

# DISNEYLAND PARIS OPENS BUT LACKS INTERNATIONAL VISITORS



Disneyland Paris, the first tourist destination of the Old Continent, reopened its doors last Thursday. Mandatory booking of tickets on the Internet, wearing masks, suspension of the parade and hugs with Mickey and his cronies ... The park has changed its habits because of the health situation.

"Subject to the evolution of the situation," two hotels will not reopen until July 1st and 13th. "Before the Covid-19 pandemic, 10% of foreign tourists in France were visiting Disney," said Didier Arino, director of Protourisme. **It will take several years before the flow of tourists returns to a level that allows us to reach financial equilibrium.** This is a threat to employment and investment in the region."

Since its opening in April 1992, Disneyland Paris has had a special place in attracting mostly foreigners. In 2017 (the company has not communicated since), 44% of its visitors were French (while this rate is more like 90-95% in other parks). The rest were mostly British (28%), Dutch and Spanish (13% each) and German (12%). Many will not be back for several months. Will the park be able to compensate for their absence by attracting more French visitors? Disneyland Paris can count on a pool of 18 million people living within an hour and a half of the park. These are potential customers, provided that the park, which is a symbol of mass tourism, provides them with suitable offers.

In losses and lack of cash, Disneyland Paris proceeded in May 2020 to a capital increase of 350 million euros subscribed by its American parent company. This has not prevented the park from continuing to renovate: Sleeping Beauty Castle is currently covered and the Disneyland Hotel closed. It also innovates. Visitors will be entitled to a new attraction, Cars Road Trip, offering "a trip inspired by Route 66, in the footsteps of popular characters from Disney and Pixar Cars films such as Flash McQuenn and Martin". Starting June 21, they will be able to stay in a new hotel: Disney's Hotel New York-The Art of Marvel, a four-star hotel with 561 rooms.

"That the leader is starting up again is a good signal for the theme parks, the majority of which reopened on June 9," says François Fassier, director of the leisure park division at Compagnie des Alpes and vice-president of Snelac, the national union of leisure, attraction and cultural facilities. Disneyland Paris has a very important attraction force. But the lack of international visitors will lead it to favor the French, and thus compete for more head-on with other parks. This is forcing all the players to innovate and rethink their commercial and communication strategies. "At Parc Astérix, for example, internet sales have risen from 13% in 2019 to more than 20%, and this is accelerating."

The 65% gauge imposed by the government until June 30 is not very restrictive. **"The parks are gradually getting back on track, with some staff still in training,"** confides François Fassier. To ensure a quality experience, they are going beyond the attendance limit that is imposed." The expert expects a great summer for the sector, as many French people will stay in France. "The level of reservations for the coming weeks is rather encouraging," he assures.

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