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# news

## Observation Wheel in Las Vegas Expected to Reach New Heights

By Mark Fitzgerald

The construction of a new observation wheel—which has been designed to surpass the height of the London Eye by more than 30 m—will begin in Las Vegas sometime this year, according to Voyager Entertainment International, Inc., a development company based in that city prepared to build the wheel. Revolving at an apex of more than 182 m, the wheel will feature 32 “Orbitor” cabins and two observation platforms that offer an overlook of the Las Vegas Strip.

“This project is remarkable in a number of ways,” says Daniel E. Campbell, P.E., M.ASCE, a structural engineer commissioned to build the wheel. “The structure is a greatly embellished set of ‘A’ frame supports designed to resist imposed loads in a very efficient way. Each cabin is designed to house twenty visitors in a luxurious setting for the twenty-seven minute lofted experience, which will include a steward and drinks served in a first class lounge atmosphere.”

The wheel, which will have a diameter of over 150 m, will be constructed mostly of steel and within its center will contain a considerable amount of usable space. In addition to the two observation platforms, some of that space will be used for condominiums, swimming pools, and a nightclub, a recent press release from Voyager Entertainment International, Inc. noted.

“It is a remarkable structure in that it is such a simple solution to an elaborate moving habitable sculpture,” adds Campbell, who has been involved in a variety of engineering projects in Southern Nevada, including the Statue of Liberty at the New York, New York Hotel and Casino; numerous structures at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) Theme Park; and the rock-scape design at Buffalo Bills Hotel and Casino.

Backed by \$150 million, the project involves close collaboration between theme construction specialists, engineers, and architectural designers. Voyager Entertainment International anticipates the wheel to be a state-of-the-art attraction (it has already promoted it as the “World’s Tallest Observation Wheel”) that will yield substantial profits from the estimated seven million riders per year who purchase tickets. “The return on investment is sure to be great,” adds Campbell. “The wheel will also have a big impact on the already well developed visitor interest in Las Vegas as a destination with a wide variety of attractions and experiences. Of course, the corporate ownership and stockholders won’t be complaining either.”