

Forbidden City, parks in Chinese capital reopen to public

May 1 2020



Visitors wearing face masks to protect against the new coronavirus walk through the Forbidden City in Beijing, Friday, May 1, 2020. The Forbidden City reopened beginning on Friday, China's May Day holiday, to limited visitors after being closed to the public for more than three months during the coronavirus outbreak. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

Beijing's parks and museums including the ancient Forbidden City reopened to the public Friday after being closed for months by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Forbidden City, past home to China's emperors, is allowing just 5,000 visitors daily, down from 80,000. And parks are allowing people to visit at 30% of the usual capacity.

One Beijing resident said this visit felt different than others, when the Forbidden City was more crowded. "When walking in some areas without others around I felt like getting back to the history," Bian Jiang said.

Large-scale group activities remain on hold and visitors must book tickets in advance online, according to Gao Dawei, deputy director of the Beijing Gardening and Greening Bureau.

Photos on social media showed visitors to the Forbidden City wearing face masks and being escorted by police along designated routes.

Beijing on Thursday downgraded its level of emergency response to the virus from first to second tier, but temperature checks and social distancing remain in force.

The change comes at the start of the five-day May 1 holiday and in advance of China's rescheduled gathering of the National People's Congress on May 22.



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Chinese paramilitary police and security officers wear face masks to protect against the spread of the new coronavirus as they stand guard outside an entrance to the Forbidden City in Beijing, Friday, May 1, 2020. The Forbidden City reopened beginning on Friday, China's May Day holiday, to limited visitors after being closed to the public for more than three months during the coronavirus outbreak. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)



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A visitor wearing a face mask to protect against the new coronavirus walks through the Forbidden City in Beijing, Friday, May 1, 2020. The Forbidden City reopened beginning on Friday, China's May Day holiday, to limited visitors after being closed to the public for more than three months during the coronavirus outbreak. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)



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The sessions were delayed from early March. The two-week annual meetings are largely ceremonial, with the legislature rubber-stamping decisions reached earlier by Communist Party leaders, but in typical years they are a colorful spectacle in the nation's capital. It's not yet clear if the 3,000 or so delegates would come to Beijing, or if sessions would be held virtually through videoconference.

China on Friday reported 12 new cases of the virus, six of them brought

from overseas, and no new deaths for the 16th day. It has reported a total of 4,633 deaths from the virus among about 83,000 cases, mostly in the central city of Wuhan.

Most recent cases reported in China have been among travelers arriving from abroad or in a northeastern province near the border with Russia.

Across the country, 599 patients remain under treatment for the virus. Just under 1,000 people are under medical observation because they tested positive but don't show symptoms or have symptoms but testing hasn't confirmed the infection.

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