

Disney, Universal Studios Close All Theme Parks Amid Coronavirus Pandemic

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UPDATED

By Monday, all [Disney](#) theme parks worldwide and both Universal Studios in the U.S. will be closed in an effort to prevent the further spread of the novel [coronavirus](#), or COVID-19.

The announcements came in quick succession Thursday, not long after California Gov. Gavin Newsom held a press conference to address the state's prevention and containment efforts. He outlined the new guidance to cancel or postpone gatherings of 250 people or more in California, but noted that he had spoken with [Disney](#) executive chairman Bob Iger on Wednesday, and that casinos, card rooms, theaters, and large parks like Disneyland would be exempt from the recommendations due to ["the complexity of their unique circumstances."](#)

Less than two hours after the presser ended, however, Disney announced that it would temporarily shutter Disneyland Park and Disney California Adventure starting Saturday, March 14 through the end of the month, a move that Newsom hailed as a good decision.

"Late last night, California put out a new policy on mass gatherings and engaged in deep conversations with Disney and other companies about how to meet it," he said in a statement Thursday afternoon. "Using that policy, Disney made the right call in the interest of public health and agreed to shut down their California parks. Expect more announcements like this shortly."

And the announcements did come shortly. Universal Studios Hollywood issued a statement that it would close beginning Saturday, March 14, with an anticipated re-opening on March 28.

By evening, Walt Disney World in Florida, Disneyland Paris and Universal Studios Orlando said they would shutter by close of business Sunday, March 15, and remain closed through the end of the month.

The Disney Cruise Line is also suspending all new departures beginning Saturday through the end of March. The Walt Disney Company will pay its cast members during that closure period.

Disneyland Resort hotels will remain open until March 16 so guests can make necessary travel accommodations. The hotels at Disney World and Disneyland Paris will remain open until further notice, as will the retail and dining complexes, Disney Springs at Walt Disney World and Disney Village at Disneyland Paris.

Universal CityWalk remains open, as do Universal Orlando's hotels. Universal Studios Hollywood expects to reopen on March 28, while Universal Studios Orlando will be closed through the end of the month.

"The health and safety of our team members and guests is always our top priority," said a Universal Studios spokesperson, adding that they would monitor the situation and "provide timely updates as conditions evolve."

Disneyland Resort foresees opening its doors again at the end of the month. It is only the fourth time in history that the theme park and resort in Anaheim, Calif., has fully suspended operations. The other instances were the Sept. 11 attacks, the Northridge earthquake, and the national day of mourning after President John F. Kennedy's assassination.

"While there have been no reported cases of COVID-19 at Disneyland Resort, after carefully reviewing the guidelines of the Governor of California's executive order and in the best interest of our guests and employees, we are proceeding with the closure of Disneyland Park and Disney California Adventure, beginning the morning of March 14 through the end of the month," Disney said in its initial statement. "The Hotels of Disneyland Resort will remain open until Monday, March 16 to give guests the ability to make necessary travel arrangements; Downtown Disney will remain open. We will monitor the ongoing situation and follow the advice and guidance of federal and state officials and health agencies. Disney will continue to pay cast members during this time."

The company added, "Disneyland Resort will work with guests who wish to change or cancel their visits, and will provide refunds to those who have hotel bookings during this closure period."

Per the California Dept. of Public Health on Wednesday, [the new guidance is as follows](#) through the month of March:

The California Department of Public Health finds the following:

- *Large gatherings that include 250 people or more should be postponed or canceled.*
 - *This includes gatherings such as concerts, conferences, and professional, college, and school sporting events.*
- *Smaller gatherings held in venues that do not allow social distancing of six feet per person should be postponed or canceled.*
 - *This includes gatherings in crowded auditoriums, rooms or other venues.*
- *Gatherings of individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be limited to no more than 10 people.*
 - *This includes gatherings such as those at retirement facilities, assisted living facilities, developmental homes, and support groups for people with health conditions.*
- *A "gathering" is any event or convening that brings together people in a single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, or any other indoor or outdoor space.*

This applies to all non-essential professional, social, and community gatherings regardless of their sponsor.

Disney was slow to close the doors to its theme parks, despite cancellations of major entertainment industry events like South by Southwest and Coachella. The [NBA suspended its season](#) Wednesday night after a player tested positive for [coronavirus](#).

Disney [shuttered its parks in Shanghai and Hong Kong](#) in January, and has also temporarily shuttered its parks in Tokyo as well. The [Shanghai Disney Resort will reopen](#) some shopping, dining and entertainment options on Monday, but the main theme park will remain shut. Disney reported that it could lose \$280 million in revenues due to closures in Shanghai and Hong Kong alone.

Disney heiress Abigail Disney, who has been critical of low wages for theme park employees, [wrote Thursday on Twitter](#), “This is heartbreaking, but it’s the right thing to do. I just hope they honor their obligations to their employees.”

Elsewhere in California, Knott’s Berry Farm closed early Thursday due to inclement weather but otherwise remains open for business. A spokesperson said it is “aware of the new guidance issued by the State of California last night,” and “is open today as we understand and evaluate what this means for our park, our guests and our associates.”

Representatives for Legoland did not respond to requests for comment. SeaWorld San Diego has canceled shows but continues to operate on normal business hours.

“We will continue to monitor the situation for changes, collaborate with health officials and take the necessary steps to address the health and safety needs of guests, ambassadors and animals,” SeaWorld spokesperson Kelly Terry told *Variety*.