

Blackpool has three piers, built in Victorian days. The earliest was the North Pier, built opposite the road from the railway station so that early visitors could naturally progress down towards the sea and then straight onto the pier.

It was built with a distinctive sloping entrance, which still exists on one side today. This was because a mound had been built on the site of the entrance in 1846. The mound vanished when work was carried out subsequently on the promenade and sea wall.

The pier was opened on 23 May 1863 as the "Blackpool Pier". It had been estimated that 200,000 visitors would walk along the decking each year, but 247,000 visited in the pier's first year with twice the annual target being met the following year.

There was little commercialism on the pier, with only two sales kiosks apart from the entrance toll to tempt money from the public. Despite this, the pier earned its shareholders dividends in plenty.



The entrance to the pier in 1998. An amusement arcade now stands at the entrance to the pier, though access to the decking can be gained directly down the slope, under the yellow half-moon signboard towards the left of the photograph.

This leads visitors past the ticket sales office for the pier end theatre and also through a conservatory seating area for a bar, where several shops and kiosks can tempt them.

An electric tram can be ridden to the far end of the pier, for those unable or unwilling to walk.

Children are always fascinated by the sight of the sea as seen through the gaps between the decking planks beneath their feet, whilst for many years a favourite joke of comics at seaside pier theatres has been an impression of a young lady wearing stiletto heels who suddenly finds that her heel has become wedged down these same gaps!



Mind you, in this view it looks like it may take something a little wider than a stiletto heel to become wedged in the gaps!

This was taken in 1991 when the rails for the electric tram were being laid.



At the far end of the pier is a two-storey carousel, seen here shortly after being erected in 1991.





In this recent photograph the carousel has been shielded from the weather if needs be by glass partitions.

Despite these attractions, the North Pier remains the least commercialised of the three piers and the decking still allows an uninterrupted walk in a straight line from one end of the pier to the other.



Opposite the theatre is the sun deck. Raymond Wallbank was a regular for many years, playing the mighty Wurlitzer organ here. He readily agreed to pose for a photograph when I asked, the photo being taken at a Miss Blackpool heat in 1982.



Ah yes - the lads' ears pricked up there! Skater Robin Cousins was the judge and picked No.5, Wendy Phizacklea.

I can't remember any of the fellas falling asleep but as you see, left, not everyone was riveted!



The North Pier seen from the top of Blackpool Tower, 11 August 1998.



The appearance of the North Pier has remained unchanged over the years except for one or two additions.

This photograph was taken in 1977.

The Carousel, costing £500,000, was installed on North Pier in June 1991, having been built in Italy (Venice). It is a two-storey traditional style merry-go-round carrying over 70 passengers. It features ornate gondolas, as well as colourful horses.

It was originally open to the elements, but the housing was built for it later.

The Venetian Carousel is free to ride all day as many times as you like with the 50p toll. Fantastic for both children & adults!



THE OPEN AIR THEATRE AND SUN DECK

Enjoy free live entertainment in the Carousel Bar at the end of North Pier. Let our entertainers keep the kids happy with all their favourite songs. Starring duos Pure and Bulgaria as well as 5 star groups Footloose and Groovy Movie.

The Carousel Bar allows you to sit and take in the views over the sea and back onto the promenade. It's an ideal place to see some magnificent views.

Opening times may vary, please call 01253 621452.

CAROUSEL BAR

The Merrie England Adult Comedy & Show Bar is great for an adult only night out with great names such as Bernard Manning & Freddie Starr making special appearances.

The Merrie England is the home to Joey Blower, with fun, games & some great prizes to be won!

For more details about the Merrie England, visit the official website www.merrieenglad.co.uk

