

These real-world casino heists make ‘Ocean’s Eleven’ look mild

Written by Administrator

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This past weekend, visitors to Las Vegas’s luxurious Bellagio experienced a truly crazy show — even by Sin City standards. On Saturday, three crooks dressed in fancy black suits and animal masks [smashed their way into the casino’s Rolex shop](#), grabbed wristwatches and ran out. Some patrons fled, fearing for their lives. The thieves’ getaway was foiled by a car that would not start. A man in a pig mask was apprehended. You can’t make this stuff up.

Though Hollywood would have you believe otherwise, extravagant heists are rare in real-world casinos, where cameras and security seem to be everywhere and a tight lid is kept on the cash. But when over-the-top schemes do happen, they can be even wilder than in the movies.

Take one incident in Macau, where an employee at a “junket operator” — a company that liaises between casinos and gamblers, to bring in high-rollers — allegedly managed to embezzle as much as \$258 million from the outfit that employed him, [as reported by Bloomberg](#). It was disastrous enough for the firm to file a police report (which is noteworthy in a corner of the industry that tries to avoid getting the authorities involved in legal issues).

Some wrongdoers don’t even need inside connections. At the Venetian, in Vegas, a man simply wandered into what the [LA Times described](#) as an “off-limits area” and strolled out with \$1.6 million in casino chips. And in Philadelphia, [CBS Philly reported](#), 11 winning gamblers were robbed after leaving SugarHouse Casino, four of whom were tasered over the course of a single week.

London thieves took more of a classy, cinematic approach to relieve a gambling den of some 1.3 million British pounds (about \$1.6 million). [According to BBC News](#), a trio of advantage-players used a laser scanner to clock roulette wheels and gauge the correct numbers to bet on. They were arrested and their money was confiscated. Then, they were released and had their winnings returned. Yes, amazingly, British police decided that the group technically did nothing illegal, so they got to keep the cash.

But these things don’t always go smoothly. In 2012, a pair of wig- and sunglasses-wearing knuckleheads made their way into the Bellagio and proceeded to a high-stakes blackjack table. One guy blasted the area with pepper spray while another reached for high-denomination chips,

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grabbing \$115,000 worth of the precious gambling discs.

"I saw an arm, out of the side of my eye, reach out and squirt something," a player at the table [told Las Vegas Review Journal](#)

. "At first I thought it was a joke, like some old high school friend. But, then my wife screamed, and a guy reached into the plastic that holds down the chips and started grabbing, and I said, 'It's a freakin' robbery.'"

The thief with the chips, Michael Belton, was tackled and arrested. The sprayer eluded authorities. Belton pleaded guilty, accepting a plea deal of two to five years behind bars in Nevada. At his sentencing, he let loose with the ultimate understatement: "I'm sorry about what I did. It was poor judgment on my part."

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