

Now, the VOA Special English program Words and Their Stories.

Many cities have interesting nicknames. Nicknames can help establish the identity of a city. They can also spread pride among its citizens.

New Orleans, Louisiana probably has more nicknames than any other American city. One web site lists more than twenty nicknames. The most famous is "The Big Easy." It describes the gentle, slow and easy-going way of life in New Orleans.

So how did the city get this nickname? In the early 1900s there was a dance hall in New Orleans called "The Big Easy." But the nickname did not become famous until the early 1970s. That was when a Louisiana newspaper writer began calling New Orleans by this name. She compared the easy-going way of life there to the hurried pace of life in New York City.

In 1970, James Conaway wrote a crime novel called "The Big Easy." The story was set in New Orleans. In 1987, that book was made into a film which made the nickname even more popular.

New Orleans has other nicknames. One of them is "The Crescent City." During the 19th century, new neighborhoods expanded out from what is now known as the French Quarter. These areas followed the great curve of the Mississippi River, giving New Orleans the shape of a crescent.

Another nickname is “The Birthplace of Jazz,” because that kind of music started in New Orleans. It is also called “Mardi Gras City” for the wild celebrations and parades that take place there every year. And, there is a nickname that uses the short way to write New Orleans and Louisiana. If you do not want to use the complete name, you can call the city “NOLA.”

One of America’s most exciting cities is Las Vegas, Nevada. There you can play games of chance all night long. The city’s nightclubs are also open all night for eating, drinking and dancing. So it is not surprising that Las Vegas is called “The Gambling Capital of the World” and “The Entertainment Capital of the World.”

Another nickname for Las Vegas is “Sin City,” because you can find many kinds of adult entertainment there. Many people who come to Las Vegas in hopes of winning lots of money do not know when to stop gambling. They may lose a great deal of their hard-earned money. So the city is also called something that sounds like Las Vegas – “Lost Wages.”

In 1964, Elvis Presley starred in a movie called “Viva Las Vegas.” Here he sings the title song from that movie.

This program was written by Shelley Gollust. I’m Barbara Klein.



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