Paris Fashion Week has unveiled the schedule for the city’s next runway season, with a healthy 88 events listed on the official program.

The nine-day season, showing Spring-Summer 2021 women’s ready-to-wear, debuts on Monday, September 28, with Japanese rising star Mame Kurogouchi. It ends on Tuesday, October 6, with Louis Vuitton.

It remains to be fully clarified, however, exactly how many houses will in the end stage actual physical runway shows, rather than just presentations in showrooms.

The Federation de la Haute Couture, French fashion’s governing body, cautioned in a note: “This Official Calendar brings together the houses of fashion shows calendar and the houses of presentations calendar and will include physical and/or digital events.”

Asterisks on the calendar indicate that, currently, 22 houses plan presentations— and not catwalk events.

That said, major fashion houses such as Christian Dior, Chanel and Louis Vuitton have all confirmed their goal: to stage proper physical shows. Though, due to social distancing, these will have significantly smaller audiences than usual.

Unlike New York, where Governor Andrew Cuomo has imposed a maximum audience size of 50 people for the city’s upcoming Fashion Week, authorities here have issued no specific instructions on fashion crowd sizes in Paris.
France has suffered a significant spike in the number of people testing positive to Covid-19 in the past several weeks; with more than a score of clusters being reported in Paris alone. On Friday, Sept. 4, the health ministry reported seven new deaths from coronavirus in the capital. Wearing a mask is now effectively compulsory throughout Paris— or one risks facing a 135-euro fine.

Several notable fashion houses – in particular Saint Laurent and Comme des Garçons – are going to sit out this season, but by and large, the vast majority of brands have recommitted to the season. A far higher percentage comparatively than New York, where such leading brands as Ralph Lauren, Michael Kors, Marc Jacobs and Tommy Hilfiger will not be present this month.

As noted, the Federation accepted 10 new entrants onto the calendar last week, underlining Paris’ continuing attraction as the pre-eminent season, even in the midst of the global pandemic. The opening Monday features four of these fledgling houses, including Situationist from Georgia and Wales Bonner, the fashion-forward London tailor who was the LVMH Prize winner of 2016.

Tuesday afternoon kicks off with the first show by a mega brand, Dior, at its traditional time slot of 2.30pm, while the day will finish with another LVMH Prize winner, Thebe Magugu of South Africa.

Shows are scheduled most hours from 9.30 AM to 8PM, in a season which will witness the debut of new hire Matthew Williams as creative director of Givenchy. Expect a major shift in direction from his predecessor Clare Waight Keller, who designed Meghan Markle’s bridal gown, to Williams, who helped create the LED jacket Kanye West wore for his Grammy 2008 performance, and prior to his role at Givenchy was a creative consultant to Lady Gaga.
Among other new arrivals to the Paris calendar will be Gabriela Hearst, the Uruguayan-born, New York-based designer, and Mossi, the happening haute street label.

The season will finish with a busy Tuesday, where giants like Chanel, Miu Miu and Louis Vuitton are showing. The latter two bracket Maison Margiela, which has pushed back the date of its show—making for a charged final few hours.

By Godfrey Deeny