

Pamper yourself and check out the shopping in Santa Monica



By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

SANTA MONICA - On our recent trip to the Los Angeles area we were like a lot of tourists, wanting to spend time at the beach. There was one problem: we did not bring our own towels, chairs or umbrellas. In researching Santa Monica (www.santamonica.com), our prayers were answered in the form of Perry's Café and Rentals (www.perryscafe.com).

Perry's has been an integral part of the Los Angeles beach scene and an icon in the community for over 37 years. With nine prime locations throughout Santa Monica and Venice beach, including four open air cafés, they possess a large array of amenities. Perry's offers an assortment of beach and bike rentals, delicious foods with fresh ingredients prepared daily, and a variety of items to satisfy your palate. You can relax at one of their lounge areas, eat with friends, get pampered by our Beach Butlers or simply enjoy a bike ride. Oh yes, the Beach Butler. We opted for the Custom Butler package – lunch, drinks, beach chairs, umbrellas, a wind block and a small table. For \$100, not including tip, this was a real bargain. For an additional charge, you can also order items such as sunscreen, beach toys and a full array of rentals ranging from extra chairs to boogie boards. When you are ready to leave, there is no cleanup. Just pack up and go – but return the walkie talkie.

Our Beach Butler Matthew, attired in a golf shirt and bow tie, set us up comfortably and left an ice cooler with chilled waters and a walkie talkie to reach him whenever we needed. He even provided his cell phone number, encouraging us to text him if need be. After reviewing the neat menu we communicated with him, ordering a couple of absolutely delicious sandwiches.

We were seated at the picturesque 2400 Ocean Walk location right near the water. The Beach Butler is a pretty neat concept. For reservations just call 310-303-8493 or communicate with them via their website.

After spending the day at the beach, head over to Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier. This is a full-service amusement park located on the Pier with rides and attrac-

tions for kids and adults, including such unique rides and activities as a five-story West Coaster roller coaster, the nine-story Pacific Plunge tower ride and the nine-story Pacific Wheel – the only over-water ferris wheel in California, and the first solar-powered wheel in the world.

Main Street and the "Green Light District" are where the locals go. This eclectic street oozes laidback beach lifestyle and a commitment to sustainability. This street has the most certified green businesses in the city as well as a community garden. You'll find boutiques, design galleries, cafes, bars, restaurants and more. Santa Monica Place, an entirely outdoor three story shopping mecca, was a lot of fun and an easy walk from the beach. It features Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom, Coach, Tiffany as well as a third floor rooftop deck that's entirely for dining and featuring gorgeous ocean views. From there we moved on to the Third Street Promenade. The city's pedestrian-only "outdoor living room," features all forms of entertainment, street performers, movie theaters, restaurants, bars, art galleries, shopping and people watching! It is a "must" stop

Also worth a visit is Bergamot Station, an old trolley station that was transformed into Southern California's largest art gallery complex and cultural center. It features 40 different art galleries in one location, as well as the Santa Monica Museum of Art and Bergamot Café, with outdoor seating and healthy lunches and snacks.

The Santa Monica Visitor Information Centers are your source for all things Santa Monica. They each provide friendly, trained and knowledgeable travel counsellors; visitor guides and maps; foreign language line; and information on attractions, hotels, dining, museums, galleries and entertainment. At their Walk-In Visitor Information Center on Main Street,

you will find a full display of free visitor information; three computers with high-speed Internet access; Santa Monica gifts and souvenirs; tickets to area attractions; and a display on all things "green" in Santa Monica. You can call 1-800-544-5319 for more information or email info@santamonica.com

Santa Monica is on the western oceanfront edge of Los Angeles, just 16 miles from the heart of Downtown L.A., just eight miles from Los Angeles International (LAX) Airport and close to other Southern California cities such as Hollywood and Beverly Hills.

The city of Santa Monica's story began when a Franciscan monk, inspired by the region's natural springs, named the area after Saint Monica. The rest, as they say, is history, and a rich history at that.

