

HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

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High Desert Museum to Reopen June 17

New procedures now in place to help protect public health

BEND, OR — The High Desert Museum will reopen to the public on Wednesday, June 17. In accordance with state and local parameters, new practices will be in place at the Museum to best ensure the health of visitors and staff.

“We’re cautiously optimistic about welcoming visitors again for the first time in three months,” says Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw, Ph.D. “We miss our community and of course are excited for visitors to return. We’re committed to reopening in a manner that is responsible to visitors and staff while also providing the inspiring High Desert Museum experience people value.”

The Museum closed on March 17 as part of measures aimed at mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic. Museums are now allowed to open again under the state of Oregon’s guidelines.

“We view the health of the public and staff as a top priority,” says Museum Board Chair Ryan J. Hagemann. “Staff have analyzed every aspect of our facility to ensure we have the best possible safety procedures in place.”

As part of reopening, the Museum will require visitors and staff, both in front of and behind the scenes, to wear face coverings. They will not be required for those who experience health issues or disabilities that make wearing a face covering difficult, as well as for those younger than age 2. They will also not be required for wildlife curators in certain situations.

Visitors will also experience other changes at the Museum: Physical distancing signs and reminders are present throughout the grounds. The number of people at any given time inside certain exhibit spaces will be limited. Hands-on elements in exhibits remain closed for the time being, as well as a few other areas of the Museum, such as the *Whose Home?* indoor play space.

And while the Museum encompasses both indoor and outdoor space, the number of people visiting at any given moment will be capped to ensure adequate space for physical distancing.

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A timed entry system with advance ticket purchase is being put in place to help manage visitor numbers: Find details at highdesertmuseum.org/tickets. Some tickets will also be set aside on a first-come, first-served basis for Museum members and walk-ins.

“This time is uncharted territory for all of us,” Whitelaw says. “We’ll be observing and assessing what works and adjusting as needed as we navigate these first couple of weeks.”

For those most at risk if they contract coronavirus, the Museum will open an hour early on Sundays at 8:00 am. This hour is for vulnerable populations and their families only. Those interested in visiting during this time can sign up at highdesertmuseum.org/vulnerable-populations-hour. The Vulnerable Populations Hour is made possible by Home Instead Senior Care.

More information about new safety measures at the Museum can be found at highdesertmuseum.org/reopening.

Exciting experiences await at the Museum. Visitors will enjoy a new exhibition yet to be seen by the public called *Natural Wanderment: Stewardship. Sovereignty. Sacredness.*, a collection of portraiture by photographer Matika Wilbur (Swinomish and Tulalip). The exhibition debuted on March 20—during the Museum closure—and will now be extended past its original closing date to September 7.

Wilbur journeyed 250,000 miles creating images of Native Americans from the nation’s more than 562 federally recognized Tribes. The photographs, black and white with coloration, feature Indigenous people of all ages, dressed in combinations of contemporary and traditional clothing, often in natural landscapes.

The resulting photography and the stories of her subjects highlight contemporary Native America and the ways that Native people seek to protect ancestral ways of life. Learn more at highdesertmuseum.org/natural-wanderment.

In addition, the run of the original High Desert Museum exhibition *Infinite Moment: Burning Man on the Horizon* will now be extended through January 3, 2021. The exhibition had been in the gallery less than two months at the time of the Museum’s closure. Visit highdesertmuseum.org/infinite-moment.

The Museum’s Kids Camps are also slated to proceed with modifications for safety in place. The Museum has been communicating with caregivers about camps. Slots remain open in several camps: To learn more go to highdesertmuseum.org/kids-camp.

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The public may continue to enjoy the Museum's virtual offerings at highdesertmuseum.org/resources, a hub for virtual field trips, educational activities for children to do at home and other resources. A virtual launch of Ellen Waterston's new book, *Walking the High Desert: Encounters with Rural America along the Oregon Desert Trail* will take place on the evening of Wednesday, June 17. Find registration information at highdesertmuseum.org/walking-the-high-desert.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM:

THE HIGH DESERT MUSEUM opened in Bend, Oregon in 1982. It brings together wildlife, cultures, art, history and the natural world to convey the wonder of North America's High Desert. The Museum uses indoor and outdoor exhibits, wildlife in natural habitats and living history demonstrations to help people discover and appreciate this diverse region. The Museum is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, is a Smithsonian Affiliate, was a 2018 finalist for the National Medal for Museum and Library Services and is the 2019 recipient of the Western Museums Association's Charles Redd Award for Exhibition Excellence. highdesertmuseum.org

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