Aviation Museum of N.H. reopens to the public on Saturday, July 18

We're delighted to announce that the Aviation Museum of N.H. will reopen to the public on a limited basis. Starting Saturday, July 18, the museum will open each Saturday from 10 a.m to 4 p.m. We're temporarily reducing our schedule in order to comply with CDC and state public health guidelines. We'll restore hours on Fridays and Sundays as soon as we're able.

The biggest change is that under new public health guidelines, New Hampshire museums must eliminate "hands-on" exhibits in favor of static "look and see" displays. This means we have temporarily removed or changed several exhibits. Among the exhibits temporarily removed are our Rob Holland Experience virtual reality exhibit; the children’s toy airport and play area; our hands-on flight simulators, our Elbit "heads up" night vision display, and the popular life-sized Embraer flight deck.

In their place, we've arranged for new exhibits that we expect visitors will find interesting. Among them: a display of vintage New Hampshire-related "first day" air mail letters that celebrate airport openings, new airline routes, and other Granite State aviation events; a display of U.S. airmail stamps from 1918 to 2013; an exhibit of artifacts from the dramatic Mt. Success crash of Northeast Airlines Flight 792 in 1954, in which five people spent three nights in sub-zero weather before getting rescued; a "Smoking in the Sky" collection of items from the days when flying and lighting up went hand in hand, including airline-branded ashtrays, lighters, and matchbooks, a complete set of 'Wings' cigarette cards from the 1940s, and vintage magazine ads showing glamorous pilots and stewardesses all puffing away; an expanded Northeast Airlines exhibit in the form of a ticket counter; a collection of aviation paintings by N.H. landscape artist (and former Eastern Airlines pilot) Richard Peter Hilker, and more. There's a lot to see!

Visitors will notice that in order to comply with CDC and state guidelines, we've had to make changes to the way people experience the museum. These changes came out of a committee process where we prioritized the need to keep visitors and volunteers safe, to comply with guidelines, and also offer a quality experience.

So starting on July 18: Face coverings will be required of anyone in the building. Credit card transactions only; no cash in the building. Visitors will be screened for Covid-19 by having temperatures taken via a forehead scan, answering standard questions, and providing contact info in the event tracing is required.

Also, visitors will be taken through the museum as part of a docent-led guided tour, with no more than eight people permitted at one time, and with social distancing practiced. All tours will follow a one-way route through the museum, and tours will exit via our rear door, which offers paved access to the parking lot. The museum's public bathrooms and drinking fountain will be closed until further notice. Our gift shop and the Slusser Library are closed. Hand sanitizer will be available, and frequent cleaning and sanitizing of the museum will take place during open hours.

We realize these changes will mean a different experience for visitors and volunteers. But without them, our museum could not open during the ongoing pandemic. Our aim is to balance the desire to offer a memorable and inspiring experience, and still meet all guidelines designed to keep everyone safe during these unusual times. We look forward to when we can resume normal operations. Thank you!

- Executive Director Jeff Rapsis

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Jeff Rapsis, Executive Director
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