Virtual and Real Decisions

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Where Will You Go?

Mummies have had to wait during the pandemic. Museums, movie theaters and many eateries have been forced to close for months. Gradually parks, outdoor galleries and sculpture gardens, and some D.C. museums are welcoming visitors back.

On March 3, The Post gave readers an update in “National Gallery, Smithsonian take slower approach to reopening, while some D.C. museums start welcoming visitors back.”

Context and current decisions in the article inform readers. The National Gallery of Art will not be open for its 80th anniversary in March, but continues to have a lively online program.

Activities in this resource guide encourage students to explore online museums, to locate D.C.-area safe programs and to update articles for readers. Think Like a Reporter gives guidelines and Post reprints provide information to update.

So, what will you do? Will you be engaged at home in a virtual tour in a museum in distant countries or in a deep dive into works at the National Museum of Women in the Arts during the museum’s virtual celebration of International Women’s Day? Will you attend a movie at the Alexandria Drive-In Theatre? What was old is new. The experience continues because of innovative individuals and technology.

And about those mummies? They were dug up in the late 1800s from a cemetery in Egypt and await conservation at a museum in Atlanta. As conservator Mimi Leveque stated, “My patients are dead for a very, very long time.’ They won’t go anywhere.”
Miss visiting museums?
Engaging with art on a small phone screen can actually be rewarding.

BY KELSEY ABLES, EDITORIAL AIDE
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Last week, you might say I visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Generous terms, of course, for what was actually just me waving my phone around in my apartment.

With “The Met Unframed,” online through Feb. 16, you can “visit” four exhibitions and the Great Hall, and interact with 46 works from the New York museum’s collection. There also are “challenges” to bring the art home (i.e. put it on your wall using augmented reality). With music straight out of a spy movie and “decoding” games, it’s halfway to an art heist video game — inhibited only by the fact that with clunky navigation features, it feels a bit like being on Google Earth.

It may be last-resort optimism after months away from major museums, but “The Met Unframed” actually left me thinking about the limitations of a physical museum space. You can glean only so much information from a wall text. Artworks can’t be moved around without bureaucratic hurdles. In “real life,” the flow of traffic pushes you from one piece to the next, maybe before you’re ready to move on. And looking too closely often earns a stern “ahem!” from a nearby security guard — leaving brushstrokes and tiny details out of view.

Not so in this semi-apocalyptic, pandemic-inspired vision of the Met. Sure, there’s no New Yorker pontificating about how “his earlier work was just so much better” (though I’d make a case for this feature in a later version). And the program itself has limitations — it’s only available on your cellphone, and you can’t see the animation-enhanced paintings unless you have 5G (likely a result of the corporate partnership with Verizon). But in general, “The Met Unframed” may be one of a few digital “experiences” that actually adds more to the art than it takes away from it.

Throughout the pandemic, arts institutions have been forced to bolster their online presence. Some efforts have succeeded — usually when they resist trying to replicate the real-world experience. But many full flat. A Zoom tour can feel like another work meeting. The much-hyped online viewing room often seems like nothing more than a glorified webpage. And many online tours are pixelated, akin to looking at art through foggy glasses.

In my own empty, virtually rendered Met, however, I was surprised to find that I actually spent more time with some of the art than I have in person.

“Fifty-Four Scenes From The Tale of Genji,” a pair of six-panel folding screens made in Edo period Japan, for example, is immediately striking for its immense detailing and scale. But if you aren’t familiar with the 11th-century Japanese epic and able to parse the dozens of scenes and
figures, it’s difficult to find an entry point to begin to understand it.

In “The Met Unframed,” you’re tasked with finding details of various scenes — for example, three girls rolling a large snowball or Genji’s wife confronting his former mistress. It’s no art history course and would be great if it went even deeper — like Dutch public broadcasting service NTR did with Hieronymus Bosch’s “The Garden of Earthly Delights.” But a guided examination brings the art to life in a way that, even with a docent present, would be difficult with the work a few feet behind a glass wall.

Divided into four exhibition sections — Nature, Power, Home and Journey — the experience follows the “big art history” model popularized by the Met Breuer a few years ago. Works from across millennia and continents are brought together based on broad themes (see: exhibitions “Like Life: Sculpture, Color, and the Body (1300-Now)” or “Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible”).

Such a model invites the usual criticism: It can be so vague as to be meaningless; it reaches for connection where there is none. In this virtual world, too, many of the curatorial choices seem strange. Landscapes by Albert Bierstadt and Frederic Edwin Church somehow wind up in the “Power” section. Rembrandt van Rijn’s self-portrait is inexplicably featured in the “Journey” exhibit.

In other cases, the change brings welcome, unexpected contrasts. Typically, thousands of years of history and a few museum floors would separate say, “The Temple of Dendur” from a painting like “Rising Green” by abstract expressionist Lee Krasner. But here, only one “door” separates them. And you may find interpreting hieroglyphics a surprisingly fitting way to prepare to look at an abstract painting, where the nonrepresentational can seem like its own language, too.

The main and only objective in the “game” — admittedly a stretch to call it that — is to “unframe” artworks and “hang” them on your walls. As fun as it is to see a Van Gogh next to your bookcase or good old Hatshepsut sitting in your chair, it’s a bit of a one-trick pony and too made-for-sharing on social media.

But the “unframing” process encourages a kind of engagement that can make hard-to-crack works accessible to someone without an art background. For someone with it, it is simply a new way of looking. I can’t say I’ve ever really considered how much of each color Joan Mitchell used in a particular painting, but there are certainly less useful ways to look at her work.

Surprisingly, the program really succeeds with the large works. Tasked with finding flying condors, among other details, in Frederic Church’s “The Heart of the Andes,” the work somehow feels larger, richer. Sure, a 5½-by-10-foot work viewed on a 6-by-3-inch iPhone sounds like a disaster. But when sized down to your fingertips, what’s monumental in person becomes both more vast and more intimate.

Overall, “The Met Unframed” is an exercise in looking. It might — as was the case for me after I traversed Church’s landscape — make you more excited to see the art in person, to find the details you zoomed into on your phone. It might even make you homesick for that regal building on Fifth Avenue.

■

**The Met Unframed** Free through Feb. 16 at themetunframed.com.

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Explore Museums Online

✦ Google Arts & Culture
https://artsandculture.google.com

✦ Anne Frank House in Virtual Reality, Amsterdam, Netherlands

✦ British Museum, London
https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com

✦ Dali Theatre-Museum, Catalonia, Spain

✦ Louvre, Paris, France

✦ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/online-features

✦ Musée d’Orsay, Paris
https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/musee-dorsay-paris

✦ National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
https://www.nga.gov

✦ National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City
https://mna.inah.gob.mx

✦ Natural History Museum, London
https://www.nhm.ac.uk/visit/virtual-museum.html

✦ Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.
https://www.phillipscollection.org

✦ Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City
https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/solomon-r-guggenheim-museum

✦ Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center and Smithsonian Air & Space Museum, Virginia
https://airandspace.si.edu

✦ Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.
https://naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour

✦ The Vatican Museums, Vatican City, Rome
http://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/tour-virtuali-elenco.html

✦ Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), London
https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/explore-the-va-online [vam.ac.uk]
Museums around the world have been closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether new installations that took years to organize or permanent collections, the public could not have the experience of seeing the colors, shapes, design styles and brushstrokes within a few feet. Lectures by special speakers — artists, scholars, leading figures in the creative industries — could be heard only through videos, online events or special broadcasts.

Museums have been forced to make adjustments. Some created YouTube subscription channels. Others created courses, provided lessons to accompany works or exhibits and held online discussions. The following activities will help you to get acquainted with some of the different approaches while getting to know the museums and their collections and missions.

1. If you are looking for the following information, which of the online museums would you visit? Find the information and write the name of the museum on the blank.
   
   a. Examples of Oaxaca culture
   
   b. Learn about the works of Salvador Dali.
   
   c. 82nd and Fifth, 100 curators talk about 100 works of art
   
   d. A 360º Tour of the Sistine Chapel
   
   e. Movies and TV shows filmed in this English Museum

2. What do Wonder Woman, Batman and the military’s B-2 have in common?
   Visit the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy online exhibit, The Science of Stealth, on March 4 and live chat on March 11. Miss the program? Listen to a recording of the LIVE show. What’s one way to make a sneaky flying machine?

3. Virtually visit the Musée d’Orsay in Paris and the National Gallery of Art in D.C. Compare and contrast the online exhibits. Include in your essay
   • Ease of navigating the online sites,
   • Variety of content (give specific examples),
   • Awareness of audience, and
   • Favorite online feature.

4. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York has several online exhibits. Select one of the 5 Stories. Describe one or two of the images that you find most striking or that opened your eyes to another world. Add a short review of the online exhibit.

5. The Victoria and Albert Museum created games and activities for families and friends. They are inspired by items in the V&A collections. Go to the V&A Family Fun, Games and Activities section. Select and complete one of the activities.
Where to Find D.C. Area Activities and Travel Advice

The Style section, Weekend and other supplements and online features provide entertainment news and opportunities. Reporters as well as owners and supervisors of venues are very aware of the guidelines that enable in-person and virtual events — and share them with you. Where can you learn about the possibilities for the next week and months?

**Best Bets**
Where & When: Friday, Weekend supplement
What: Noteworthy events this week

**Going Out Guide**
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/)
Where & When: Online, Style, Food supplement
What: D.C.-area nightlife, events and dining

**Guide to the Lively Arts**
Where & When: Sunday, Arts & Style; Mon., Tues., Wed. and Sat., Style; Friday, Weekend supplement
What: Listing of shows, dates, times, description, details, price, contact information

**Movie Reviews**
Where & When: Friday, Weekend supplement; Arts & Entertainment online; Style
What: Movies in theaters, streaming and video formats

**On Exhibit**
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/museums/?itid=sn_arts%20&%20entertainment_4/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/museums/?itid=sn_arts%20&%20entertainment_4/)
Where & When: Friday, Weekend supplement; Style
What: Gallery and museum exhibits and shows

**Talk About Travel**
Where & When: Monday, 2:00 p.m.; Sunday, Travel supplement
You are invited “to discuss your travel-related questions, comments suspicions warnings, gripes and sad tales.”
Use these Post resources to plan and review activities.

1. Using The Post, the e-Replica edition, or website, find an event you would enjoy.
   a. What is the activity?
   b. Where and when will it be held? Cost?
   c. In which of The Post resources did you find the event?
   d. Describe what makes this an appealing event.

2. Talk About Travel’s live chat answers your questions. Read through several live chat transcripts. Either write a follow-up question or ask about a new topic. If you are doing a follow-up or clarification question, be sure to refer to the original question and date of the live chat.
   Write your question here:

3. Read the first paragraphs of “An artist’s sculptures take shape virtually” by Mark Jenkins.
   a. What makes this exhibit a unique one?
   b. Why can you go back to “Global Perspective: Math, Art and Architecture Around the World” often and find something new?
   c. What do you think the artist means when he says his creations demonstrate “the beauty that exists at the atomic level”?
   d. In what way would familiarity with the artists referenced in the fourth paragraph add to your reaction to the review?
   e. Experience the exhibit by following the directions. In two-three paragraphs tell us about your visit with the exhibit.

An artist’s sculptures take shape virtually

Abstract sculptor Anton Bakker’s math-derived structures are on exhibit at some of the world’s best-known sites, including the Washington Monument grounds, New York’s Times Square and equally prominent locations in Paris, Tokyo, Mexico City and more. Now, they’re also in your backyard and living room.

This is possible because the sculptures are not, of course, really anywhere. They’re virtual entities that can be seen only through cellphones and other camera-equipped mobile devices, not with the naked eye. Observed via a digital lens, though, the sleek creations housed at globalsculpturepark.com have a compelling presence. They can be approached, circumnavigated and — it almost goes without saying — selfie-ized. (Click the “Activate AR” button to bring up the augmented-reality display, which places the artworks, virtually, in your own environment.)
The series of displays, titled “Global Perspective: Math, Art and Architecture Around the World,” will continue through the end of 2021. Every month brings a new set of designs, each with a particular theme, such as fractals, optical illusions and Mobius strips. The complex (and bright red) “Polyline” figures now on view will be replaced by silvery “Knots” at the beginning of March.

The pieces in all the monthly displays are in the tradition of such modernist sculptors as Constantin Brancusi, Alexander Calder and Isamu Noguchi, whose work is streamlined and sinuous. But Bakker’s inventions are more complex, regular and symmetrical, although the latter two qualities tend not to be immediately evident.

“Sometimes I feel I’m more of a discoverer than a sculptor,” says the Netherlands-raised artist, while giving a recent tour, on the Washington Monument grounds, of artwork that was unseen by everyone else who passed by. What his creations demonstrate, he explained, is “the beauty that exists at the atomic level.”
Think Like a Reporter | Update Your Readers

Readers want current information. News is about now. At the same time, some stories need the context of the past (whether a day, a week or years before) in order to understand the current news. Carefully select those details.

Updating a news story gets more challenging with the 24/7 news cycle and social media adding new information throughout a day. When this information has not been verified by reliable sources there is the danger that rumors, half-truths and misinformation will become part of the fact-based news story.

The journalist has a commitment to being objective in gathering information, in interviewing multiple sources with different points of view, in presenting the news without bias and with fairness.

Guidelines for Updating a Story

- Go to the most reliable source for current information.
- Give some background or context. Don’t assume every reader knows the back story.
- When stories include examples of best practices, be sure that advertisers do not influence who or what businesses are presented. Give credit to the source of the rating and the criteria used to determine this recognition.
- To be most transparent, indicate that a particular business is a sponsor or advertiser. For example, The Post indicates that Jeff Bezos is the owner of The Washington Post when writing about him, Amazon or his other ventures. This may be done in several ways.
  a. Amazon was like a winning lottery ticket that allowed him to invest $1 billion a year in Blue Origin, he has said. Despite his many other ventures, including ownership of The Washington Post, achieving Blue Origin’s goal of “millions of people living and working in space” is “the most important work I’m doing,” he’s said. (Feb. 2021)
  b. The project, which Brooks started, is funded by Facebook and other large donors, including the father of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, who owns The Washington Post. (March 2021)
- Readers should not be confused whether they are reading a news story or an opinion piece. Commentary by columnists, guest commentaries and editorials should be clearly labeled. Readers understand that they are reading one person’s point of view and the arguments of advocates of one position.

Journalists should
• Gather, update and correct information throughout the life of a news story.
• Label advocacy and commentary.
• Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.

— From the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics
Apply These Concepts and Update a News Story

Let’s use three articles that have appeal to different readers. Hikers, in particular, those who hike the Appalachian Trail; those who enjoy camping; and those who support a green lifestyle, even on vacation.

UPDATE 1

“Appalachian Trail reopens to day-trippers but urges thru-hikers to stay home” was published on June 11, 2020. Read the article.
1. In order to update the article, in one to two paragraphs summarize the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How of the 2020 travel article.
2. Name four reliable sources to check with for the latest accurate information.
3. Write five questions that need to be answered in order to update this article.
4. What tips from the ATC may need to be changed?
5. What information about hiking the Appalachian Trail did you find most surprising?
6. Select one piece of information about the Trail. Research to find updated information. Write a paragraph that gives information hikers would want to know about that topic.

UPDATE 2

“Camping is back, with fewer people and activities and more cleaning and waiting” was published on June 5, 2020.
1. Summarize the main ideas presented in the article.
2. Name four reliable sources to check with for the latest accurate information about this topic. Include at least one local source.
3. List five to seven tips to safe camping, based on the information shared by the campers who were interviewed.
4. Have you and your family or someone you know gone camping in the last month? What have you or they experienced? Write a four- to five-paragraph essay about the experience, including a quotation. If no one you know has camped, ask four people whether they would go camping now. Please include a question about the suggestion to go camping in one’s own backyard.

UPDATE 3

“What is ‘green travel,’ anyway? A beginner’s guide to eco-friendly vacation planning.” is a Travel section article that was published on May 18, 2017. Much of the basic information is still true, but years have passed.
1. Are the terms “green travel” and “sustainable travel” still used? Have other terms entered the ecotourism vernacular to reflect changes in technology and respect for the environment? Define the terms.
2. Read the “Choosing a green destination” section. A number of No.1 destinations are given.
   a. How does Sachs present this information so readers understand the objectivity in naming these places and any professional bias that might exist?
   b. What advice is included to determine the best destination for each reader?
3. Read the “Choosing a green mode of transportation” section. Select one of the modes of transportation.
   a. What was true about this mode in 2017? What was projected about it?
   b. Research current status in meeting ecotourism standards? Are there any industry leaders?
4. Read the “Choosing a green hotel” section. Dawn Head, owner and editor of Go Green Travel Green, suggested that readers: “Decide your cause and what you won’t compromise on.” After reading different criteria and practices, what are your guidelines and expectations for selecting a hotel? Are there green practices that you expect?
5. Read the “Choosing green activities” section. What is the main idea presented in this section?
   a. Find a D.C.-area hotel that practices the idea to “use less and do good when you're there.” What sources might help you find this hotel?
   b. If you can find no D.C.-area hotel that meets the criteria, select one that you think could partner with your school. Brainstorm ideas and write a proposal.
TRAVEL

Appalachian Trail reopens to day-trippers but urges thru-hikers to stay home

BY ANDREA SACHS

In mid-March, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail started shutting down sections and services to hikers of all ambitions. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), which oversees the 2,193-mile route, implored day hikers and “thru-hikers” to temporarily hang up their hiking boots. Last month, the organization revised its message and released guidelines that coincide with the steady reopening of the trail.

The ATC, which is based in Harpers Ferry, W.Va., teamed up with trail management partners and experts in the outdoor recreation and medical fields to assemble tips for day and overnight hikers.

The group is still urging thru-hikers — adventurers who complete the months-long 14-state trek in one go — to hold off on plans for now.

“Day hikers can mitigate exposure,” said Sandra Marra, the ATC’s president and chief executive, “but thru-hikers have greater challenges because they are coming into contact with people from all over and then going in and out of trailside communities.”

In anticipation of the Memorial Day holiday and the unofficial start of summer, the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service opened areas that the trail runs through, such as Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, Cherokee National Forest...
in Tennessee, and Pisgah and Nantahala national forests in North Carolina. The Triple Crown, a 27-mile stretch in Virginia’s Blue Ridge Mountains, was one of the last holdouts and will reopen June 13. About five miles of the Appalachian Trail remain off-limits, according to the ATC.

Although the majority of the trail is back, many of the facilities and services overnight and long-distance hikers use are still shuttered. As of early June, the majority of overnight shelters and privies remain closed, with the number exceeding 200. In addition, New Jersey and Massachusetts are prohibiting overnight stays on their land, as is Shenandoah. In New Hampshire, the Appalachian Mountain Club has pulled the welcome mat from its mountain huts and parked its White Mountain hiker shuttle for the remainder of the year. Maine closed all lean-to shelters and campsites on state land, including Baxter State Park, which also forbids hiking above the tree line and on the trail’s first — or final — 5.2 miles. The park plans to readmit overnight hikers on July 1, a turn of events that could delay thru-hikers: Katahdin, the park’s legendary mountain, is the official start or finish line of the trail, depending on the hiker’s point of departure.

“Southbounders can’t start until Baxter opens,” Marra said, referring to hikers who travel from Maine to Georgia.

Day and overnight hikers have more flexibility to work around the limited facilities and patchwork of restrictions, including states requiring visitors to quarantine for two weeks. Hikers of this ilk can also be more self-sufficient: They can carry their own water and food supplies and avoid the enclosed spaces with high-touch surfaces where the risk of exposure to the coronavirus is greatest.

“When you go into those facilities, all bets are off,” Marra said. “The picnic tables and privies are teeming with bacteria on the best day. We can’t station enough people to sanitize them.”

The ATC maintains a frequently updated list of closed areas and services on its website. For businesses in communities near the trail, such as hostels, laundromats and grocery stores, hikers should contact the retailer directly, because hours of operation may vary.

Before setting out, the ATC recommends that hikers ask themselves questions about their state of health and preparedness, such as: Have you experienced coronavirus-like symptoms? Does your route include any closed portions of the trail? And do you have protection against the coronavirus, such as a mask and hand sanitizer? Depending on the answers, you should stay home or proceed to the trailhead.

The tips combine guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with outdoor best practices. For example, hike with your shelter-in-place crew or a group of no more than six people. Maintain a safe distance from other hikers; if you can’t, slip on a mask. Wash or sanitize your hands after touching a hard surface. Carry a trowel for digging a cat hole or makeshift latrine. Hike locally to avoid pit stops for gas and food. If you plan to stay overnight on the trail, set up a tent or personal shelter that no one else has inhabited. And bring your own bearproof food storage unit, so you can skip the communal bear boxes, poles or cables.

“Treat your hike like a true backcountry experience that is not reliant on A.T. facilities you would otherwise use,” the ATC states in its guidelines.

Even outside, under the open sky, hikers need to take precautions. To minimize contact with other trail users, seek out access points and trailheads with less foot traffic. Be aware of narrow paths not conducive to social distancing. “You can’t walk five abreast and stay on the trail,” Marra said. If the trail is crowded, wait until it is safe to proceed or choose an alternative route. One clear indicator of a location to avoid: a packed parking lot. Marra recommends driving on. “You don’t want to add to that mess,” she said. Also, don’t park illegally on the side of the road. Marra said police have been ticketing cars in such high-volume spots as the stretch of Route 40 near Annapolis Rock in Maryland. For your planning purposes, plumb the resources provided by local and regional hiking groups, such as the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club.

The ATC does not know when it will...
change its position on thru-hiking, but several factors could influence its decision: the reopening of all trail sections, a flattening or decrease of the coronavirus infection curve in all 14 states for two weeks, or a vaccine. As a consolation, the group is granting folks who had to abandon their quest additional time to complete their journey. Thru-hikers “have 12 months from the date they choose to resume their hikes to complete the remainder of their journeys and still be recognized by the ATC as a thru-hiker and 2,000-miler,” the group stated.

The ATC will not acknowledge the accomplishments of hikers who ignored its advice and continued their journey during the pandemic. Marra said that about 100 hikers, including a collective called the Resistors, refused to leave. She said a group passed through West Virginia last month, and one rogue hiker was spotted in New Hampshire.

Marra hopes to open the ATC’s visitors center in Harpers Ferry in mid-July. The staff is creating signs to ensure social distancing inside the compact facility, which is a combination museum, information desk and rest stop for trail-weary trekkers. The opening could overlap with the return of another important site in the hiking community: the Goodloe E. Byron Memorial Pedestrian Walkway. In December, a train derailment damaged the Harpers Ferry footbridge. When the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park fully reopens, the park service is planning to transport visitors by shuttle. However, by the end of July, Appalachian Trail hikers may be able to cross the Potomac on their own two feet.

Andrea Sachs has written for Travel since 2000. She has reported from nearby places such as Ellicott City, Md., and the Jersey Shore, and from far-flung locations, including Burma, Namibia and Russia.