

Variations on a theme



Get the answers to your clients' questions about what theme parks will be like once travel restarts. **Natalie Marsh** reports

A theme park escape is always full of excitement, with thrilling rollercoasters, awe-inspiring shows and character-packed parades. But when Covid-19 protocols are front of mind to help keep people safe, what are the rules and regulations for visitors to theme parks and attractions around the world?

We've spoken to a host of theme parks to find out how they have adapted, so you can reassure your customers that they can still expect a fun and entertaining holiday, while knowing that their safety is the top priority.

WHAT ARE THE CAPACITY RESTRICTIONS?

Theme parks are operating at a significantly reduced capacity to avoid overcrowding. Efteling in the Netherlands is aiming for a quarter of its usual capacity. Chief executive Fons Jurgens says all reservations need to be made online in advance with a time slot selected, to ensure that capacity is managed.

"Efteling consists of 65 hectares of woods, footpaths and squares – the equivalent of more than 130 football pitches," he says. "There is plenty of space for visitors to spread out and enjoy the great outdoors – particularly now with a reduced capacity."

WHAT CAN I EXPECT UPON ENTRY?

At Yas Island in Abu Dhabi, home to Ferrari World, Yas Waterworld and Warner Bros World, thermal screening cameras have been set up at the entrances to the parks to help manage the flow. "Guests are asked to diligently comply with precautionary measures by wearing a face mask at all times, observing social distancing markers, undergoing thermal screening upon entry, in addition to regularly sanitising hands and opting for contactless payments at all outlets," says Alhasan Kaabous Alzaabi, vice-president of operations at Farah Experiences, which manages and operates Yas Theme Parks.

HOW IS SOCIAL DISTANCING MANAGED?

Ensuring that guests maintain their distance from other parties has been a priority for theme parks. Dubai Parks and Resorts, which comprises five parks including Motiongate, Bollywood Parks and Legoland Dubai, has adjusted its attractions, shops and restaurants for social distancing with maximum capacities marked. Tables and seats in restaurants, counters in shops, and queuing facilities have also been arranged accordingly.

Meanwhile, Spanish theme park PortAventura ➤

DESTINATIONS

THEME PARKS & ATTRACTIONS | NEW REGULATIONS

WHAT'S NEW
for
2021

Lightwater Valley in Yorkshire has a new Go Safari area with animal-themed rides, while the Treetop Trails experience is now included in the admission price.

Aquatica in Orlando, Florida, has launched Riptide Race this month, allowing visitors to race against each other on the duelling water slides.

Bollywood Parks Dubai has added nine new attractions, one of which, the Bollywood Skyflyer, is the tallest swing ride in the world.

Universal Orlando Resort will open the Jurassic World VelociCoaster in June, where guests embark on a high-speed chase alongside velociraptors.

FIND OUT MORE

- 🌐 disneylandparis.com/en-gb/health-safety-measures
- 🌐 dubaiparksandresorts.com/en/health-and-safety
- 🌐 efteling.com/park/corona-safety-restrictions
- 🌐 lightwatervalley.co.uk/faq
- 🌐 parcaterix.fr/en/reopening-sanitary-measures
- 🌐 portaventuraworld.com/en/general-hygiene-measures
- 🌐 seaworld.com/orlando/park-info/park-safety
- 🌐 yasisland.ae/yaswellness
- 🌐 universalorlando.com/web/en/us/plan-your-visit/safety-faqs



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Hollywood Rip Ride Rockit at Universal Orlando Resort; SeaWorld sanitising station; Covid-19 safety information board at Efteling

PICTURES: Universal Orlando Resort/Willie J Allen Jr; Levin den Boer

has implemented distancing and hygiene measures, as directed by local authorities for when it reopens.

"With regard to managing the queues, we have signs, information displays and dedicated staff on hand," says David García, managing director at PortAventura World.

ARE ATTRACTIONS OPEN?

Lightwater Valley in Yorkshire reopened on April 17 and will see its indoor play areas follow suit a month later, in accordance with government guidelines.

"Food and drink outlets will be operating as takeaway service only and there will be plenty of outdoor seating available throughout the park," says Colin Bowes, the park's manager.

At Efteling, indoor attractions are due to open with distancing of 1.5 metres, while outdoor shows have been modified. "Park show Raveleijn will run in a shorter form," says Jurgens. "Also, there will be multiple performances per day of the Aquanura water show due to the adjusted capacity. There are now different waiting areas where households can view the show separately."

WILL I STILL HAVE TO QUEUE?

With capacity restrictions in place, queues are likely to be shorter than usual. Universal Orlando Resort's app allows visitors to join a virtual queue for some of the park's attractions. Visitors select how many people are in their group, and head back to the ride in their allocated time slot so they can make the most of their day and avoid gathering in large numbers.

Meanwhile, visitors to Parc Astérix in northern France

will be able to use the park's app to check waiting times at attractions. "The app allows guests to plan their day and visit rides when queues are smallest, and we are also developing a new virtual queueing system," says Guy Vassel, deputy managing director at Parc Astérix.

WILL OUTDOOR SHOWS GO AHEAD?

Walt Disney World Resort has modified or suspended some of its experiences, including character greetings, parades and fireworks, which involve being in close proximity to others. Instead, character cavalcades – scaled-down versions of the parades but with plenty of Disney magic to keep visitors entertained – have been introduced.

CAN I ORDER FOOD AND DRINK AS NORMAL?

At Disneyland Paris, guests can book restaurants up to two months in advance. Menus can be viewed online, single-use paper menus will be used and face coverings must be worn in public areas. Buffet restaurants will change to an all-you-can-eat table service.

CAN I REBOOK OR CANCEL IF MY CUSTOMERS CAN NO LONGER TRAVEL?

SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment says it has been reviewing its ticket policies. "We have extended the validity of our three-park tickets initially to the end of 2021 and now through to the end of 2022, in light of the current international travel ban," a spokesperson says.

"If guests are unable to travel, agents can request that their Discovery Cove reservation be moved to a future date with the original price honoured." **TW**