

Giant Forest to reopen months after fires threatened sequoias

December 13 2021, by Hayley Smith



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Three months after wildfire flames ripped through California's ancient

sequoia groves, officials at the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks have announced the Giant Forest will reopen to the public.

Visitors will be able to access limited areas of the forest beginning Saturday as part of a phased reopening, officials said—although [winter storms](#) could force some roadway closures.

The [forest](#) has been closed to [public access](#) since mid-September by the KNP Complex fire, which burned through more than 88,000 acres and is still smoldering in some areas.

The fire generated one of the most indelible images of the year, when the base of the General Sherman Tree—known as the largest tree on Earth by volume—had to be wrapped in fire-protective foil.

"We have been working hard to restore access to the Giant Forest as quickly as we responsibly can, and we thank everyone for their patience and flexibility with the limited access that we're currently able to provide," Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Supt. Clay Jordan said in a statement.

Though sequoias are adapted to wildfire—and depend on it for reproduction—California's new breed of faster, hotter and more intense wildfires has proved lethal. As many as 3,600 [giant sequoias](#) in the southern Sierra Nevada perished in the flames of the KNP Complex and the nearby Windy fire this year.

The stunning loss represents about 3% to 5% of the world's giant [sequoia](#) population, officials said.

But many of the trails in the Giant Forest, including the Congress Trail, were not affected by the fire and remain open. Some trails that were burned by the fire will be open with posted warnings, while the most

severely damaged trails will stay closed, officials said.

Saturday's reopening will extend from Hospital Rock to just above the intersection with Wolverton Road. The Giant Forest Museum will also be open, but there is no [potable water](#) or food available in the area so visitors are advised to bring their own.

And with winter storms in the forecast, tire chains may be required, officials said.

The foothills of Sequoia National Park also remain open, although visitors are advised to check weather and road information before visiting the [park](#) during the winter.

The Giant Forest is an extremely popular area that typically draws millions of visitors each year, but those numbers took a hit because of wildfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, officials said.

"As we continue to mitigate risks, get employees back into their homes and contend with the obstacles posed by the winter season, we hope we can continue to get closer to a level of access that's normal for this time of year," Jordan said.

Park officials said the initial reopening of the Giant Forest will be four days a week, 8 a.m. through sunset, with seven-day [access](#) from Christmas Day through New Year's Day.

The upcoming open days are as follows, weather and conditions permitting:

- Saturday, Dec. 11 - Sunday, Dec. 12
- Friday, Dec. 17 - Monday, Dec. 20

•Friday, Dec. 24 - Monday, Jan. 3.

Sunday, Dec. 12, will be a fee-free day, the park said.

©2021 Los Angeles Times.

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Giant Forest to reopen months after fires threatened sequoias (2021, December 13)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2021-12-giant-forest-reopen-months-threatened.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.