

The biggest little city goes farm-to-fork in style

By Jackie Burrell, Bay Area News Group

There's something distinctly different about Reno these days.

Oh, the neon arch still proclaims this the biggest little city in the world, and you'll still find weary gamblers plying the slots. But the city is suddenly alive with new distilleries and craft breweries, grain-to-glass bars, farm-to-fork restaurants and a buzzy arts scene.

And the newest downtown lodging is an eco-friendly, nonsmoking, nongambling boutique hotel. Instead of a casino, the Whitney Peak Hotel has a gigantic bouldering gym, and its edifice holds the world's tallest climbing wall – so intrepid guests can gaze down at the “Biggest Little City” arch next door from 164 feet. We got dizzy just looking up.

In fact, that dazed, delighted feeling lasted all weekend as we suddenly realized – Reno has farms? And a buzzy arts scene? And a glitzy hotel sans slots and smokes? And that's not all?

How awesome is it to arrive in a place you thought you knew and discover you were delightfully wrong? We ponder the question as we stroll the galleries of the Nevada Museum of Art, just a few blocks from the Truckee River, which bisects the city. Built in 2003, the museum's striking four-story building is a huge black mass with cantilevered edges and curves wrapped in crimped, charcoal-hued zinc, its lines echoing Nevada's Black Rock formation. Inside, the exhibits are eclectic, fascinating and thought-provoking. We gaze at paintings and works from the museum's permanent collections and check out a watershed sculpture exhibit, an amazingly bizarre taxidermied art exhibit and rooms filled with watercolors and sketches of coral reef destruction in the

South Pacific.

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