

Donald Trump may reopen Alcatraz as a prison

8th May 2025



US President Donald Trump says he wants to reopen the famous prison Alcatraz. The prison is on a rocky island in San Francisco Bay. The jail was in use between 1934 and 1963. It was used to house high-profile prisoners. These included the gangsters

Al Capone and George "Machine Gun" Kelly. Officially, no one ever escaped alive from the prison. In 1973, Alcatraz opened to the public and became a tourist attraction. President Trump wants the island to return to housing dangerous criminals. Trump said: "Alcatraz represents something very strong, very powerful." He wants it to be a symbol of law and order. He added: "America has been plagued by vicious, violent, and repeat criminal offenders."

The USA's head of border control, Tom Homan, liked the idea of reopening Alcatraz as a prison. He said it could be "an option for significant public safety threats and national security threats". However, some people think Alcatraz should not become a prison again. Hugh Hurwitz, a former acting director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, disagreed with the idea. He told the BBC: "It's not realistic to think you can repair it. You'd have to tear it up and start over." He said the island needed too many repairs and that some buildings are "literally falling apart". He pointed out some problems. He said: "There are no security upgrades. No cameras. No fencing. You can't run a prison [like that]."

Sources: [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com) / [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com) / [npr.org](https://www.npr.org)

Writing

The world needs more prisons. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

Alcatraz / island / prisoners / prison / gangsters / tourist attraction / symbol / law / border control / safety threat / repairs / buildings / security / cameras / fencing

True / False

- 1) Donald Trump will reopen the Alcatraz prison next week. T / F
- 2) Alcatraz was used as a prison for more than 100 years. T / F
- 3) Alcatraz is now a place that attracts tourists. T / F
- 4) President Trump said Alcatraz was a symbol of crime and violence. T / F
- 5) The USA's head of border control is against reopening Alcatraz. T / F
- 6) An ex-Federal Bureau of Prisons worker wants to reopen Alcatraz. T / F
- 7) Alcatraz needs many repairs. T / F
- 8) There are no cameras at Alcatraz. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1. famous | a. dangers |
| 2. prison | b. go back |
| 3. escaped | c. sign |
| 4. return | d. got away from |
| 5. symbol | e. breaking up |
| 6. head | f. well known |
| 7. threats | g. operate |
| 8. repair | h. boss |
| 9. falling apart | i. jail |
| 10. run | j. fix |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Should Alcatraz be reopened as a prison?
- c) What do you think life inside a prison is like?
- d) What are your favourite movies about prisons?
- e) What do you think when people escape from prisons?
- f) Should prisons stop people from committing crimes?
- g) What will prisons be like in the future?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the prison authorities?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. The prison is on a | a. profile prisoners |
| 2. The jail was in use between | b. out some problems |
| 3. It was used to house high- | c. and order |
| 4. no one ever escaped | d. prison like that |
| 5. a symbol of law | e. 1934 and 1963 |
| 6. national security | f. alive from the prison |
| 7. the island needed too many | g. apart |
| 8. some buildings are literally falling | h. rocky island |
| 9. He pointed | i. repairs |
| 10. You can't run a | j. threats |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you know about Alcatraz?
- What is the purpose of prisons?
- What are prisons like in your country?
- What should happen to gangsters and dangerous criminals?
- How long should a prisoner stay in their cell each day?
- Are prisons the best way to punish people?
- Is crime a big problem in your country?
- Should all prisons be on islands?

Spelling

- reopen the ufasmo prison Alcatraz
- high-erpfio prisoners
- These included the eggsarsnt
- no one ever pecseda alive from the prison
- a otisurt attraction
- a lbsoym of law and order.
- The USA's head of rrodbe control
- public safety ahtrtse
- a mrrfeo acting director
- It's not lriacteis to think you can
- buildings are "leytlira falling apart
- There are no euiyrtcs upgrade

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. i	3. d	4. b	5. c
6. h	7. a	8. j	9. e	10. g

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions. (Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What kind of island is Alcatraz on?
2.	Who was George "Machine Gun" Kelly?
3.	How many prisoners successfully escaped from Alcatraz?
4.	When did Alcatraz become a tourist attraction?
5.	What does President Trump want Alcatraz to be a symbol of?
6.	What is Tom Homan's job?
7.	Where did Hugh Hurwitz used to work?
8.	What did Hugh Hurwitz say the island needed?
9.	What did Hugh Hurwitz say was happening to the buildings on Alcatraz?
10.	What did Hugh Hurwitz say there was a lack of on Alcatraz?

Speaking – Punishments

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst punishments at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| • Prison | • Community service |
| • Fines | • Ankle tags |
| • House arrest | • Chain gangs |
| • Death penalty | • Police warnings |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	T	4	F	5	F	6	F	7	T	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.