

Family Fun at the Musical Instrument Museum

Written by Rachel Roland

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Rachel Roland is a mom on a mission - exploring the Valley with her two little companions in search of the best restaurants, attractions, and products for you and your children. See what she has in store for your family today!



[The Musical Instrument Museum](#) is a relative newcomer to the Valley museum scene – opening just 18 months ago, it's already expanding and has garnered a lot of praise and attention from the media and, well, everyone! They recently won *Arizona Foothills Magazine's* [Best of the Valley 2012 for Best Musuem](#). After a visit there with Jeremiah and Sarah, I can see why!

Before you even start the tour, you're struck by the beauty of the building. With an acoustically perfect theater (their next performance, a Jazz Holiday Celebration, is sadly already sold out!), great gift shop, restaurant and enough exhibits to keep you busy for hours, this is the next item to put on your "Things we have to do in the Valley" list!

The entire museum is a self-guided tour with a headset and little device you can clip on your belt, purse, or they also have lanyards you can use. You can check larger bags and coats at the front desk, and I recommend this if you have a heavy bag (like me).



If you go in the morning, prepare to encounter one of the many school groups the MIM brings in yearly – there are about 25,000 kids that tour the museum with their school every year! One of the museum staff did advise that the school groups are usually done by 12pm, so if you want a less crowded experience, go on a weekday after 12pm. Weekends, I think it goes without saying, are very busy at the MIM!

Once we got our headsets, we started exploring. The exhibits are sectioned off by country – and I'm fairly certain they have instruments from every country in the world. Each exhibit has a video playing with the music coming through your headsets when you step up to the exhibit, and as you walk away, the music stops playing. I have to admit, I found this extremely neat, and I think the kids did too.



They even had ceremonial dresses to go along with the exhibits, as you see in this exhibit from Sierra Leone in Africa. I loved that you could watch the video and see the instruments in person while hearing the music the instruments make.

Now, being that Sarah is still young (not yet three), she really couldn't and didn't appreciate the self-guided tour. I think she didn't like the headset, and kept removing it. After a little while, we ended up heading to the [Experience Gallery](#), which is another amazing adventure in itself!



The Experience Gallery is where you can play instruments. I knew they had something like it at the MIM, but I was expecting a small room with a few (kid friendly) instruments. That was not the case at all! Children and adults alike can play guitars, harps, drums, a gong, xylophones, and many, many others. I have to be honest; we probably spent an hour in here, and then went to lunch at the Café.

[The Café at the MIM](#) is fantastic – they have a menu that changes daily to reflect what local produce, meat, etc they were able to obtain. We shared a turkey sandwich, macaroni and cheese, (fantastic – it had BACON in it!), and I also had soup. Of course, we had cookies (delicious!),

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and then we spent some time in their Family Center, a little room where kids can get some energy out. They have couches, little tables, a nursing room, and a bathroom in the Family Center.



Once we were done in the Family Center, we went back to the Experience Gallery, of course. Then I persuaded the children to join me in a trip to the Museum Store, with a promise to return to the Gallery. We found a gift for a party I was going to that evening (a hand-beaded African ornament), and harmonicas for both of them. Those harmonicas made for a musical ride home!

Overall, I'd recommend the MIM for children 4 years old and up. Children 5 years old and under have free admission, adults 18-64 are \$15, Seniors 65+ are \$13, and youths 6-17 are \$10. The MIM is open Monday-Wednesday 9am-5pm, Thursday & Friday 9am-9pm, Saturday 9am-5pm, and Sunday 10am-5pm. The museum staff is incredibly helpful and friendly, from the front desk to the galleries to the café, so if you have questions at any time, you can ask and not feel silly.

I know that winter break is coming up, so I would definitely get the kids out of the house and to the MIM if you're looking for something to do!

The MIM is located at: 4725 E. Mayo Boulevard Phoenix, 85050



I'm Rachel - a mom, wife, and 'green' blogger at [Small Steps On Our Journey](http://SmallStepsOnOurJourney.com). If you have any suggestions for future articles or any questions on this one, please contact me at rachel@smallstepsonourjourney.com or tweet me @rachelroland!