

Here's how Trump's idea of reopening Alcatraz is affecting a San Francisco Area small business, what it could do to Bay Area tourism

It's 7:05 on Wednesday morning, and Dylan David's black RadRunner electric bike comes to a stop at the front door of his office at the corner of the intersection of Columbus Avenue and Greenwich Street.

He takes out a key ring with more than a dozen keys and uses the lime green one to open the door before he chains up his bike on the sidewalk. There are 55 minutes until a group of 24 customers is scheduled to leave his office for a San Francisco tour.

David, 46, started [Dylan's Tours](#) with his self-proclaimed "soccer mom minivan" in 2003. Now, he has a staff of 15 drivers who take locals and travelers to tourism hotspots, ranging from Muir Woods to Lombard Street. After making their way across the Bay Area, the 24 customers in the afternoon will head to Alcatraz, which, aside from its infamous history and notoriety, has become even more popular recently.

The popularity spike came from President Donald Trump's [May 4 claim](#) on the Truth Social platform that he wanted to reopen the federal penitentiary, which has been closed since March 21, 1963, and has a current upkeep that Alcatraz historian [Jolene Babyak called](#) "horrendous."

“I am directing the Bureau of Prisons, together with the Department of Justice, FBI, and Homeland Security, to reopen a substantially enlarged and rebuilt ALCATRAZ, to house America’s most ruthless and violent Offenders,” Trump wrote.

Since Trump’s post, no orders have been signed, and it has become a widespread joke with some Bay Area residents. For others, including those not from the Bay, it's another example of an illogical idea from Trump, who some think is disinterested in understanding what his ideas sprouting into actions could mean for citizens, like David, who run small businesses attached to the president’s groundless ideas.

“I don’t think any right American would go, ‘Hey, let’s shut down something that is interesting, successful, creates a lot of jobs, creates tourism,’” David said.

David took the comments in stride, never believing them or the idea that Alcatraz could soon house prisoners. But it’s leaving a mark on him and his business, along with those who are visiting San Francisco.

‘I think it’s dangerous’

Glenn and Kristine Stokes from Augusta, England, had a list of things they wanted to do while visiting San Francisco.

They, like many before them, came to see “The Rock.”

No, not the Nicolas Cage and Sean Connery [film](#), but the nicknamed prison. However, the 1996 flick is a prime example of how Alcatraz, aside from housing Al Capone, George “Machine Gun” Kelly and numerous other famous (or infamous) inmates, has been a cultural phenomenon long before Trump wanted to reopen it.

But after going on a cruise with [City Experiences](#) — whose media contact, Cornelius Geary, said the company is “passing all questions and comments about Trump reopening Alcatraz to (the National Park Service)” — to the prison and walking through it Monday, Kristine laughed at the idea that it could reopen before sharing what she believes those across the Atlantic think about Trump.

“It’s dangerous for someone in his position to enable such rhetoric and action,” she said. “I think quite a lot of British people think he’s a... bit of a joke.”

Those in power thought Trump’s idea of opening Alcatraz was somewhat of a joke, too. On May 5, San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie [called Trump’s thought](#) “not a serious proposal.” On the same day, [Trump said](#), “nobody ever escaped (from Alcatraz),” before talking about how “one person almost got there” and explaining how the prisoner’s ripped clothing was found in the water.

However, that's not entirely accurate. A homemade life vest [washed up on Cronkhite Beach](#), but that was after the famous escape attempt of *three* men: Frank Morris and the Anglin brothers.

This was dramatized in the 1979 Clint Eastwood [film](#), "Escape from Alcatraz."

David took it as a joke, too.

"It never once crossed my mind that this was ever going to happen or ever will happen," he said.

"... So it's just taking this stuff with a grain of salt and having a little humor with it."

If it weren't a joke, though, there would be no kidding about how expensive it would be to repair Alcatraz and how it could weaken San Francisco's tourism industry.

After operating for nearly 30 years, Alcatraz closed [due to hefty upkeep](#), which cost nearly three times more than any other federal prison.

According to the [National Park Service](#) — whose office of public affairs had no comment and referred to Trump's statement and recommended reaching out to the White House — Alcatraz Island generates about \$60 million in annual revenue for park partners from 1.6 million visitors.

Kristine, from abroad, saw Trump's idea as a distraction. Her opinion hadn't changed at Pier 33 after seeing Alcatraz.

“While you’re all running around over here talking about whether he’s gonna open Alcatraz or not, now there’s something more important going on over there,” Kristine said.

Off without a hitch

David worries considerably more about online travel agents taking customers than Alcatraz reopening and affecting his business.

Recently, when David guided customers on tours, “a catalyst” for why some decided to see Alcatraz was “just in case” it closes to the public, he said, which is helping grow business.

If Alcatraz were to stop tours, though, David’s company would lose 20% of its revenue, he said.

But on Wednesday, there’s no need to worry about that. Per, the morning tour guide, stands in the doorway at 7:50 after the bus loads up with patrons. David tells him it’s a good bunch.

And at 7:59, the bus leaves the corner of the intersection of Columbus Avenue and Greenwich Street, which means another group will soon saunter through Alcatraz and share opinions on Trump’s idea while David appreciates the ahead-of-schedule departure and the morning going off without a hitch.

“That’s what we wanna see,” he said, watching the bus drive away.