

Santa's Island

Written by Written by Susie Tyler-Alofs

Ho, ho, ho and ahoy! Santa, elves and festive fun greeted guests at this island holiday bash.



Invitation

This invite became the first gift of the season, as a red gift box arrived in each family's mailbox. Filled with mini marshmallows, this invitation was especially fun to open. It included a large marshmallow on a stick tied to the cardstock. This idea can be adopted for any bonfire bash as s'mores-themed parties gain popularity. This invite read: "To start this holiday season with laughter, fun and s'more, we're building a great big bonfire at Lake Pleasant by the shore. All our friends are invited to our traditional Christmas Day. A festive outdoor cookout on Santa's Island by the Bay!"



Holiday Fun

A 75-foot boat ride to Santa's Island was enjoyed by all kids big and small. Their eyes lit up as we got closer to the shore. The island was illuminated by a roaring bonfire, 20 nautically decorated Christmas trees and an A-frame house set up for the perfect Christmas celebration. As fast as the boat hit shore, the children were off. The Candy Table was their first stop. Then on to the bonfire to make s'mores, followed by a game of tug of war. Next, the big activity of the night: The Christmas Ornament Hunt. A very small sailboat ornament was hidden under one of the hundreds of rocks. The prize for the guest who found the treasure? A brand new iPad. A traditional holiday meal followed the festive fun. Finally, the big surprise: Santa and his elves (from Phoenix's Santa Claus and Company) arrived via boat. Little children sat in his lap to share their Christmas wishes. As he left, he handed out navy-and-red-plaid filled stockings to all.

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Décor

Santa's Island was a huge undertaking. It would have been an impossibility without Henry Lopez, a Valley handyman who agreed to make this vision a reality. A project this big requires such a leader. Once Lopez was on board, a classic nautical holiday color scheme was introduced: navy and red plaid. This, mixed with marshmallows, to represent our s'mores theme, and small boat ornaments completed the look. A complete set of navy-and-red-plaid ornaments, wrapping paper, stockings, pillows and other coordinating items were found at IKEA.



PARTY PROS

Cuisine: Chef Daniel LaGarde, www.lagardeculinarysolutions.com. **Invitation:** The Paper Place, 480.941.2858. **Photographer:** Erica Velasco, www.ericavelasco.com. **Santa and Elves:** Santa Claus and Company, www.santaclausandcompany.com.