

# 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 in the absence of a crisis, museums are considered refuges 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 — way before the coronavirus pandemic. A pandemic is a disease epidemic that has spread across a region or worldwide.

Purists will say nothing substitutes for actually seeing a work of art or an artifact in person, and the purists are right.

But these are not pure times, and even without a pandemic, plenty of people are unable to travel to see the world's treasures 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.**

The nation's premier people-owned [art museum](#) lists more than 42,000 artworks online, and two special "exhibits."

"Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting" focuses on the popular 17th-century Dutch master Johannes Vermeer, and "Fashioning a Nation" is a brief survey of American fashions from 1740 to 1895.

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

At least 12 of the Smithsonian Institution's 20 museums offer virtual tours, including the [National Zoo](#).

The [National Portrait Gallery](#) has been especially crowded in recent years —thanks to the wildly popular portraits of former President Barack Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama. You can check these out in two online exhibits, "First Ladies" and "Portraits of African Americans."

### **Museum of Modern Art, New York City**

[MoMA](#) has relatively few artworks available to browse online — just 129 pieces and only one online exhibit.

That one exhibit is about a woman artist you might not know much about: Sophie Taeuber-Arp, a Swiss-born artist who became a central figure in important modern and cutting-edge art movements of the first half of the 20th century.

### **Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City**

An [embarrassment of riches](#), but what else would you expect from America's largest and richest private museum in America's largest and richest city?

There are 26 online exhibits, many of them focused on fashion history and Vermeer. One way to explore this vast collection online is to click on the button to tour the museum by room and object.

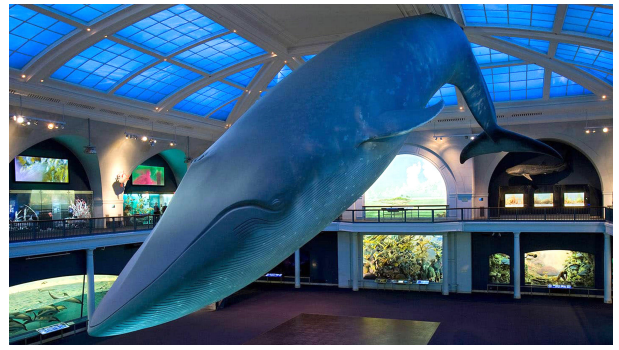
### **American Museum of Natural History, New York City**

Science and natural history museums offer their own sources of tranquility and fun, especially for dinosaur-obsessed kids stuck at home.

The [American Museum of Natural History](#) hosts three online exhibits, including one that looks at the museum's famous habitat dioramas, "Windows on Nature." Another, "Highlights from the American Museum of Natural History," features all the greatest hits, including the Titanosaur, the 563-carat sapphire Star of India and an African elephant.

## **Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston, Massachusetts**

[MFA](#) is another wide-ranging museum with a huge collection and 16 online exhibits. They include "Fashion Photography at the MFA" and a fascinating look at conservation, "Preserving Fans at the MFA Boston."



Why fans? New England used to be the center of the U.S. textile industry, so the museum's fan collection now totals about 600 and ranges from 2000 years B.C. to the early 20th century.

## **Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan**

This is another [all-inclusive museum](#), but it is best known for its relationship with the great Mexican artist Diego Rivera and his wife, Frida Kahlo.

This museum's online exhibits include one on Rivera's "Detroit Industry" murals at the museum. Two others on Frida include "Frida Kahlo in Detroit" and "Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States, 1932."

## **The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois**

You can explore [this collection](#) online by topic, say, Modern Art or Impressionism. Impressionism is a 19th-century art movement that emphasizes light and ordinary subject matter.

Or look for favorite artworks up close in a room, such as Georges Seurat's "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte" and Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks." Or examine a painting in more depth, such as Gustave Caillebotte's "Paris Street: Rainy Day."

## **J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California**

One of Los Angeles' [premier museums](#) offers online ways to explore the 15,000-item collection by room settings. Additionally, it offers two online exhibits from the museum's renowned manuscripts collection.

But maybe skip one of them, "Heaven, Hell and Dying Well: Images of Death in the Middle Ages," and go directly to a more cheerful tour: "Eat, Drink and Be Merry: Food in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance." Now that so many restaurants have closed or are take-out only, you can get an idea of how people ate and drank hundreds of years ago in Europe.

## **High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia**

[The High](#) is famous for its photography collection and, within that, its important collections of photographs of the civil rights movement.

"Civil Rights Photography" is one of four online exhibits showing now. It contains a small selection of more than 300 photographs documenting the social protest movement from Rosa Parks' arrest to the Freedom Rides to the turbulent demonstrations of the late 1960s.

## **Museum of Fine Arts (MFAH), Houston, Texas**

This leading [Texas museum](#) features a dozen online exhibits. Space fanatics should check out "Space City: Photographs from the Museum of Fine Arts Houston," celebrating humankind's fascination with space and exploration.

Another close-to-home exhibit is "Latino Experience in the USA: Works from the MFAH Collection," which explores works by Latino artists.

### **Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico**

It's not as if this iconic artist failed to deal with dramatic images of death — all those dry cattle skulls might be a clue. Her art still has a soothing quality that might be just what we need at the moment.

This [small museum](#) in the New Mexican capital, near where she lived in the last years of her life, offers six online exhibits, but check out her "Watercolors."

## Quiz

- 1 Is the author suggesting that people who are isolated at home because of the coronavirus should take an online tour of a museum? Which selection from the article BEST supports your answer?
- (A) Yes; "Even in the absence of a crisis, museums are considered refuges of calm and reflection."
  - (B) No; "The High is famous for its photography collection and, within that, its important collections of photographs of the civil rights movement."
  - (C) Yes; "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."
  - (D) No; "You can check these out in two online exhibits, "First Ladies" and "Portraits of African Americans."

- 2 Read the following statement.

*Nature-loving students can explore natural history museums online during the coronavirus.*

Which sentence from the article BEST supports the statement above?

- (A) An embarrassment of riches, but what else would you expect from America's largest and richest private museum in America's largest and richest city?
  - (B) Another, "Highlights from the American Museum of Natural History," features all the greatest hits, including the Titanosaur, the 563-carat sapphire Star of India and an African elephant.
  - (C) New England used to be the center of the U.S. textile industry, so the museum's fan collection now totals about 600 and ranges from 2000 years B.C. to the early 20th century.
  - (D) But maybe skip one of them, "Heaven, Hell and Dying Well: Images of Death in the Middle Ages," and go directly to a more cheerful tour: "Eat, Drink and Be Merry: Food in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance."
- 3 How does the author develop the idea that many American museums offer virtual tours and resources?
- (A) by describing how many museums and galleries have been closed due to the coronavirus epidemic
  - (B) by explaining how the partnership between Google and museums provides online content
  - (C) by illustrating that few people know about the large number of virtual museum tours available
  - (D) by providing a list of online materials and virtual tours available from some of the country's leading museums
- 4 Which of the following statements BEST represents the author's approach toward virtual museum tours in the article?
- (A) They think virtual tours are no substitute for seeing art in person, so people should not bother with them.
  - (B) They think that too few museums are offering virtual tours given the current coronavirus epidemic.
  - (C) They think virtual tours are not as fun as actual tours, but a good solution given the situation.
  - (D) They think that the popularity of virtual museum tours could threaten internet service during the epidemic.