was pulled down to her chin, with literally no happiness in her body. She gave me a disapproving look and mumbled, "I don't like you close." At that moment, a cashier walked up to the enormity to politely remind her she needs to have her mask on unless she's smoking or drinking. Big Karen stared the worker down and lit up a cigarette. Bad energy, I'm OUT. I stood up, without playing, and walked off, fighting the urge to smush her face into the freshly cleaned video poker terminal.



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I walked over to the bar and picked up a beer, sipped it, and then strolled about the gorgeous casino. I played a bit of Blackjack with the new plexi-guards and three to a table rule. It was less fun, but we're literally on the other side of a lockdown, so I will STFU. I stopped at a video poker machine in high limit, and hit for a quick \$1000 (one of four \$2 video poker machines in the casino). Just as I hit the second \$500 four of a kind, I heard fatso Karen, "Ugh, you," as she plopped her ass into a machine with direct eye

contact. PERFECT TIMING. CASH OUT.

I ran back to my Super Times Pay machine - actually this was a DOUBLE Super Times Pay machine (yay!) - and had maybe the greatest action of my life. I think I played for four hours with two hundred dollars, betting between \$14 and \$21 per deal. Just absolutely amazing. I met some people at the bar later but quite frankly, we were all being too cautious to chat properly. This place must be fantastic when in full swing. I will be back!



Shoshone Bannock Casino, Idaho



After I left Sacramento, I passed through Reno. I've never stopped there and I have heard how beautiful Reno and Lake Tahoe are, but Nevada was not out of COVID yet. Maybe next time. I moved on to Idaho, and by a culmination of events, I just so happened upon a pretty casino just an hour or so west of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and I had four hours to kill. WHY NOT GAMBLE?

Shoshone-Bannock is an Indian casino, not the large corporate type of casino, and, as I've discovered, there is an added level of pride, respect and courtesy extended to you for bringing your business there.

Although that casino was in pandemic mode, I can't tell you how wonderful the entire bartending, hosts and service staff were there. I watched a bartender run out to the parking lot to let a lady know she had \$50 in the machine. The staff couldn't be more accommodating. A host and I spent a good five minutes talking about the area, things to see and do and just overall life in Idaho versus Pennsylvania.

When I lost my first couple of bucks, I could barely care. I love good energy and, although I only planned on playing a few hundred, I tapped the ATM. I found a Triple Double Bonus Poker machine and for some reason thought, "yeah, let me take a swing."

Whelp, the timing turned out to be perfect, again. I hit my beloved Four Aces with Any 2,3,4 for the Royal Flush payout. I was so happy I could die. Will was my cashier who assisted with the handpay. We had a great chat.

When I was leaving the casino, I was bummed because I didn't want to leave. Of course, I was happy I was up but this is the kind of place I'd like to live next to.

These are the kind of peeps I would love to grab a few beers and talk about nonsense with. Go there if you're ever on the east side of Idaho and tell them the guy from Pennsylvania sent ya ;)



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Deadwood, South Dakota Casinos: Calico Jack's, Silverado Franklin and Others



For any of you who watched the HBO series Deadwood, this town is for you. For any of you who like to drink, gamble and have a good time, THIS TOWN IS FOR YOU. I planned to do one night in Deadwood and by means of adventure, ended up staying three. I love this town.

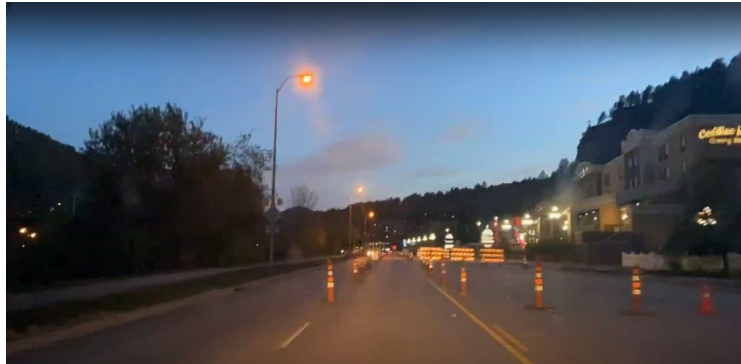
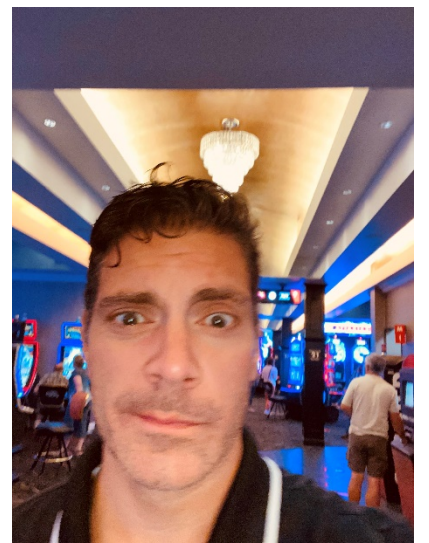
Calico Jack's is a chain casino and being that it was my first venture into the area, I played it safe. They have a weird hotel setup as three separate hotels are connected to them. Double-Tree was beautiful (not comped) and the casino had a hip small Vegas look and feel.

Silverado Franklin was probably my favorite casino in Deadwood. As with almost all casinos outside of Nevada and AC, you have to pay for drinks even when playing until a host sees you. The place is big, they have a beautiful patio for drinks and people watching, and they have \$2 VIDEO POKER!!!! I had a wonderful talk with one of the managers on staff. She walked me around a bit to show me what's what (I wished I wrote her name down, she was too much fun to talk to. Another drinking buddy someday!). When we finished chatting, my machine was taken. I walked to the bar and picked up a cocktail instead. The bartender and I were having a good time making fun of random reality stars on the TV. I had another cocktail. And another. And maybe one more.

When I finally got to my machine, I was flying, which is usually a recipe for disaster. As it were though, my timing was perfect. The machine was hot. I hit 3 four of a kinds and finally got the Four Aces with Any 2,3,4. It was Double Double Bonus Poker, which

is my typical game. This only pays half the Royal Flush but I was so happy to see my namesake again on this trip. The manager comped me a few more drinks and I am not sure how I got back to my hotel. Love love love this casino.

In Deadwood, there are a ton of other casinos and I popped into and out of a bunch: The Station, Tin Lizzie, Gem, Mineral Palace and others. Each has its own flavor and attraction. This is a great town to visit!



Mystic Lake, Minneapolis

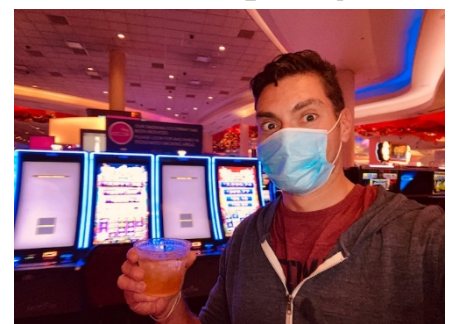


"Hey Victor, how close to Minneapolis would you advise staying during massive protests and riots?" For me, the answer is easy. Mystic Lake. This casino is beautiful. The hotel rooms, the bars, the restaurants, the machines (\$1 Double Super Times Pay, \$2 Video Poker, and with Triple Double!) and the people are just perfect. I felt welcomed and cared for from the get-go. And the irony, that if I had come a few days earlier as planned, I would have stayed in the city. Again, my timing was perfect.

Despite the riots, this casino was focused on keeping their strict COVID measures in place, so you really couldn't do much, but I could see how this place could be an amazing destination. On a Wednesday night, there were plenty of people at the bar, social distancing and conversing

through their masks). I had another long gambling session. I think I played for eight hours on \$300 (that's CRAZY).

In the morning, when I woke, I went for breakfast and there was a bit of a crowd. To respect the social distance, I did my part and went to a video pokes machine. I hit a jackpot or two before my breakfast, and was back on the road before 12. The timing was so perfect, I even got a free gift that became available at 11!



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Davenport, IA Casinos: Capri Isle by The Sea and Rhythm Casino



Davenport, Iowa, has a number of casinos, and I had planned to stay in this town from the beginning so I could visit a friend, even moved some things around to hit this spot (forced trip means RED FLAG). I stayed at The Isle of Capri. It sits on the river and externally is a pretty casino. Inside the casino, I was underwhelmed. Their machine selection was meh (no \$2 Video Poker, no \$1 Super Times Pay, limited other machines too). Their rooms were dated (I will say very clean though). Oh and boy did I get murdered on the machines I did play. Finally, due to the riots, Davenport had enacted a curfew and the casino was forced to close down at 8 PM.

Crazy times.

In the morning, I went over to the Rhythm casino. This is a very handsome casino with a small Vegas look and feel. I won a couple bucks playing what machines they had (still no \$2 Video Poker or any Super Times Pay I could play) and should have left up but I was chasing my losses from the night before. I got smoked and hit the road asking myself why I didn't stand up when I hit my second four of a kind.



Other Casinos, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio

Man, I wish I could say there was more casino visits, but this COVID thing impacted so many states that when I was on the road, they were closed. I could have sat around for a day or two as they opened, by now we were into June and many of the casinos were turning the lights back on. But if my last stop reminded me of anything, it's that timing is everything. And now wasn't the time. I'll be back again, someday, probably ;)

Epilogue

It was early June and my family was looking for me. I didn't want them to worry about me traveling, so I turned off my location services in Cali. I answered the Facetimes and Google Duo video calls only when I was outdoors. For all intents and purpose, my fam considered me on the West Coast. It was a Saturday night when I finally pulled into my Northeastern Pennsylvania driveway, and I was exhausted.

Through pics shared on the family chat, I could see we were having a fireplace social distance gathering. So, I disinfected myself one more time (as we have all done now so many times) and snuck into their backyard behind the fireplace. I watched them chat and dance for a while and when it felt right, I called out, "HEY YOU GUYS!!!!"

The nieces and nephews looked at each other, "Dad?" But their dads were just as confused as they were. Again, I called out, "HEY YOU GUYS!!!" Now the entire crew was MAD confused. No one knew what was up. My brother pulled the beer back from his lips, "Chunk? From Goonies?"

I stepped out from behind the fire place, "It's Sloth, but close enough." The whole crew was shocked, and we stared at each other because we really can't hug or do any of that good nonsense just yet. My brother in law looked at me, "What the hell are you doing here?"

I looked at the beer in his hand, "It's been a long ride. I could use a drink." The entire family ran into the house to go grab me a cocktail.

I sat down in a chair, spaced in front of the fire near my sister. She sat - a smug smile on her face. My niece rushes to hand me a glass of scotch. My sister says, "You're home." All I can say back is, "Perfect Timing."



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EVENTS

A GAMBLER'S TO-DO

July:

- All casinos can open, but a number are holding off until they can get us drunk and stuff

August 6th – August 10th:

- Regular Fun Crew in PH LV (if they open in time) CANCELLED

JACKPOTS

ROAD TRIP HITS

May 29th Hard Rock Sacramento

4 Aces on \$1 Double Super Time Pay Triple Double Bonus Poker for \$4015 – If only there was a multiplier!



June 2nd Silverado Franklin in Deadwood, SD

4 Aces with kicker hit on a beautiful old time \$2 Double Double Bonus Poker machine for \$4000!



June 4th Mystic Lake Casino in Mystic Lake, MN

4 Aces with kicker hit on a \$1 Double Super Time Pay Double Double Bonus Poker for \$2015!



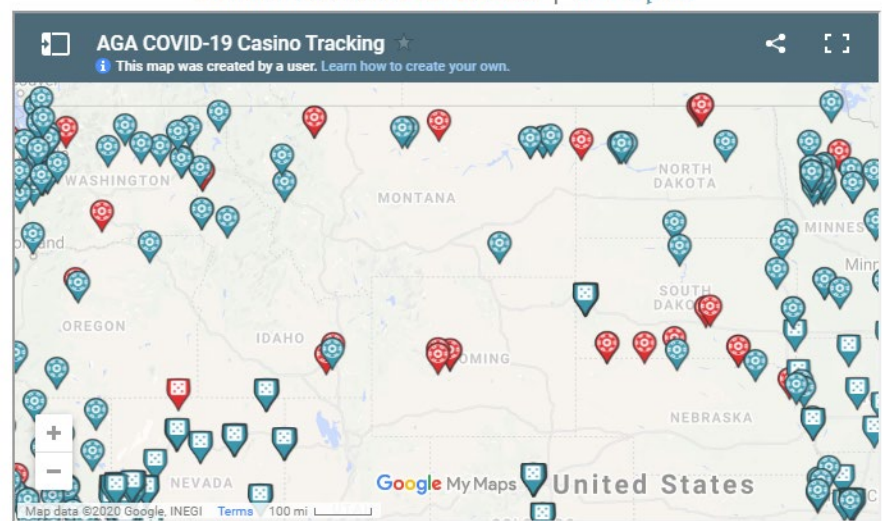
CASINO OPENINGS

CHECK OUT WHAT'S OPEN

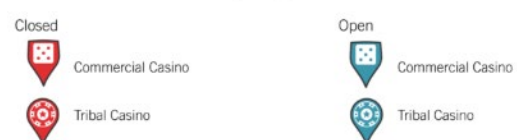
I swear I thought this nonsense would be over by now. Just too many people wanting to go out on the streets and shout this thing or that thing, spreading what was left of this nonsense around. OK, THIS TIME FOR REAL. Only a couple more weeks until all the casinos that have survived this pandemic will open up.

Here's what we know so far. Be safe out there and hope to see everyone at a bar real soon!

Current Status: 148 Closed | 841 Open



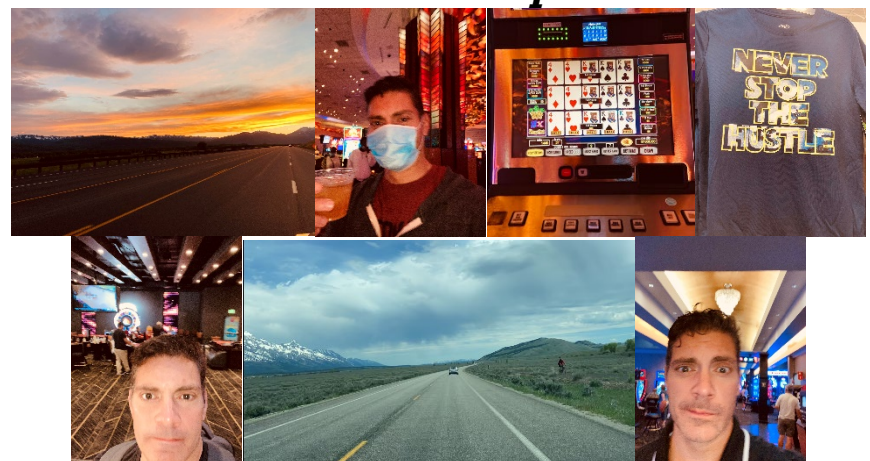
Map Key



Data and graph provided by

<https://www.americangaming.org/research/covid-19-casino-tracker/>

More Pics from the Road Trip





THE HOT LIST

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