

Reno's family-friendly makeover

By Susan Moeller, Boston Globe

On a cold night in March, Great Full Gardens restaurant in a nondescript brick building in Reno's MidTown District is jamming. Locavores tuck into plates that are paleo-friendly at one table, vegan at the next, grass-fed at another. One of my daughters, Emily, is eating a black bean burger. The other, Sophie, is sipping an artisan kombucha. There's not a slot machine, cigarette, exotic dancer, or daiquiri in sight. Welcome to 21st-century Reno.

Tell someone you're headed to Reno and you're likely to hear a story involving copious amounts of alcohol and activities unfit for a family newspaper. But because Sophie has lived in the area for almost 10 years, I've developed a soft spot for "The Biggest Little City in the World." Often thought of as a smaller, less glitzy – but generally more affordable – cousin to Las Vegas, Reno is in the midst of a big makeover. And it's not just about the food.

In the last few years, Reno's city leaders and entrepreneurs have embraced its easy access to the outdoors, reasonable climate (at 4,000 feet, it's markedly cooler than Vegas and has lots of sunshine); central location (about a four-hour drive from the San Francisco Bay Area); and the culture of Burning Man (about 30,000 "Burners" fly into the Reno-Tahoe International Airport each summer on their way to the arts gathering in Black Rock Desert).

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