

Protect Group Travel in America's National Parks

Supporting Economic Growth, Efficient Park Management, and Sustainable Funding

America's National Parks are a vital economic engine, supporting gateway communities and generating billions in tourism-related spending each year.

Commercial tours are essential to both park management and local economies. Organized commercial tours move visitors efficiently, reduce the number of individual vehicles entering parks, and help address the National Park Service's (NPS) top operational challenge: parking congestion.

From an economic standpoint, commercial tours deliver high-value visitors who stay longer, spend more locally, and generate reliable revenue for small businesses and state and local governments.

Policies should support—not discourage—commercial tours, which strengthen park access, economic vitality, and operational efficiency.

NPS Fee Changes Jeopardizing Commercial Tour Access and Visitor Demand

Effective January 1, 2026, NPS implemented a new fee structure intended to support long-term park maintenance. While sustainable funding is a shared goal, elements of the new structure create uncertainty for commercial tourism sector and the communities that depend on it.

COMMERCIAL TOURS PROVIDE STRUCTURE & PREDICTABILITY, DELIVERING THREE CORE OPERATIONAL BENEFITS:



IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW

Fewer individual vehicles entering parks reduces gridlock at gates and key attractions



ENHANCE VISITOR EDUCATION

Guided tours deliver richer, more informed park experiences for every visitor



REDUCE INFRASTRUCTURE STRAIN

Organized groups lower wear and tear on roads, parking lots, and visitor facilities

CUA-permitted commercial tours address the NPS's top operational challenge: parking congestion. While also improving the experience for all park visitors.

2024 U.S. MOTORCOACH
INDUSTRY ACTIVITY

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$158^B

DIRECT TRAVELER SPENDING

\$69.8^B

TOTAL TAX REVENUE

\$27.7^B

FEDERAL, STATE, & LOCAL TAX

JOBS SUPPORTED

890K+

NATIONWIDE

PASSENGER MILES TRAVELED

37.6^B

PASSENGERS TRANSPORTED

400M



American
Bus Association™
100 Years



Key Changes

- \$100 per-person surcharge for non-U.S. citizens entering national parks.
- Increase of the America the Beautiful annual pass for international visitors to \$250, compared to \$80 for U.S. residents.
- Unclear application of per-person fees to passengers on group tours operated by Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) permit holders.

Why Per-Passenger Surcharges are Problematic for Commercial Tours

- Pricing disruption: Commercial tours are typically priced and contracted 12-18 months in advance. Any new fees put in place to trips previously sold will be paid by US- tour operator companies—not international visitors.
- Reduced International Visitation: Higher per-person fees discourage group travel and reduce demand for local lodging, restaurants, and attractions.
- Shortened Stays: Operators may need to modify itineraries to offset increased costs.
- Lower Local Tax Revenue: Reduced visitation directly impacts gateway communities and state and local budgets.

Policy Recommendation

To balance sustainable park funding with economic stability and operational efficiency:

1. Maintain commercial vehicle-based entrance fees rather than per-passenger surcharges.
2. Provide clear statutory confirmation that per-passenger entrance fees do not apply to passengers traveling on commercial tours operated under CUA permits,
3. Authorize NPS to implement a predictable 5% annual adjustment to commercial vehicle entrance fees.

