

Smithsonian Museums Set to Reopen by September

The Cooper Hewitt will be the first, opening its doors on June 10. Others will follow through August.



By Sarah Bahr

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The Smithsonian Institution, which reopened eight of its Washington-area institutions this month, on Wednesday announced a schedule to bring back the rest of its museums closed by the pandemic — including two in New York — by the end of August.

The Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York will open on June 10. Admission will be free through Oct. 31, but tickets must be reserved online in advance.

“Willi Smith: Street Couture,” which opened briefly before the museum was shuttered by the pandemic, will be extended through Oct. 24. “Contemporary Muslim Fashions,” organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, will be on view through July 11.

The National Museum of Natural History in Washington will open its doors on June 18, followed by the Smithsonian’s other New York City location, the National Museum of the American Indian, on June 23.

July will bring four more Washington reopenings: The National Museum of African Art and the Freer Gallery of Art on July 16, followed by the National Air and Space Museum and the Smithsonian Institution Building, known as the Castle, on July 30. (The Sackler Gallery of Art, which shares a building with the Freer Gallery, will be closed until November because of exhibition construction.)

The final batch, in August, includes the Anacostia Community Museum on Aug. 6, the Hirshhorn Museum on Aug. 20 and the National Postal Museum on Aug. 27.

The Smithsonian also announced a grand reopening in November of the Arts and Industries Building, which has been closed to the public since 2004. A new free exhibition, “FUTURES,” will celebrate the Smithsonian’s 175th anniversary by showcasing nearly 150 objects, including an experimental Alexander Graham Bell telephone, a Covid-friendly support robot that reduces loneliness and a video game that can be played using the eyes. It will be on view through July 2022.

Visitors will need to reserve free timed entry passes online for most locations, which will be available beginning a week before an institution’s scheduled reopening. A Smithsonian spokeswoman said capacity will vary, but will start around 25 percent, and then increase when the Smithsonian believes it can safely

accommodate more visitors.

Additional precautions will also be in place: The museums will require facial coverings for everyone ages 2 and older, though fully vaccinated visitors will not be required to wear them in outdoor spaces. Some sites will reduce their hours, and some museum cafes and retail stores may be closed.

The Smithsonian had reopened eight of its Washington-area museums between July and October of last year, but it was forced to close them again at the end of November when coronavirus cases increased across the country. The Institution's other museums have all been closed since March 2020.

New York and Washington both began allowing museums to operate at full capacity last week, though a six-foot social distancing requirement remains in place.

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