

Atlantic City's Steel Pier Opens for it's 126th Year

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Riders on the Freedom Flyer get some thrills aboard a topsy-turvy amusement during opening day of Atlantic City's Steel Pier on Saturday. The pier opened for its 126th season with familiar favorites but also some new attractions.

Vernon Ogradnek Photos, Staff Photographer

ATLANTIC CITY (March 31, 2024) — For locals such as Mays Landing resident Denise Farina Pierce, coming to the Steel Pier on Easter weekend, when the attraction first opens its gates for the upcoming tourist season, has been a decades-long family tradition.

For the past 40 years, Farina Pierce, 61, has been bringing her four children, eight grandchildren and now three great-grandchildren to the pier at 1000 Boardwalk.

"We used to get the kids all dolled up on Easter and dressed for the contests they had, the pageants, go to the pancake breakfasts they used to have, take pictures with the Easter Bunny," Farina Pierce said Saturday, reminiscing about the days when she used to bring her kids, now adults, to the pier. "It's a shame they don't do that kind of stuff anymore, but we still have a lot of fun being together and enjoying the nice weather. The kids are with their babies, and it really is just a beautiful day."

So when the Steel Pier opened its gates for its 126th year at noon, Farina Pierce was getting her family's season tickets.

"I love Atlantic City. And the kids love it too. They're small, so it's like they're in Disney World," said Farina Pierce, as her 4-year-old granddaughter got ready to ride the carousel. "I'm local, so I don't have to travel far or spend thousands of dollars to go to Florida. The kids have the beach and the rides during the day. Then I get to hit the casinos and have a couple drinks at night."

Sharon Franz, sales and marketing director for the Steel Pier, said it's "always been a tradition for all boardwalks and amusement piers at the Jersey Shore" to open Easter weekend.

Steel Pier just got a new helicopter for its flights around the island, she said. The historic pier plans to open a new Spinning Coaster in late spring, in addition to hosting more events and activities, like a Mother's Day Character lunch for kids.

The season opener, although weather dependent, also is Steel Pier's way of gauging if it'll be a good year for the organization. Hundreds of people showed up. They waited in small lines to get on The Wheel, which is 227 feet tall, the Flying Dutchman boat and the dozens of other rides.

Others tried their luck at winning giant teddy bears or other prizes by shooting targets with water guns, popping balloons on dart boards, and playing other games.

Others hit the boards to enjoy the weather with family and friends.

"The last time I was here was when I was 10 years old," said Alexia Singh, who visited from Hartford, Connecticut, with her family because it was a nice way to spend the day outdoors with her 18-month old daughter and husband. "I didn't know it was opening for the first time today, but it's been amazing, especially now that I have a child."

An Easter Bunny gave out little goodie bags filled with a few yellow, green, pink, purple and blue-highlighter colored eggs. Also offered at its booths this weekend is a buy-one get-one-free 80-count ticket sale, as well as a BOGO deal for The Wheel tickets.

"We didn't expect this many people to be out today, but it's really nice," Singh said. "The summer season is going to be great."

For now, the pier will be open from noon to 11 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, according to its website. It also will be open from 1 to 6 p.m. this Monday through Friday for spring break. For Memorial Day weekend, the pier will open at 4 p.m. Friday, May 24. Starting Friday, June 14, the pier will be open daily.

For more information and prices, visit steelpier.com.

By: Selena Vazquez

https://pressofatlanticcity.com/news/local/atlantic-city-steel-pier-opening-day-2024-easter-weekend/article_f75cc0d8-eec4-11ee-84a5-1fd6153da2ae.html