

California gives OK for Disneyland and other theme parks to reopen April 1st, with restrictions

Disneyland, Universal Studios other theme parks, and sports stadiums in California can reopen beginning April 1st, the California Department of Public Health said Friday. But there are caveats: the health department is requiring “significantly reduced capacity, mandatory masking and other public health precautions” due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

How many people will be allowed in the parks depends on the number of COVID-19 cases in the counties where they’re located.

For amusement parks, counties in the “red” tier of California’s four-tier reopening risk system— red is the second-highest risk category— will be limited to attendance of 15 percent capacity. In the orange tier, the limit increases to 25 percent capacity and in the yellow tier, to 35 percent. Attendance will be restricted to in-state visitors. Disneyland is in Orange County, which is currently in the highest-risk “purple” tier, but local news reports suggest it may soon move down to the red tier.

Outdoor sports and live performance venues in California have a slightly different set of reopening criteria, and some will be able to reopen even if their counties are in the highest-risk purple tier, but with similar limits on capacity.

“With case rates and hospitalizations significantly lower, the

arrival of three highly effective vaccines and targeted efforts aimed at vaccinating the most vulnerable communities, California can begin gradually and safely bringing back more activities, especially those that occur outdoors and where consistent masking is possible," Dr. Mark Ghaly, secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, said in a statement.

Disneyland closed March 14th, 2020 as coronavirus cases spread across the US. Disney laid off thousands of theme park employees, and has taken a significant financial hit as a result of the closures. In its most recent fiscal quarter, revenue for Disney's parks division revenue was down 53 percent, to \$3.6 billion, the company reported. The company said during a February call with investors that it estimated "the total net adverse impact of COVID-19 on segment operating income in the quarter was approximately \$2.6 billion."

Disney World in Florida also closed last March and reopened in July in limited capacity and with restrictions. But California has taken a more cautious approach to rolling back pandemic restrictions than Florida, even as Disney executives have been pushing California officials to allow theme parks and other venues to reopen.

Ken Potrock, president of the Disneyland Resort, said in a statement posted to Twitter that with the new reopening date, Disneyland would be "getting thousands of people back to work and greatly helping neighboring businesses and our entire community."

<https://www.theverge.com/2021/3/6/22317285/disneyland-california-theme-parks-coronavirus-pandemic-reopen-april-1st>