



Questions on NPS Policies for CUAs and Fees for Tour Operators – compiled questions from National Tour Association, American Bus Association, US Tour Operators Association, International Motorcoach Group, United Motorcoach Association and Student and Youth Travel Association

Overview Information

Information about the updated CUA policies and park entry fees is available at the National Park Service [Commercial Use Authorizations website](#) and [Entrance Fees by Park website](#). The CUA website includes a downloadable list of NPS sites that charge an entry fee along with the per person entry fee rates as of October 1, 2019 (when commercial operators will begin paying the per person entry fee) and as of January 1, 2020 (when a subset of those sites will implement a fee increase). Additionally, an interactive map on the CUA webpage contains links to the CUA pages for each NPS unit.

- Which fees apply prior to the new fee structure going into effect on Oct. 1, 2019? Do we charge based on the normal motorcoach entrance fees? Do CUA's only apply to a limited number of parks?

Until October 1, 2019, road-based commercial tour operators will pay entrance fees based on the current commercial entrance fee schedule. After October 1, 2019, road-based tour operators should assume they will need a CUA for every park in which they operate. The [CUA website](#) offers an interactive map feature allowing users to access individual park CUA websites and CUA office contact information. Operators should contact those parks in early 2019 to understand requirements effective October 1, 2019.

- Will the motorcoach entrance fee cease to exist October 1, 2019 or will it be listed as a variable rate going forward? Will it be pre-calculated or will we need to calculate the fees for each trip?

Beginning October 1, 2019, the commercial entrance fee schedule (motorcoach entrance fee) will no longer apply. Operators will pay entrance fees based on the park-specific per-person entrance fee for each passenger in the vehicle.

- For parks that charge entry fees, with exception of the CUA application fee, there will be no per person fees or CUA management fees collected at year end with the annual report?

That is correct. The \$5 per person CUA management fee will be taken from the per-person entrance fee operators pay upon park entrance.

- If the CUA management fees are already collected, what is the purpose of filing an annual report?

Every CUA holder in the NPS must submit the CUA Annual Report each year. This is an Office of Management and Budget-approved information collection. The NPS maintains this operational information and, with the exception of the visitor use statistics, does not disseminate it to the public. This information allows the park to manage the impacts of commercial use on the natural and cultural resources and the visiting public. Knowing the level of use an area receives allows park managers to measure and control the impacts of use, including trail maintenance, landscape maintenance, parking management, trash collection, utilities, and the visitor experience.

- Does the tour operator still have to pay the CUA if we don't own our own coaches, but we contract with a coach company that already has a CUA for each park we visit? If the coach company operates their own tours and already has a CUA, and then tour operators contract with that coach company for the use of their coach, it would seem the CUA is being paid twice if we also are required to obtain one. Would both need to file an annual report (what about double counting)? CUA Fee is \$300 per park per year plus \$5 per person management fee – are there any exclusions to which parks will require the CUA? Does this include national monuments?

After October 1, 2019, road-based commercial tour operators should assume they will need a CUA for every NPS unit in which they operate. The [CUA website](#) offers an interactive map feature allowing users to access individual park CUA websites and CUA contact information. Operators should contact those parks in early 2019 to understand requirements effective October 1, 2019. Domestic tour operators will have responsibility for obtaining road-based commercial tour CUAs and providing end-of-season reports. Transportation companies would need to obtain a road-based commercial tour CUA only if they contract as a receptive for foreign-based tour companies or if they directly sell tour packages to travelers. In the case of a domestic tour company contracting with a coach company and both having obtained CUAs for the season, the tours under that contract would fall under the domestic tour company's CUA and be reported as such.

- For parks that currently charge an entry fee, we will need to pay an entrance fee equal to the per person entry fee. But which fee is it? We have 35 people on a coach at \$5.00 pp for total of \$175.00? OR is it based on the capacity of the coach – ie. 56 seats x \$5.00 per person = \$280.00 entry fee or is the per person fee equal to that of a person walking up (e.g. \$12 at Acadia). And presume this is in addition to the management fee.

Beginning October 1, 2019, commercial operators must pay the per-person entry fee for each person on the vehicle. For parks with entry fees, the \$5 per person management fee is included as part of the entry fee.

- Will someone be boarding each motorcoach to count how many people are aboard and then demanding payment?

No, NPS staff will rely on the count conveyed by the driver or guide.

- What if it's a 12-day tour and while the office was expecting 53 people to be aboard the bus, only 50 people show up the day of the trip, how much are we being charged for entry?

The entry fee is per-person based on the number of people in the vehicle upon entry. Guides and drivers do not need to pay for entry.

- For parks without entry fees – we will need to pay the CUA fee annually plus the \$5 management fee and provide the mandatory annual reports. So does this mean we're now paying a CUA and \$5.00 fee for Great Smoky? Is there a master list that outlines the requirements at each park?

Operators should assume they will be responsible for applying for and securing a CUA for every park. The [CUA website](#) includes a downloadable spreadsheet that lists the parks that charge entrance fees and provides the per-person entrance fee for those parks. For all other parks, operators will pay a \$300 CUA application fee and a \$5/person fee for each visitor they bring to the park due with the submission of the required annual CUA report.

- Do parks that do not have an entry fee still have a CUA requirement and annual report requirement?

Yes

- The per person entrance fees announced on April 12, 2018 are set to change at least 2 times (May 2018, June 2018, January 2019) in many parks before the new standardized structure starts to apply to commercial road-based tours. Which entry fees will apply on October 1, 2019 and will they then change again on January 1, 2020 when many per person fees are set to change?

The [CUA website](#) features a spreadsheet showing the changes to entrance fees for commercial operators effective October 1, 2019. Some parks will increase entrance fees on January 2, 2020, and operators will pay those updated per person entrance fees, which are also included on the spreadsheet.

- Will there be a more uniform schedule for future changes or will operators now have to monitor all 417 parks individually and estimate their fees 2 years in advance?

The NPS will adjust CUA application and management fees periodically to account for increased costs including inflation.

- Does the National Park Service differentiate commercial from non-commercial and educational visitor groups?

Non-commercial and educational groups should contact the appropriate park(s) to clarify their status and determine the applicable permit, waiver, or reservation requirements.

- The NPS CUA webpage includes a statement: “We are working to create a centralized system allowing online application submission and expect the system to be in place in 2019.” What does this mean? Does this mean that a centralized CUA system is being developed? A singular check box format where all the parks visited can be selected at once and submissions made?

The National Park Service is working with a contractor to develop an online system to ease the application and reporting process for operators. We anticipate the system will allow applicants to submit multiple applications at one time.

- Who does the market price CUA fee apply to? There is confusion in the industry over whether “market price” fees apply to road operators like us as it’s worded in a way that causes confusion as to whether we could potentially have to pay those in addition to all of the above.

Starting October 1, 2019, the CUA management fees for road-based commercial tours will be the \$5 per passenger fee and not a market price fee. Until then, individual parks do have the authority to charge a market price fee for any category of CUA, if they choose.