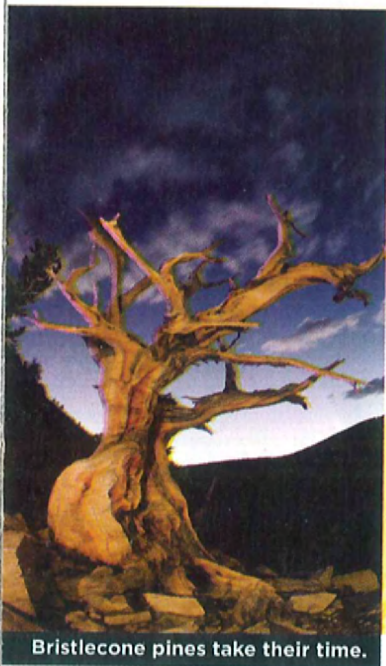


On the Road



Bristlecone pines take their time.

GREAT OUTDOORS

Age-old beauty near Las Vegas

Ersatz antiquities are big draws in Vegas. You can hardly toss a poker chip without hitting an Egyptian pyramid, an 18th-century pirate ship, or a medieval castle. But if faux history leaves you hankering for a look at something truly venerable, head out of town to 11,918-foot Mount Charleston, the recreation area 45 minutes northwest of the Strip.

High above the Mojave Desert floor, amid limestone cliffs, lives a stand of fantastically gnarled bristlecone pines that rank among the world's oldest beings. "They've seen lots of weather, so they're twisted from

the wind and the bark is stripped off," says Branch Whitney, a Las Vegas outdoorsman and author. "They're really dramatic looking and photogenic."

The most ancient bristlecone here, Raintree, is about 1,500 years old. It is easy to find on the North Loop Trail, 2.7 miles from the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area parking lot. The park has 51 miles of hiking trails, but a driving tour on the Mount Charleston Scenic Byway makes a fine day trip. (702) 515-5400, www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf/districts/smmra. —ANNE BURKE

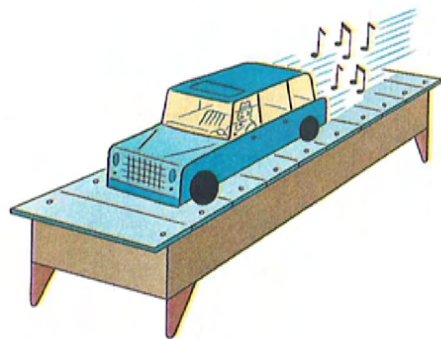
HOT PROPERTY

Close enough for comfort: Yosemite's Evergreen Lodge

Vacations often require compromise. The kids yearn to hike, Dad hopes to enjoy the scene with a cold beer, and Mom wants a massage. California's Evergreen Lodge is the rare place that may please everyone. Built in 1921, the lodge just west of Yosemite National Park first housed a post office, store, and, it's said, moonshine still. Today, pints are poured in the new beer garden, part of a renovation that includes 24 fresh cabins with king-size beds, spacious living rooms, and private decks. And there's a massage cabana for relaxing after a long day hike—or for enjoying on a day with no hiking at all. From \$99. (800) 935-6343, evergreenlodge.com. —MIYOKO OHTAKE



The Sierra resort's face-lift glows.



DETOUR

Hiyo Silver highway

Lancaster, Calif., has given new meaning to the term *road music*. The desert city's musical roadway—the first of its kind in North America—plays a 20-second snippet of the "William Tell Overture" as cars zip over it. The sound generator, first put in for a Honda auto commercial, is a pattern of crosswise grooves cut into a stretch of pavement by a company that grinds diversion channels in roadways to aid rainfall runoff.

At one point the strips were paved over after neighbors complained of noise and motorists making U-turns to replay the tune—think of the Lone Ranger's theme. On occasion drivers even backed up at speed over the grooves. "It was just a matter of time before someone got hurt," says R. Rex Parris, Lancaster's mayor.

But the musical road's demise sparked an even more vociferous outcry, so the city of 145,000 spent some \$28,000 to reinstall it in a nonresidential area. The westbound left lane of West Avenue G between 32nd and 40th streets now plays the tune for motorists, its pitch and rhythm sounding best when a midsize sedan drives over it at or near the speed limit. —JENNY HONTZ