

1, 149 FEET

# DAREDEVILS WANTED!

by Erin K. Schonauer and  
Jamie C. Schonauer

**DESTINATION:** Stratosphere Tower, Las Vegas

Soaring 1,149 feet, the Stratosphere Tower is the tallest freestanding observation tower in the United States. Perched at the top are the highest thrill rides in the world.

To build this massive tower, construction workers used concrete and steel. At its base, three reinforced concrete legs, each weighing 4 million pounds, surround a six-sided core. They form a pedestal at 800 feet, which holds the 12-story pod on top. Here, four rides await you—if you're a real daredevil.

Ready to rocket to the sky? Big Shot is the highest thrill ride in the world. Before takeoff, riders sit in open-air compartments with their feet skimming the Nevada sky. Air pressure launches the riders 160 feet up the tower's spire traveling at 45 miles per hour. Once they reach a total height of 1,081 feet, they plunge down in time for another blast.

Nosedive anyone? X-Scream dips passengers nearly 30 feet over the tower's edge. Its eight-seat car races along a track at 30 miles per hour until its magnetic brakes kick in, leaving wide-eyed riders staring at the city 866 feet below.

Dare to get dizzy? Spinning at 40 miles per hour, Insanity extends riders 64 feet beyond the tower's edge. Twirling 900 feet above Vegas, Insanity then tilts riders at a 70-degree angle toward the ground. Luckily, its claw-like arms hold passengers safely in two-seat compartments.

Pumped to jump 855 feet? Rather than zooming down the double-decker elevators at 21 miles per hour, daredevils choose SkyJump. While wearing a jumpsuit and harness, riders are connected to a "descender machine," which controls the jumpers' speed. Daringly, they leap from the 108th floor, falling at 40 miles per hour. Even exits are extreme at the Stratosphere! ★

**LEFT:** The Stratosphere Tower soars over Las Vegas Boulevard.  
**RIGHT: (FROM TOP TO BOTTOM)** Riders get a blast on Big Shot; X-Scream looms over the edge moments before its downward dip; Insanity spins riders above Vegas; SkyJump's taunting view.

