

## Santa Claus Returns to Lower Manhattan, Christmas Joy in Tow

Rejoice, Lower Manhattanites and Bruce Springsteen Christmas song fans alike. Santa Claus isn't just coming to town, the man in red is already here. How he arrived is something of a mystery at present, but as the great Alabama-raised country soul singer Clarence Carter told it in 1968, "They Call Me Back Door Santa, I make my runs about the break of day."

Replace "back door" with "downtown" and you're close to understanding how Santa Claus—and his doubles—have ensconced themselves on opposite shores of Lower Manhattan, one on Pier 15 at South Street Seaport, the other in Brookfield Place in Battery Park City.

Although NYPD, the US Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, and the and North Pole's Deputy Commissioner for Public Information all declined to comment on how the Santas arrived downtown, informed sources suggest it was not by land or river but rather by air—perhaps even a flying sled. As for where Santas stay downtown when they are not on duty pleasing the kids, adults, and pets who wish to be photographed with him, this too is being kept hush hush.



## East Side, Beast Side

On the East Side, Santa's home is at Pier 15. Formally, the address is 78 South St., between John and Fletcher streets. Colloquially, get yourself to Fulton Street and keep walking east, crossing under the FDR Drive. To the left you'll see the Tin Building food court, to the right you'll see the South Street Seaport ships and just past them, Pier 15, which in its non-holiday guise is best known as Watermark, a restaurant, bar, and event venue renowned for its historic location and views of the Brooklyn Bridge. (Fans of the classic 1953 atomic bomb testing monster movie *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*—which sees the titular Beast surface right here—must visit regardless of the season.)

Continuing through Dec. 31, however, Watermark is transformed into Santa's Winter Wonderland. At the high end, one can buy tickets for a variety of dining options—chalet seating, glasshouse table, private glasshouse, etc.—whose prices include **food and admission to the Christmas-themed Winter Wonderland arcade.**

At the low end, you can pay about \$22 (\$19 + \$2.71 "fee") for admission to the Wonderland arcade alone. For many parents, this is the most compelling option and gives one an hour or so of entertainment in what's essentially an outdoor Christmas-decorated play space.

Among the Wonderland's offerings are numerous Christmas trees, a lighted tunnel, a large chalk wishing wall, a photograph-ready sleigh carriage with the Brooklyn Bridge behind it, a mini-carousel, and a toy shed with a fake "snow" makers (which seemed to be soap bubbles), marshmallow-roasting fire, and, of course, pictures with Santa.