



The Attractions Industry's Route to Economic Recovery

For the past year, IAAPA, the global association for the attractions industry, has been working to support members around the world through the COVID-19 pandemic. IAAPA first focused on COVID-19 in early January 2020 as it was beginning to impact our members in Asia. Guest and employee safety has always been our industry's top priority. We have effectively addressed public health issues in the past, but such instances have paled in comparison to the coronavirus in terms of complexity, concern, speed and ease of transmission.

The attractions industry includes a variety of permanently located attractions including theme and amusement parks, water parks, family fun centers, museums, zoos, aquariums, cultural attractions and more. To address the rapidly evolving outbreak, we facilitated calls between our members in Asia so they could share information and discuss modifying operations to reduce the health risks associated with COVID-19. The outcome of those conversations included the development of preliminary operating guidelines that we shared with our members.

As the virus spread and rates of transmission increased, making COVID-19 a global pandemic, all attractions around the world started to feel the impact.

Building from the guidelines established by and for our members in Asia, we expanded that sharing initiative, holding calls and gathering input from the brightest minds in the global attractions industry, from operators and suppliers large and small. Operating guidance was further developed with input and expertise from more than 60 companies from around the world. We also enlisted the assistance of a respected infectious disease expert and referenced guidance provided by a variety of other industries and government health agencies including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). That information was the foundation for our conversations and ensured the protocols and solutions we developed were based on medical science and the latest information known about COVID-19.

The resulting ["COVID-19 Reopening Guidance: Considerations for the Global Attractions Industry"](#) was made available to our members, and shared with local and regional governments and public authorities tasked with reopening their communities to help communicate the work the industry was doing to ensure safe operations for guests and employees. In addition, a thorough, [member-exclusive resource center](#) was created on the IAAPA website to help provide members with timely information, contacts, newsworthy updates and data about the pandemic in each region.



The good news is, the protocols have worked as we are not aware of any mass coronavirus infections attributed to parks or attractions. The guidelines have also been referenced by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in their [Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism](#), and the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) in their [Attractions: Global Protocols for the New Normal resource](#).

As we reflect on 2020, it is clear the economic impact of the pandemic on the attractions industry has been devastating. Some attractions closed and were not allowed to reopen - even with COVID-19 safety protocols in place. Some closed for several months in 2020, while others remained open but at limited capacities. Many of these businesses will never reopen again; the effects of lost revenue for such an extended time left an irrevocable impact.

We hope government officials will act responsibly and allow attractions to operate with safety protocols in place, even as the pandemic continues to affect many areas. As vaccinations increase and COVID-19 cases subside, we hope government leaders will expeditiously support the full recovery of the attractions, hospitality, and tourism sections so these segments can once again provide the significant economic contributions to the regions they serve.

While the industry anticipates 2021 will bring guests back through our doors at greater numbers than in 2020, we don't anticipate pre-pandemic levels of attendance. In fact, recent studies indicate it will be years before that happens. Federal relief programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program, Employee Retention Tax Credit, and state level programs supporting small businesses have been a lifeline. Continued federal and state government relief in the form of forgivable loans, grants, long term low interest rate loans, tax incentives for retaining staff, COVID-specific liability protection and commercial eviction moratoriums are critical to ensuring the quickest possible recovery for the attractions industry and others in the travel and tourism industry.

IAAPA members around the world are ready to safely welcome back guests to parks, zoos, family fun centers and attractions. Now is the time to make plans and experience all the global attractions industry has to offer. See our YouTube video here: [Plan a Visit to Your Favorite Park and Attraction Today - YouTube](#)

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