

2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response

Following guidance from the White House, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and state and local public health authorities, we are increasing access and services in a phased approach across all units of the National Park System. Before visiting a park, please check the [park website](#) to determine its operating status. Updates about the overall NPS response to COVID-19, including safety information, are posted on www.nps.gov/coronavirus.

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20200502143232/https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/news/park-be...>



National Park Service

Great Smoky Mountains

National Park
NC, TN

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NEWS RELEASE

Park Begins Phased Reopening on May 9

Date: April 30, 2020

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Following guidance from the White House, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and state and local public health authorities, Great Smoky Mountains National Park is increasing recreational access and services. The National Park Service (NPS) is working servicewide with federal, state, and local public health authorities to closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and using a phased approach to increase access on a park-by-park basis.

Beginning May 9, the park will reopen many roads and trails. The health and safety of employees, partners, volunteers, visitors, and local residents remains the highest priority in park reopening decisions. Park managers will examine each facility function and service provided to ensure those operations comply with current public health guidance, and will be regularly monitored. Park managers will also continue to work closely with the NPS Office of Public Health using CDC guidance to ensure public and workspaces are safe and clean for all users.

“We recognize this closure has been extremely difficult for our local residents, as well as park visitors from across the country, who seek the park as a special place for healing, exercise, recreation, and inspiration,” said Superintendent Cassius Cash. “We are approaching this phased reopening with that in mind, as we balance our responsibility to protect park resources and the health and safety of everyone.”

Park managers are implementing new safety measures in facility operations and services to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 as areas reopen to the public. Campgrounds, picnic pavilions, visitor centers, and many secondary roads will remain closed during the first reopening phase, which is expected to last for at least two weeks. Some of these measures will include disinfectant fogging operations for restrooms and public buildings, installation of plexiglass shields at visitor centers, personal protective equipment requirements for maintenance workers, new safety protocols for emergency services staff, and reduced group size limits.

While many areas will be accessible for visitors to enjoy, a return to full operations will continue to be phased and services may be limited. The park typically has more than one million visitors each month, May through October, from across the country. When recreating, the public should follow local area health orders, practice Leave No Trace principles, avoid crowding, and avoid high-risk outdoor activities. The CDC has offered guidance to help people recreating in parks and open spaces prevent the spread of infectious diseases. We will continue to monitor all park functions to ensure that visitors adhere to CDC guidance for mitigating risks associated with the transmission of COVID-19, and take any additional steps necessary to protect public health.

For the most up to date information about facility openings, service hours, and access, please visit the park website at www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/conditions.htm

Park rangers remain available to answer questions and help with trip planning via email or phone during business hours at (865) 436-1291, (828) 506-8620, or GRSM_Smokies_Information@nps.gov.

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