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Take Your Kids to the Carousel in Santa Monica. They'll Love You For It!



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In this age of high tech entertainment and digital extravaganzas, can carousels compete for your kids' attention? They absolutely can. I would characterize it as guaranteed fun. We proved it ourselves last week when we visited the Santa Monica Carousel with our two and a half year old daughter. Located at the foot of the Santa Monica Pier, the impressive carousel captures the imagination of young and old. We did not know much about it prior to the visit, apart from that "it's there". We did engage in some pre visit buildup making our daughter extremely eager to finally experience it.

The Santa Monica Pier complex is a mash up of all kinds of seaside entertainment opportunities. We set our minds on one activity and tried not to stray too much. Carousel and a walk to the beach would fill our half day fun. We parked at the large parking lot just North of the pier and paid around seven dollars for it. There are much cheaper options near Santa Monica place. For example: Structures 1 through 9 (on 2nd and 4th Streets) offer first 2 hours free, \$1 each additional 30 minutes. If you are willing/able to walk half a mile you can even get the entire experience for almost no parking dollars. For parking aficionados, this Santa Monica site offers wealth of information about parking in the City:

<http://parking.smgov.net>

The Carousel is located at the foot of the Pier, South side, just as you descend from the bridge. As the city web site describes it, it is located "in a Byzantine-Moorish style" building. Even if you are not familiar with this specific architectural style you will know it when you see it. For those with time on their hands here is what Wikipedia says about these styles: [Byzantine](#) and [Moorish](#). Upon entering the Carousel building you will immediately see the beautiful

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large merry-go-round as a centerpiece. The music, the horses, colors, carriages, mirrors, lights and the atmosphere are right out of some children's book. You will notice the enthralled kids' faces as they ride the carousel. Even more excitement is seen in the line to buy tickets.

We purchased our tickets and waited our turn. Our little one did not want to go by herself on a horse so I rode with her. The weight limit for the mobile up and down horseys is 180 lbs. We exceeded that so we rode the stationary horsey. There are also carriages that were popular with families with small kids. Then, the magic moment happened. The music started and the carousel picked up speed. For the next 5-10 minutes (more than sufficient ride length) we were in a magic merry-go-round wonderland. As we rode in circles we waved to everyone, cheered, screamed, jumped up and down, laughed and giggled. The music and surroundings transported us to a really really nice place. After the ride, these wonderful feelings persisted for the rest of the day.

Treat time was next. Soda Jerks ice cream shop is located on the premises and we decided to try their ice cream. We were not really expecting too much here as far as taste is concerned. However, we were pleasantly surprised by the delicious creamy ice cream. I would most definitely return here just for a sweet treat. As we ate and licked our scoops we proceeded to the outside tables. Our daughter played here, got her face all chocolatey and was intrigued by the seaside decorations on the tables. We chilled and enjoyed the Santa Monica breeze. Following this, we walked to the water's edge, then back to the car.

A perfect excursion and a great way to spend some quality time with your little ones !!!
(and not break your bank)

Here is some more data:

Adult Carousel ride fare for persons over 14 years are \$2, for children between three years and 14 years of age are \$1. Children aged two and under ride for free if accompanied by a ticketed adult.

And here are some cool facts directly from the official web sites of the carousel (<http://www.santamonicapier.org/> and <http://www.mycarouselparty.com>):

- The Carousel Building was designed and built in 1916 by Charles Looff
- Charles Looff was one of the original designers of the Santa Monica Pleasure Pier.
- It is listed in the National Registry of Historic Places.
- The building that houses the carousel is built in a

Byzantine-Moorish style

- The carousel is owned by the City of Santa Monica since 1977.
- The merry-go-round is one of the few surviving all-wooden Carousels in the world - less than 70 continue to operate today.
- It has been carefully restored and renovated in 1981-1983, 1990 and just three years ago.

200 Santa Monica Pier
Santa Monica, CA 90401
310-458-8900

<http://www.santamonicapier.org/>
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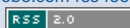
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