

Take a virtual tour of these 12 amazing museums closed because of coronavirus

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Image 1. The portrait of President Obama by artist Kehinde Wiley usually attracts large crowds at Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. The museum is now closed, but the portrait, among other exhibits, is available to view online. Photo: Michael S. Williamson/The Washington Post via Getty Images

Even without a crisis, museums are considered places of calm and reflection. And in these anxious times, they are more needed than ever.

However, most museums and art galleries are now closed because of the coronavirus and we're all stuck at home for a while, so what to do? The answer: Virtual tours.

Coronavirus is a flu-like illness. It began in China and has been spreading all over the globe since December 2019.

As it happens, Google partnered with more than 2,500 museums and galleries to offer virtual tours of their collections. They did so way before the coronavirus began spreading.

Some art lovers will say nothing substitutes for actually seeing a work of art in person.

A virtual tour is better than no tour at all. So here are some virtual museum tours to try in the United States:

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

This national art museum lists over 42,000 artworks online. The museum has two special "exhibits."

"Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting" focuses on the popular Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer from the 1600s. "Fashioning a Nation" is a survey of American fashion from 1740 to 1895.

Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.

The National Portrait Gallery has been especially crowded in recent years. This is because of the wildly popular portraits of former President Barack Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama. You can check these out in two online exhibits. Look for them in "First Ladies" and "Portraits of African Americans."

Museum of Modern Art, New York City

MoMA has just 129 pieces online and only one exhibit. That one exhibit is about a little-known woman artist: Sophie Taeuber-Arp. She was a Swiss-born artist who became important to the modern art movements of the early 20th century.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

The Met has 26 online exhibits. Many of them focus on fashion history and Vermeer. To explore this vast collection online, click on the button to tour the museum by room and object.

American Museum of Natural History, New York City

Science and natural history museums offer fun, too. The American Museum of Natural History has three online exhibits. One looks at the museum's famous habitat dioramas, "Windows on Nature." Another includes famous pieces from over the years. There's the Titanosaurus and the 563-carat sapphire Star of India.



Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston, Massachusetts

MFA is another museum with a huge collection and 16 online exhibits. One looks at conservation called "Preserving Fans at the MFA Boston."

Why fans? New England used to be the center of the U.S. textile industry. The museum's fan collection now totals about 600 and ranges from 2000 years B.C. to the early 1900s.

Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan

This museum is best known for its artworks from Mexican artist Diego Rivera and his wife, Frida Kahlo. Three exhibits are devoted to Rivera's murals and Kahlo's paintings.

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

You can explore this collection by topic, say, Modern Art. Or look for favorite artworks up close in a room. Look for Georges Seurat's "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte" or Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks."

J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California

The Getty offers exploration of its 15,000-item collection by room settings. Additionally, it has two online exhibits from its famous manuscripts collection.

You might enjoy "Eat, Drink and Be Merry: Food in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance." Many restaurants are closed or are take-out only. You can get an idea of how people ate and drank hundreds of years ago.

High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia

The High is famous for its photography collection — especially photos of the civil rights movement. The civil rights movement worked to get equal rights for black people.

"Civil Rights Photography" is one of four online exhibits. It has more than 300 photographs from Rosa Parks' arrest to the demonstrations of the late 1960s.

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas

This Texas museum features a dozen online exhibits. Space lovers should check out "Space City: Photographs from the Museum of Fine Arts Houston." It celebrates humankind's fascination with space and exploration.

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico

This famous artist certainly dealt with images of death — all those cow skulls might be a clue. Still, her art has a soothing quality. It might be what we need just now. The small museum has six online exhibits, but check out her "Watercolors."