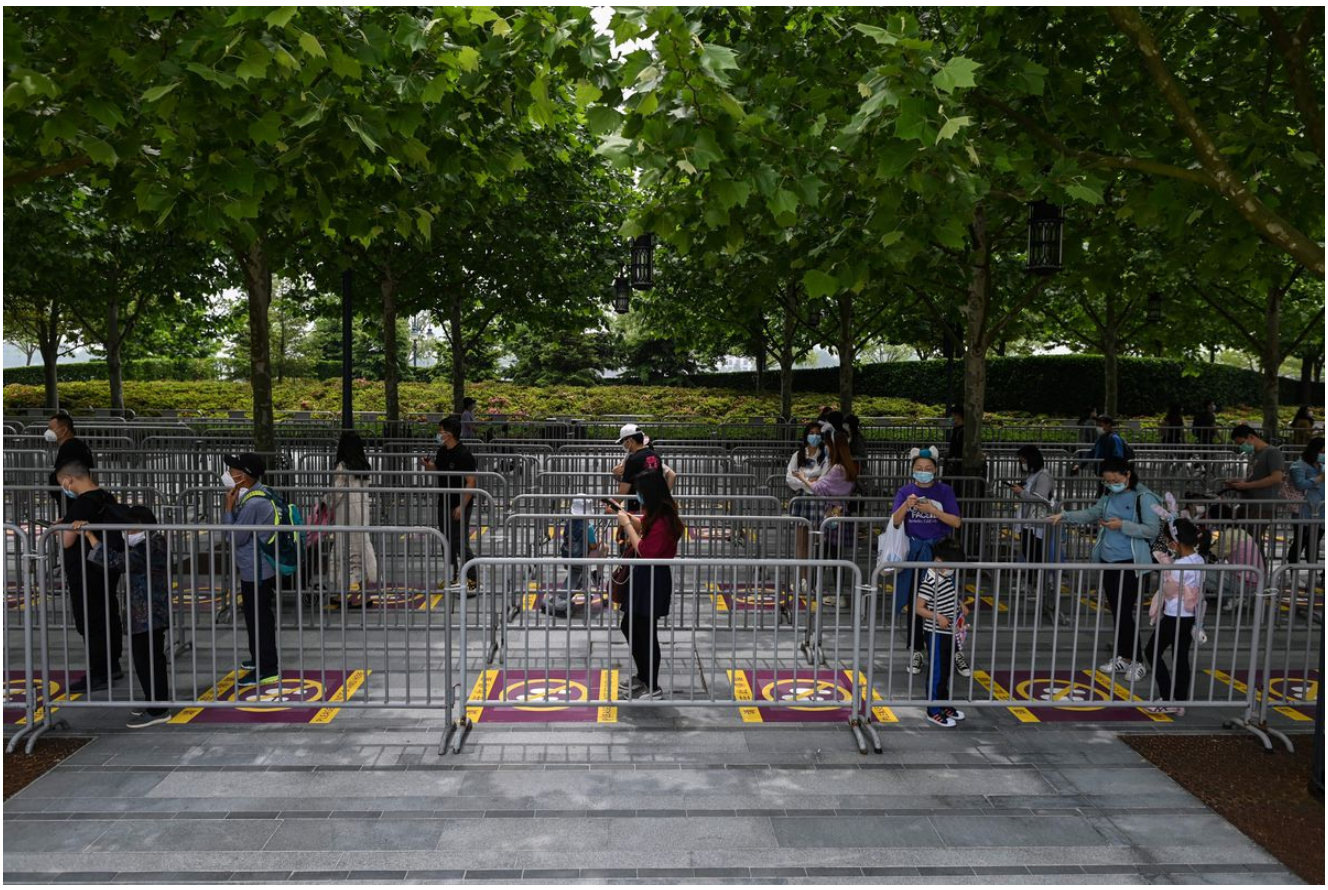
Shanghai Disneyland reopens with mandatory face masks and social distancing

Mickey Mouse has returned to Disneyland: capitalism is healing.

After shutting its parks and resorts worldwide in March, Disney is starting to restart what is a core part of its business. The company is beginning with the Shanghai Disney Resort, which began admitting visitors this week for the first time since January.

The park is operating under a slew of new healthy and safety measures, though, the most significant of which is a cap on visitor numbers. A maximum of 24,000 people will be allowed to enter each day, representing around 30 percent of the park's regular capacity.

On the ground reports suggest much fewer guests than this showed up on on the first day, and that the mood was somewhat muted, as masked visitors were greeted by costumed cast members (Disney's term for staff) shouting welcomes in both English and Chinese.



Social distancing measures in place at Disneyland Shanghai. Photo by Hector Retamal / AFP via Getty Images

A number of new safety measures have been introduced in the park to keep workers and visitors safe. Masks are now mandatory for all guests, and new bins have been dotted around the resort to dispose of old masks safely. Guests must have their temperature taken on arrival and be able to show show an all-clear green QR code from Shanghai's official diagnostic app.

Queues and rides also incorporate social-distancing measures, with purple mats placed on the ground to show visitors how far apart to stand, and alternate rows left empty on rollercoasters. Seats and safety bars are regularly disinfected, while some interactive rides (like the blaster-wielding Buzz Lightyear's Planet Rescue) now require disposable gloves.

The re-opening is a litmus test for Disney's parks worldwide. Photo by Hector Retamal / AFP via Getty Images

"We have a very dedicated team of custodial cleaners that we've increased the number of […] throughout the park that are constantly wiping down all the surfaces," the SVP of operations at the resort, Andrew Bolstein, told *CNN*. "We'll be able to strike that right balance between the safety and health and confident side, and then the magic that we're able to deliver every day."

Most notably, a staple of Disneyland resorts – meet-and-greets with costumed cast members – have been modified: characters can now only pose with visitors for photos at distance. Many of the park's more spectacular attractions, including parades, theater shows, and firework displays, have also been suspended to avoid a build-up of crowds.

Disney superfans were among the first to return to the parks. Photo by Hector Retamal / AFP via Getty Images

The success of these measures will be closely watched by Disney executives, investors, and staff alike as a litmus test for future reopenings. Some 43,000 park staff have been furloughed just from Walt Disney World in Florida, and the closure of parks is estimated to have cost the company $1 billion in operating income.

Disney has not indicated when other parks might reopen, but it's possible that resorts in the US will be next. Shanghai Disney reopened gradually, with a nearby shopping mall containing Nike, Starbucks, and Lego stores opening in March, reports *The New York Times*. In what could be a similar sequence, the shopping mall in Florida's Walt Disney World, Disney Springs, begins phased reopening on May 20th with limitations on visitor numbers.

Joe Schott, general manager of the Shanghai resort, said the reopening was going smoothly. "So far, guests are being very, very respectful about social distancing," Schott told the *NYT*.

“It has been an emotional morning,” he said, but “[t]here is light at the end of the tunnel.”

https://www.theverge.com/2020/5/11/21254283/disneyland-shanghai-reopens-safety-measures-coronavirus