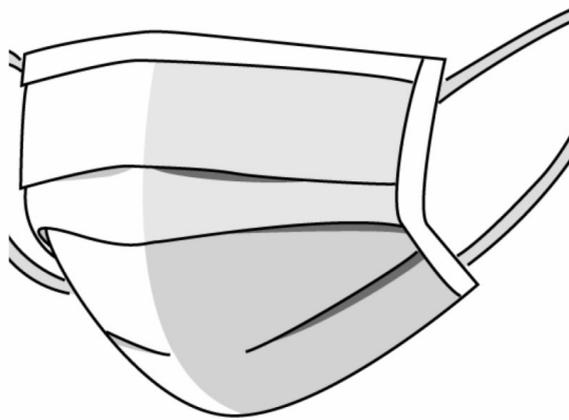


## Masks:

**The debate over whether to mandate face coverings seems to have taken over the conversation about re-opening the tourism industry**



*The list of states with mask mandates includes California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New York, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia. Source: NPR*

Masks have unfortunately become a partisan political issue, but they are of real concern to DMOs all over the country.

At the state and local level, a balance must be found that allows both for tourism workers to return to work and for travelers to feel safe traveling. And DMOs have no authority in the decision process.

Recent research conducted by SMARInsights has found:

- Almost half of consumers in the eastern U.S. still believe that it is safer to stay home and venture out as little as possible
- Only 11% are ready to resume normal activities.
- About 43% are starting to add more activities to their routine while taking recommended precautions.

Destinations are dealing with many different local scenarios and levels of mask mandates and guidelines. Here are a few examples.

### Montana

The leaders of Montana’s chambers of commerce and many tourism organizations called on the public to

wear masks or face coverings to protect the health of Montana communities.

“Montana relies on tourism, and the ability of visitors to travel safely into, around and out of the state is critical to our economy’s recovery.

“According to the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana, in May of 2020, a full 44% of Montana tourism business owners said that under current conditions, their businesses could only survive another six months or fewer.

“Another 22% said they could only last up to a year. The impact of the pandemic is devastating to our economy and wearing masks can lessen this impact,” according to Lucy Guthrie Beighle from Glacier Country Tourism.

The following statement was released by Glacier Country Tourism:

“There is a misconception that COVID-19 is being brought to Montana by out-of-state visitors. Although this may have been true in a handful of cases, most cases in Montana have been caused by

community spread amongst our residents, according to local health departments and the state’s Department of Emergency Services.

“As residents of Montana, we must set the example for our community and our visitors—wear masks when social distancing is not possible, whether indoors or out.”

– *nbcmontana.com*

### Beaufort and Hilton Head Island

To combat the spread of COVID-19, leaders in Beaufort and Hilton Head Island passed mandatory mask policies on June 29.

Face coverings will now be required to be worn at all commercial businesses on Hilton Head Island. The town council said steps need to be taken “now” to protect the island and its citizens.

“While I would be the last person to find thinking that a mandate is something we need to do, I think that’s the point we’ve come to,” said Hilton Head Councilwoman Tamara Becker.

Under the new ordinance, all Hilton

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## DMOs promote the wearing of masks by everyone

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Head Island residents, tourists, and some workers will be required to wear face coverings in all commercial areas such as grocery stores, restaurants, bars, pharmacies, and retail stores.

It will be a criminal misdemeanor to violate the ordinance with a penalties of up to a \$500 fine or 30 days in jail.

“A mandate should only be used in extreme positions, and that’s where we are,” Becker said.

— *wsav.com*

### Tennessee

Some DMOs are seeing an opportunity to use masks as a promotional tool.

After an executive order from Williamson County Mayor Rogers Anderson mandating masks to be worn in public, several local organizations have created a new campaign for residents to wear one.

Williamson County organizations included in the #wearamask campaign are Visit Franklin, the Downtown Franklin Association, Franklin Tomorrow, Williamson County Health Department, Williamson Inc. and the Williamson Medical Center.

Research conducted by Visit Franklin that sampled more than 2,400 Williamson County residents indicated they feel more comfortable in public when they and people around them wear a mask. Less than 30% felt comfortable going to grocery stores, retail shops, indoor restaurants or large indoor gatherings without a mask.



postandcourier.com

A sign at the City Market in Charleston reminds visitors to wear masks.

To help encourage the use of masks, Visit Franklin and the City of Franklin are ordering 1,500 Franklin branded masks from the Tennessee Economic Recovery Group’s Tennessee Strong Mask Movement. They will be distributed to businesses and residents in need of a mask and will be available at the Visitor Center while supplies last.

— *tennessean.com*

### Charleston

As both coronavirus case numbers and South Carolina hotel occupancy rates continue to climb, tourism leaders are talking nonstop about masks.

Knowing that masks would be key to reopening the region to tourists, Explore Charleston and Charleston County’s economic development office teamed up to provide free face coverings to small business owners who didn’t need large quantities of masks.

They acquired about 50,000 disposable masks, about half of which have been given out since distribution started in mid-May. The remaining masks are still available for pickup at the visitor centers downtown, in Mount Pleasant and in North Charleston.

The masks are also there for any tourists who need them, said Helen Hill, CEO at Explore Charleston. Many of the freebies being passed out to local businesses are intended to help ensure out-of-town guests are masked, too, she explained.

Hill said that, given Charleston’s reputation for hospitality, they’ve adopted the philosophy that the best sign of good service during these times is an abundance of masks — masks on hotel and restaurant workers, masks on residents and masks available to visitors.

— *postandcourier.com*