

# GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

## Filming Guidelines, Requirements, and Fees

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Office of Public Affairs  
865/436-1208 (phone)  
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### Commercial Filming

All commercial film production requires a permit. **Commercial filming is defined** as the use of motion picture, videotaping, sound recording, or other visual image or audio recording equipment by a person, business, or other entity for a market audience such as for a documentary, television feature or special, advertisement, or similar project.

Commercial videographers, cinematographers or sound recording crews of up to two people with only minimal equipment (i.e., a camera and a tripod) working in areas open to the public are required to obtain a commercial filming permit and are subject to appropriate permit terms and conditions and cost recovery charges but are not subject to location fees.

### Still Photography

Still photography activities require a permit only when one or more of the following applies:

1. Use of model(s), set(s), or prop(s) that are not a part of the location's natural or cultural resources or administrative facilities.
2. The activity takes place at location(s) where or when members of the public are generally not allowed.
3. The Park would incur additional administrative costs to monitor the activity.
4. The Park needs to provide management and oversight to:
  - a. avoid impairment or incompatible use of the resources and values of the park,
  - b. limit resource damage
  - c. minimize health or safety risks to the visiting public.

Those who do not need a permit include visitors taking photos or filming for their personal use, as well as professional or amateur photographers who are shooting in areas open to the public and who require no special services from Park personnel. Coverage of breaking news by bona-fide news crews is exempt, but is subject to restrictions and conditions necessary to protect Park resources, public health and safety and to prevent impairment or derogation of Park resources, values, or purposes.

The policy of the National Park Service on commercial filming and photography is: "The making of still and motion pictures or television productions for public consumption is an acceptable park use provided these activities pose no threat to the park resources in the judgment of the park manager, and do not conflict unduly with the public's normal use of the park." The decision to issue or deny a permit for a special park use flows from the appropriate policy guidance written in several documents that include National Park Service Management Policies 2001, Director's Order-53, Special Park Uses, and Guidance Memos Dated April 13, 2006 and May 8, 2006.

With more than 9 million visitors annually, Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the most heavily visited national park in the National Park System. Filming/photography activities are most likely to conflict with visitor use during peak visitor months. Locations of filming may be restricted to minimize conflict with visitor use during high use times.

- Areas to avoid include Cades Cove, Laurel Creek Road, Little River Road, Newfound Gap Road and all visitor centers during summer holidays, summer weekends, and in October, particularly the last two weeks in October.
- Less congested areas that offer interesting and representative features are the Foothills Parkway, Cosby, Greenbrier, and Balsam Mountain.

In some cases, hours or days of filming/photography may be limited by the availability of National Park Service personnel for liaison or supervision. Depending on the degree of supervision required and the potential for damage to Park resources, the filmer/photographer may be required to post a bond in the amount determined by the Park. If no damages are incurred, the bond will be returned.

There can be no actual or implied endorsement by the National Park Service of any commercial product.

### **Requirements for Filming/Photography**

- 1) Before a permit is issued:
  - a) The filming director/production liaison or commercial photographer must contact the Public Affairs Office to discuss the filming policy. The Public Affairs Office hours are 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and can be reached by calling 865/436-1208.
  - b) An Application for Photography/Filming Permit must be filled out and sent to the Office of Public Affairs.
  - c) All filming/photographing locations must be approved. Depending on the type of activity, a visit by the film director and a Park representative may be necessary prior to approval.
- 2) The filmer and crew/photographer are required to comply with ALL Park regulations. The following regulations may affect scenes proposed for filming/photographing in the Park:
  - a) Dogs, cats and other pets must be leashed or physically controlled at all times. No pets are permitted beyond developed areas, parking lots, overlooks, pull-outs, etc.
  - b) Wildlife captured elsewhere will not be allowed in any filming/photographing inside the Park regardless of whether or not the animals are trained.
  - c) All traffic regulations must be obeyed. Parking or driving off of established roads or parking areas needs special permission.
  - d) Public access to any area of the Park will not be denied during filming activity.
  - e) Open ground fires are prohibited outside of established fire rings.
  - f) Possessing, carrying or using firearms or other weapons is prohibited.
  - g) Disturbance of wildlife and other natural resources or cultural resources (soils, vegetation, water, historic buildings, etc) is prohibited.
  - h) Helicopters and other aircraft are not permitted to land in the Park. Indicate any intent to fly over the Park in the application.
  - i) Camping is permitted only in designated areas.
- 3) Film directors or representatives must maintain close communication with the Public Affairs Office.

## **Filming Permit Charges**

Applicants will be charged for their filming activity after the filming has taken place that will include a \$100 administrative fee, any applicable location fee, and/or charges for overtime pay for employee assistance.

Congress has established authority to the National Park Service to charge an administrative fee for providing necessary services to permittees and to collect daily location fees for commercial filming and still photography. The following provides information on those applicable fees:

**\$100** – All permits are charged this basic administrative fee.

**\$50 per hour** for Park employee assistance required only for special uses/activities. Park officials will determine when special assistance is needed during filming. Some examples of special assistance include services: to control traffic and/or visitors; to protect special resources on or near the filming site; to provide special access to an area; and to interface between visitors and the commercial production. The hours covered include travel time to and from the normal duty station.

**Location Fees** are calculated per day and are based on the following schedule:

<b>COMMERCIAL FILMING/VIDEO</b>		<b>STILL PHOTOGRAPHY</b>	
<b>Number of People</b>	<b>Daily Charge</b>	<b>Number of People</b>	<b>Daily Charge</b>
*1-2 (camera/tripod)	No charge		
1-10	\$150	1-10	\$50
11-30	\$250	11-30	\$150
31-49	\$500	Over 30	\$250
Over 50	\$750		

\*No location fee will be charged for commercial videographers, cinematographers or sound recording crews of up to two people filming with minimal equipment, i.e., camera and tripod.