How Overseas Visitors Can Help
STEWARD OUR NATIONAL PARKS

By Tate Watkins
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Introduction

After surges in visitation over recent decades, America’s national parks are struggling to keep pace with their popularity. Despite the increasing numbers of visitors, the National Park Service budget remains stagnant. Today, the park system collectively needs an estimated $22 billion for overdue maintenance and repairs. The effects are seen in potholed roads, crumbling bridges, dilapidated campgrounds, failing sewer systems, condemnable employee housing, and countless other deteriorating park assets that have lacked adequate upkeep.

The recreation fee system allows parks to raise revenue that can help meet their growing needs. It has enabled some parks to take part in, if not yet fully realize, their own rescue. One reform, however, could appreciably increase revenue from the fee system: implementing a modest surcharge for international visitors. Approximately 14 million people visit national park sites from abroad annually, or more than one-third of all foreign visitors to the United States. If each international visitor to a U.S. national park paid a $25 surcharge, it could raise an estimated $330 million, nearly doubling recreation fee revenue for the park system.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Dozens of the world’s most high-profile national park systems charge overseas visitors more than locals. Adopting a surcharge for visitors from abroad at U.S. national parks could significantly increase revenue, providing parks with more funding to address maintenance and improve visitor experience.
- Approximately 14 million people visit national park sites from abroad annually, or more than one-third of all foreign visitors to the United States.
- If each international visitor to a U.S. national park paid a $25 surcharge, it could raise an estimated $330 million, nearly doubling total recreation fee revenue for the park system.
- Entry fees account for a small fraction of the total trip costs for international visitors to U.S. national parks. Moreover, existing research suggests that higher fees would have a negligible effect on park visitation from international travelers.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Authorize park superintendents to implement a surcharge on international visitors.
- Amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to explicitly permit national parks to differentiate fee pricing.
- Study challenges of and solutions to implementing tiered pricing for overseas visitors to determine the optimal approach.
- Experiment with different approaches for collecting the surcharge at individual parks.
- Separate the surcharge on international visitation from annual passes.
- If the surcharge is collected indirectly, distribute the revenue based on international visitation and empower park superintendents to use the receipts.

A Higher Level of Stewardship

In dozens of countries, park visitors from abroad pay more than locals for entry. A higher charge levied on foreign visitors reflects their general ability and willingness to pay more. After all, the price of admission at a national park is generally a fraction of overall trip costs for visitors, especially those from abroad. Asking international tourists who do not support U.S. national parks through taxes to pay a little more to see them is not only reasonable, it would also provide additional resources to improve the stewardship of our “crown jewels.” Moreover, formal evidence suggests that demand to visit U.S. national parks—in particular the highest-profile destinations—is not sensitive to admission prices, particularly for overseas visitors. One study published in 2014 found that the price of gasoline affects national park visitation more than entry fees do. Another study, from 2017, estimated that raising the vehicle entry fee at Yellowstone National Park by more than double—from $30 to $70—would decrease visitation from foreign visitors by a mere 0.07 percent. A negligible dip would be logical given that the average overseas visitor was already spending an estimated total of $4,484 on their trip to America’s national parks.5

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The Blessing and Curse of Visitation

Excluding declines during the Covid-19 pandemic, visitation to U.S. national parks has steadily increased over the past decade. In recent years, more than 300 million people have consistently visited parks annually.12

Figure 1 presents estimates for the amount of recreation fee revenue that might be raised if each international tourist who visited a national park site paid a surcharge.13 Scenarios include surcharges of $16 or $25, amounts equal to the increases on tourist travel and visa fees proposed in Sen. Enzi’s legislation. The third scenario is a surcharge of $40, equal to the vehicle fee increase proposed by the Department of the Interior for all visitors at the most popular parks in 2017.14 Current fee revenues across all parks total $349 million.15 Implementing a surcharge on foreign visitation could raise that total to an estimated $560 million to $877 million, an increase from current levels of 60 percent to 151 percent, respectively.

“It’s great that people from all over the world recognize the value in these national treasures,” Sen. Enzi said in 2021, “but this increased visitation is adding to the maintenance backlog.” He noted that the concept is not novel: “Foreign visitors at the Taj Mahal in India will pay an $18 fee, compared to a fee of only 56 cents for local visitors. At Kruger National Park in South Africa, visitors from outside the country will pay a $25 fee per day, compared to a $6.25 fee for local visitors.”17

The idea of differential pricing for outdoor recreation has relevant precedents elsewhere in the United States. For example, it’s standard practice for state fish and wildlife agencies to charge different prices for residents and non-residents to hunt and fish.16 An out-of-state visitor who wants to hunt big game in Montana, for instance, pays more than $1,200 for licenses and permits. Meanwhile, it costs a resident less than $50 in fees to hunt an elk.19 In North Carolina, non-residents pay $32 for a fishing license, double the price for residents.20 Moreover, many states offer tiered pricing based on residency to visit state parks and campgrounds, often charging about $10 more per night.21

Whether differential pricing were implemented directly at park gates or indirectly through other means, it could significantly increase total resources available to maintain sites and serve visitors. Implementing a surcharge for overseas visitors would boost revenue from a set of people able and willing to pay it, allowing parks to better meet their basic needs and come closer to funding maintenance in a sustainable way.

Trip. In that context, increasing fees by a mere $40 would barely register in a traveler’s budget.

The current fee system for national parks in the United States lacks nuance, with most visitors paying a flat weekly fee that permits access for all passengers in a private vehicle.18 As part of this relatively blunt system, standard overseas visitors pay the same price as U.S. citizens and residents. Or put another way, locals enjoy no discount when visiting their home-nation parks. Often, Americans pay even more than foreign visitors to support national parks because, in addition to paying entry fees, most U.S. residents pay income taxes, which also partially support parks. Approximately $20 per U.S. taxpayer goes toward the National Park Service budget—each and every year, regardless of whether those Americans visit a national park.19 Asking overseas tourists who are not a part of the tax base to pay a little bit more to see remarkable sites in need of stewardship seems not only logical but prudent.

As many U.S. parks are facing record visitation and struggling through funding shortfalls, the idea of charging international visitors more than domestic ones has gained traction. The National Park System Advisory Board has suggested that differential pricing based on residency could be a way to increase park revenue, noting the success of that strategy in other nations.20 Additionally, the late Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) pushed in 2019 to legislatively implement a surcharge for overseas visitors to help fund national parks by raising tourist travel and visa fees by $16 and $25, respectively.14
More visitors to parks, however, impose more costs on infrastructure and assets. These range from wear and tear on roads, trails, and campgrounds to increased pressure on wastewater systems to neglected employee housing. The demands on park resources have outpaced the budgets available to manage them. After adjusting for inflation, the National Park Service’s discretionary budget has remained stagnant for years.13

The current backlog of overdue maintenance for park infrastructure is estimated at $22 billion.24 This includes more than $5 billion in paved road repairs, $1 billion in water system improvements, and $900 million for trails and campgrounds. Specific repairs include fixing wastewater treatment facilities near Yellowstone’s Old Faithful, rehabilitating 20 bridges in Acadia National Park, improving campground bathrooms in Yosemite, and resurfacing portions of Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park.25 These overdue projects are in addition to the day-to-day maintenance needed to keep all national parks open and accessible to visitors.26

In light of funding challenges, visitor fees are an important and growing source of revenue for many parks. Across all federal land management agencies, recreation fee revenues increased by 40 percent over the five years leading up to the pandemic.32 Recreation fee receipts for national parks now total nearly $350 million annually, an amount roughly equivalent to 10 percent of the park system’s discretionary budget.29 The distribution of this fee revenue varies greatly. Some parks charge no fees and therefore have no fee revenue. By contrast, several high-profile national parks have in some years generated more revenue through fees than they received in congressional appropriations.29

The structure of the recreation fee system means that supplemental funding from fees helps mitigate the impacts of visitation. Passed in 2004, the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act not only allows parks to charge fees, it also permits them to retain and spend up to 80 percent of receipts where they are collected. Before the act became law, receipts from visitor fees were sent to the federal treasury.30

Because parks can spend the revenues they generate from fees, the decision-making authority over those revenues remains with superintendents and staff managing recreation sites on the ground. The model empowers local staff, rather than far-away bureaucrats or politicians, to decide how to best serve their own visitors. It also removes some of the political influence over spending decisions.

Local managers who serve users well and improve the visitor experience can benefit directly if their efforts increase fee revenues. Relatedly, managers have better knowledge about site operations and on-the-ground priorities than appropriators, so allowing them to make decisions about where to spend revenues is prudent. Channeling visitor fee revenues into park budgets also means that the people who benefit the most from parks directly invest in stewarding them.

**Refining a Blunt Instrument**

Of the 425 sites administered by the National Park Service, 109 charge entry fees.31 In addition, many parks charge fees for the use of various amenities such as campites, day-use areas, and cabins. The agency is subject to various legislative stipulations that govern where, how, and for whom recreation fees can be levied.32

Spiraling maintenance needs and funding shortfalls have prompted a search for new and better ways to sustain parks, including by tapping park visitors to play a larger role in helping parks flourish. The current fee system offers various opportunities for refinement. Examples include charging by day rather than week, charging by person rather than vehicle, or using shoulder-season or weekday discounts to raise off-peak revenue.

One of the most straightforward options to refine the fee system is to add an entrance surcharge for international visitors. As described above, this option could raise a meaningful amount of revenue to support the National Park Service. Implementing an entry surcharge for every international tourist who visits a U.S. park could raise significant funding dedicated to stewarding parks (see Figure 1). Under certain assumptions, a surcharge might double total recreation fee revenues.33

**Tiered pricing for entry holds enormous potential especially for the most popular parks.**24 The U.S. national parks often featured in art prints and wall calendars—Zion, Acadia, the Everglades, Grand Teton, and the like—not only attract many international visitors but have also strained greatest under the stress of surging visitation.23 For instance, past surveys suggest that as many as one-quarter of summer visitors to Yosemite National Park have come from abroad.36 Similarly, Grand Canyon National Park’s superintendent has estimated that, in a normal year, 30 to 40 percent of visitors come from other countries.37

Current entry fee revenues at Yellowstone National Park are estimated to be $9.1 million. Under the scenarios examined, the park’s receipts from entry fees would rise to an estimated $18.4 million to $32.3 million by increasing prices for international visitors.

**FIGURE 2:** Scenarios for Entry Fee Revenue with Surcharge on International Visitation at Yellowstone National Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surcharge Per International Visitor</th>
<th>Current Entry Fee Revenue</th>
<th>Additional Entry Fee Revenue</th>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>$9.1 M</td>
<td>$9.1 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$16</td>
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<tr>
<td>$40</td>
<td>$9.1 M</td>
<td>$32.3 M</td>
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Total Entry Fee Revenue

None: $9.1 M; $16: $18.4 M; $25: $23.6 M; $40: $32.3 M

Table Note: The scenarios displayed assume that 80 percent of additional receipts would be retained by Yellowstone. Twenty percent of total revenue raised from a surcharge would support the wider park system by being distributed to parks that do not charge fees. These totals, not pictured above, are estimated to range from $2.3 million to $5.5 million under the scenarios examined. Estimates assume that each surcharge, whether $15, $25, or $40, would decrease visitation from international tourists by 3 percent, based on research that demand for visitation to Yellowstone National Park is extremely inelastic. Jeremy L. Sage et al., “Thinking Outside the Park: National Park Fee Increase Effects on Gateway Communities,” University of Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, Report 2017-11 (2017).

from gate fees, while a higher one could triple current receipts. Surveys during summer 2018 suggested that perhaps 20 percent of Yellowstone visitors did not permanently reside in the United States.55 Summer visitation that year surpassed 3.7 million.44 A $16 entry surcharge for each international visitor—an amount equal to the additional tourist travel fee proposed by Sen. Enzi—could have raised an estimated $9.3 million that summer. A surcharge of $40 might have raised $23.3 million.46 Those sums would be on top of the park’s current entrance fee revenue of roughly $9.1 million, meaning the scenarios examined could grow the park’s total receipts from entry fees to an estimated $18.4 million to $32.3 million.47 A surcharge would also support the wider park system by raising an estimated $2.3 million to $5.8 million to be distributed to other parks that do not charge fees.48

The additional resources would not be able to address the $1 billion needed for overdue maintenance projects in Yellowstone. But with $4.1 billion of park assets that require $54 million for routine maintenance annually, the added revenue could augment current funding to help ensure the park doesn’t fall further behind.49 The additional funds would be enough to, for instance, cover the $5 million needed for improvements at the Midway Geyser Basin or contribute to the $28 million needed to rehabilitate the Gardner River High Bridge.45 Figure 2 displays estimates for the amount of entry fee revenue that could be raised at Yellowstone National Park under several scenarios.

Looking Abroad

Charging foreign tourists higher fees than citizens is common at national parks in many countries. Foreign tourists to the Galapagos Islands, for instance, pay a flat fee of $100, while Ecuadorian citizens pay $6.50 At South Africa’s iconic Kruger National Park, renowned for its lions, leopards, elephants, and other charismatic African wildlife, international visitors pay about $25 per day, while residents pay about $6.51 Torres del Paine National Park, in the Chilean Patagonia, charges foreigners $55 for extended visits, almost four times the $14 that citizens pay.52 And Nepal’s Chitwan National Park, home to rhinos, tigers, gharial crocodiles, and more than 500 species of birds, charges foreign visitors $15 per day, while locals pay just over $1.52

A 2019 report that reviewed entry fees at national parks around the world found approximately three dozen nations that charge non-citizens more than citizens.53 The strategy allows park systems to benefit from foreign visitors’ ability and willingness to pay, particularly in relatively lower-income countries. Additionally, for countries that receive a high share of visits from international tourists, the approach ensures that taxpayers do not bear an outsized burden of funding those visits. Many park systems explicitly state that fee revenue is dedicated to funding operations and stewarding natural resources in parks. Figure 3 displays fees paid by local and international visitors to national parks in selected countries, including the United States.54

Some national park systems have adopted fee schedules with several tiers. At various parks, citizens of nearby countries pay a higher price than locals but a lower one than foreigners from farther away. Tourists to the Galapagos Islands from nearby countries, for instance, pay half as much as other foreigners.55 A chimpanzee trek at Nyungwe National Park costs foreign visitors from the East Africa Community $10, more than the $4 Rwandans pay but much less than the $90 fee for other international tourists. Citizens of nations in the Southern African Development Community, a regional trade bloc, pay half the price of other internationals at South Africa’s national parks.56

Figure 4 shows fee tiers per person at selected parks around the world for a three-day visit. Fees for international tourists are by far lower at U.S. parks than at the other parks analyzed. The standard entry fee at top-tier U.S. national parks is $35 per vehicle for up to one week, meaning that each member in a family of four would cost less than $9.56 At Banff National Park in Canada, which does not differentiate between local and international visitors, three days of entry costs about $23. Three-day visits for international tourists at Chitwan in Nepal or Corcovado in Costa Rica would each cost roughly $45. Pliivice Lakes National Park, in Croatia, would cost all visitors about $106, while foreigners visiting Iguazu

FIGURE 3:
Average National Park Entry Fees for Selected Countries

Many of the world’s most high-profile national park systems charge overseas visitors more than locals.

Note: Fees are expressed in U.S. dollars, per person, per day and use an unweighted average for each country, as reported in “National Park Entrance Fees: A Global Benchmarking Focused on Affordability,” Parks 25, no. 1 (2019).

The lack of nuance in differentiating fees at U.S. national parks results in illogical structures when compared to high-profile parks around the world that also charge for entry. A European family visiting Zion National Park for three days, for instance, would pay $35 for a week-long visit. That would be nearly equivalent to the roughly $28 that a Kenyan family of four would pay to visit their home-country wildlife reserve of Maasai Mara for just a single day. When compared to global peers, there is clearly a great opportunity to refine the fee structures at U.S. parks in ways that would raise funds dedicated to their stewardship.

**Recommendations**

Authorize park superintendents to implement a surcharge on international visitors.

The National Park Service should authorize superintendents to adopt a surcharge that can raise dedicated funds to improve stewardship. Park superintendents are well positioned to know whether adopting a surcharge makes sense at their individual units. The bulk of revenue from a surcharge would likely come from the few dozen major national parks that are least sensitive to price and have significant numbers of international visitors.

When it comes to setting the level of a surcharge, one option would be for the National Park Service to suggest appropriate tiers for certain groupings of parks, similar to existing entry fee tiers. Then park superintendents could decide whether to implement the relevant international surcharge at their park. A degree of regional coordination could optimize fee structures by ensuring prices are harmonized across comparable parks. Superintendents from Utah’s “Mighty 5” parks, for instance, may find it worthwhile to coordinate pricing. But leaving the decision to adopt a surcharge largely up to local park staff would empower them to decide whether tiered pricing makes sense at their site.

Amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to explicitly permit national parks to differentiate fee pricing.

While the enabling legislation for the fee system does not prohibit differentiation in pricing, Congress should act to make that authority clear. Past agency actions regarding national park fees—including decisions to use fee collections to keep parks open during government shutdowns and proposals to raise entry fees—have led

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**FIGURE 4:** Entry Fees for Three-Day Visit to Selected National Parks

Many iconic national parks around the world charge different prices for visitors from different places. Fees for international tourists are by far lower at U.S. parks than at the other parks analyzed.

Note: Fees are expressed in U.S. dollars and estimated per person for a three-day visit. Local fee is the entry fee paid by a country’s own citizens. Regional fee, if lower than the international fee, is a discounted entry fee paid by visitors from nearby countries, often members of a trade bloc or regional community. International fee is the entry fee paid by all other foreign tourists. U.S. per person fee estimated for a family of four. Nyungwe fee is a flat fee for a chimpanzee trek. Galapagos fee is a flat fee for entry to the islands. Plitvice Lakes and Iguazu fees include second-day discounts.

Sources: National park and tour operator websites.

For full details and sources, see Table 2 in the Appendix.

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<thead>
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<th>National Park</th>
<th>Local Fee</th>
<th>Regional Fee</th>
<th>International Fee</th>
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Clearly, there are many factors to consider when weighing challenges inherent to each and ways to overcome them. Park superintendents should study several options for implementing and multiple important factors to consider.

Study challenges of and solutions to implementing tiered pricing for overseas visitors to determine the optimal approach.

To be sure, there are various ways a surcharge could be implemented and multiple important factors to consider. Park superintendents should study several options for exactly how to implement a surcharge, including the challenges inherent to each and ways to overcome them. Clearly, there are many factors to consider when weighing whether or how to implement a surcharge on international visitation. The sizable amount of revenue that could be raised at high-profile parks, however, would motivate a search for solutions that overcome the challenges.

**Experiment with different approaches for collecting the surcharge at individual parks.**

Incorporating a surcharge as part of entry fees has advantages over alternatives, but it presents logistical challenges. Park superintendents should experiment with different ways to collect the surcharge. Importantly, making a surcharge part of entry fees would mean the majority of receipts would be retained where collected, preserving the sound incentives of the current fee system. Charging each individual overseas tourist, however, as this brief suggests, presents a challenge given that many visitors currently pay park entry fees per vehicle.

International travelers typically plan trips well in advance. Parks could take advantage of this reality by having an entry-fee surcharge paid electronically in advance of arrival and implementing a straightforward way to display prepayment upon entry. Alternatively, to avoid congestion concerns, parks could leave collection or enforcement of the surcharge to some point beyond physical gates, similar to how some state parks check passes in parking or other areas. Relatively, the fact that many international tourists visit national parks via tour buses could make implementation simple if it allows for coordination of payment with or even remittance of fees from commercial operators.

Another factor to consider is how Americans demonstrate they qualify for the local price. One approach would be to mimic the way hunting and fishing licenses are sold, whereby receiving the resident price could depend on having state-issued identification. Ideally, this could also be done in advance of arrival through electronic purchasing systems. Buying park entry passes online already often entails providing some sort of identifying information, such as a license plate number.

**Separate the surcharge on international visitation from annual passes.**

The National Park Service should harmonize any surcharge with its annual pass framework. One option would be to offer annual passes to residents only. Another would be to make annual passes available to international tourists but still levy a surcharge per individual visit. Regardless of the exact details, harmonizing implementation within existing fee structures would ensure the overall effectiveness of an international-pricing strategy.

**If the surcharge is collected indirectly, distribute the revenue based on international visitation and empower park superintendents to use the receipts.**

Bundling a surcharge as part of visa or travel fees, such as legislation previously sponsored by Sen. Enzi proposed, could overcome administrative concerns related to collection; however, it would also flatten important incentives built into the current fee system. The positive feedback loop created by devoting the majority of fee receipts to the site of collection is an important characteristic that would ideally be maintained and magnified through the adoption of a surcharge.

If Congress decides to collect an international surcharge through visa fees or another indirect mechanism, then the revenue should be distributed to parks based on foreign visitation. Relatedly, park superintendents should have the same authority and flexibility to spend those funds as they do for entrance fees.

While increasing visa or travel fees could conceivably raise more revenue than directly raising entry fees would—even that even tourists who do not visit national parks would pay them—it would leave open the question of how to spend receipts. Sen. Enzi’s bill proposed to give the interior secretary ultimate authority over spending funds, with various stipulations resembling the framework of the Legacy Restoration Fund that was created by the Great American Outdoors Act. Such a spending framework would provide a guide. But it would be inferior to a mechanism that empowers superintendents to make local decisions about how to best serve visitors and care for park resources.

**Conclusion**

The U.S. park system includes some of the most popular national parks in the world. Our parks clearly need help to ensure they can sustain the impacts of increasing visitation, including from visitors from abroad. Recreation fees provide an important and growing revenue stream for many national parks, and charging higher fees for overseas visitors could significantly grow current fee receipts. The “crown jewel” parks most popular with international tourists stand to benefit the most from refining current fee structures. The point of charging more for visitors from abroad is not to squeeze them as much as possible; rather, it’s to harness the enthusiasm for and interest in our nation’s remarkable wonders to provide resources that will allow them to be stewarded properly.

Dozens of countries around the world have set the precedent of charging foreign tourists more to visit national parks than citizens. Adopting the approach in the United States would provide much-needed funding to make sure the U.S. park system can be sustained for visitors of all types for generations to come.
Endnotes


4. See Figure 3 below for an argument and a range of estimates for potential revenue from a fee on international visitation.

5. This brief uses the terms “overseas visitors,” “international tourists,” “foreign visitors,” and “visitors from abroad” interchangeably and to mean any visits to U.S. national parks that do not live permanently in the United States. This usage is consistent with the way that the National Travel and Tourism Office reports data on “residents of overseas countries.” International Travel Administration, National Travel and Tourism Office, “Market Profile: Visit National Parks/Monuments,” May 2023.

6. Not all countries charge fees to visit national parks. Examples of countries that do not charge for entry include relatively high-income nations such as Denmark, France, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Some charge fees for entry, typically for one-day or seven-day visits only. 

7. Overseas visitors to national parks were estimated to exceed 1.0 million per year in 2018, based on an estimate that each overseas visitor spent $1,000 per visit. This rough estimate is meant to be illustrative and assumes that the travel time was approximately one week. The National Park Service, “Identifying & Reporting Deferred Maintenance,” RecFee-1.

8. Estimates assume that the average park would decrease visitation from international tourists by 5 percent, based on existing data that suggest that revenue from fee increases to high-profile U.S. national parks is significantly elastic, and that any revenue from overseas visitors who enter a national park pays the export duty. "Declining National Park Visitation, Studies, More, and Markowski-Lindsay, “Declining National Park Visitation: An Economic Analysis.”


10. For example, during 2015, reported entry fees generated $307 million in revenue. Visitation surpassed 330 million in 2016 and 2017, although this approach would affect revenue estimates.


13. The report’s estimates for the percentage of revenue that would have been retained by Yellowstone and 20 percent apportioned to other parks in the system.

14. To help fund state agencies that manage wildlife, while non-residents have the same fees as residents to keep more visitor fees in the park to improve the visitor experience. A systematic way.


18. The analysis examined 30 “major nature-based” national parks, including most of the highest-profile U.S. parks. In examining the effect of entry fees, it described demand as “very price elastic.” Thomas H. Stevens, Thomas A. More, and Mark Markowski-Lindsay, “Declining National Park Visitation: An Economic Analysis.”


20. Under the current law, up to 80 percent of fees are required to be spent in the park in which they were collected, while the remaining 20 percent are used-park-wide. In this way, increased fee revenues in popular parks not only benefit those parks, but also benefit other units in the national park system.

21. This rough estimate is meant to be illustrative and assumes that the travel time was approximately one week.


23. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

24. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

25. National Park Service, “2023 Deer, Elk & Antelope Hunting Regulations,” (2023). Residents presumably have contributed tax dollars to help fund state agencies that manage wildlife, while non-residents have not been assessed the same fees as residents.


28. Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Justifications,” NPS, RecFee-1.

29. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

30. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

31. Per the personal entry fee for a three-day visit to U.S. national parks would be less than $18, far less than at many other popular national parks around the world. Terre des Indiens, Parque Nacional Galápagos.

32. Terre des Indiens, Parque Nacional Galápagos.

33. Terre des Indiens, Parque Nacional Galápagos.

34. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

35. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

36. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

37. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

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40. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

41. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.


43. Under the current law, up to 80 percent of fees are required to be spent in the park in which they were collected, while the remaining 20 percent are used-park-wide. In this way, increased fee revenues in popular parks not only benefit those parks, but also benefit other units in the national park system.

44. Terre des Indiens, Parque Nacional Galápagos.


53. Terre des Indiens, Parque Nacional Galápagos.

54. Terre des Indiens, Parque Nacional Galápagos.

55. Terre des Indiens, Parque Nacional Galápagos.

56. Terre des Indiens, Parque Nacional Galápagos.

57. Terre des Indiens, Parque Nacional Galápagos.


62. If national parks cannot retain and spend the majority of the proceeds of entry fees paid online, then an electronic system will undermine the positive incentive to keep fees increasing and revenue as taxpayers. Unlike that approach, the National Park Service should implement a way to track electronic sales at the park level and retain the majority of fees to be spent in national parks.

63. To help fund state agencies that manage wildlife, while non-residents have not been assessed the same fees as residents.

64. Notably, some commercial vehicle passes already incorporate per person charges. Road-based Commercial Tour Clubs, NPS.

65. This would entail administrative and logistical challenges of its own nature. National Park Service, “Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System,” House Committee on Natural Resources, October 13, 2021.


68. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

69. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

70. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

71. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

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78. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

79. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.

80. Enhancing the Public Lands Recreation Fee System, Workshops, 4.
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