

Pack swimsuit, mask, California welcomes back tourists

June 12 2020, by Julie Watson



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There will be no packed double-decker safari buses with tour guides rolling through the San Diego Zoo, nor animal shows that draw crowds—nor breakfast buffets at hotels.

Instead, hotels are adorning lobbies with hand sanitizing dispensers and will be limiting how many people lounge by pools. And the zoo is putting entertainers on its double-decker buses to hold moving shows while people stand on green circles to keep them six feet apart. Every visitor over the age of two will be required to wear face coverings.

California's [tourism industry](#) is gearing back up just as summer gets underway, though it will not be the same. The state is giving the green light for counties to allow hotels, zoos, aquariums and museums to reopen Friday. Gov. Gavin Newsom also said wineries in the Napa Valley can operate their tasting rooms again.

Newsom issued a stay-at-home order on March 19 and most of the state was locked down for months. He gradually started lifting the orders in May, allowing [retail stores](#) and restaurants to reopen. He soon added churches and hair salons with restrictions. But the list of businesses cleared to open Friday is the most expansive yet, though counties have the ultimate say on which stores and services can open their doors.

Stay-at-home orders are estimated to have cost the state economy some \$72 billion in expected revenue from tourism and more than 600,000 in hospitality jobs, according to Visit California, the state's tourism marketing organization.

The \$145 billion industry now is navigating unprecedented territory as it balances how to implement safety measures to control a pandemic without ruining the fun.

Meanwhile, cases of COVID-19 in the state has continued to tick upward. California on Thursday reported 139,281 cases and 4,881 deaths. The state has been averaging 2,782 cases daily compared to a daily average of 2,120 cases a week ago.

Health officials are monitoring 10 counties because of concerns about the virus. Some parts are choosing to go slower than the state is allowing, like the San Francisco Bay area.

Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board President & CEO Ernest Wooden Jr. said the industry is ready for the challenge and noted that the measures will protect "the health and well-being of our visitors, who we know are eager to bask in our renowned L.A. lifestyle and endless sunshine."

Many of the attractions that are reopening, like San Diego's famed zoo, are taking time to work out any kinks with their new [safety measures](#). On Friday, the zoo will welcome only employees and volunteers and their families. Next week, members and donors can visit and then on June 20 it will open to the public.

Volunteers armed with disinfectant will stand ready to wipe down railings as visitors return to see the animals, many of which had babies while the zoo was closed.

Some outdoor exhibits where the animals can wander close to the public now have Plexiglas panels. There will be no behind-the-scene tours nor opportunities for tourists to feed the rhino or giraffes.

"We have a responsibility to continue to do our part to fight the spread of COVID for sure, but we also have to balance that with the interest in reopening," said zoo director Dwight Scott.

Still, he added, it will be a "beautiful" break for people to lose themselves in nature's wonders for a moment.

"People need to be outdoors and active and to have a peaceful experience," he said.

Some museums, like the USS Midway in San Diego, will be checking everyone's temperatures. Visitors also will be required to follow established one-way routes on the [aircraft carrier](#), which installed more than 170 hand-sanitizer stations and plexiglass barriers between sinks and urinals in the bathrooms.

Disney will begin opening its shopping district outside its amusement park on July 9. It has asked state and local government to permit it to reopen Disneyland and Disney California Adventure Park on July 17, and Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa and Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel on July 23.

The company states on its website that "an inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists in any public place where people are present," and asks tourists to closely read about the precautions they should take.

For most people, the new [coronavirus](#) causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. But for some, especially [older adults](#) and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

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Citation: Pack swimsuit, mask, California welcomes back tourists (2020, June 12) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-swimsuit-mask-california-tourists.html>

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