CUA Handbook

This handbook includes information meant to assist prospective applicants and returning operators in learning more about the Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) permitting process and commercial operation in Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA). The permit language and requirements specific to each category of authorization can be found in the category’s conditions and operating plan.

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Summary of Important Dates

November 22, 2021 – Deadline for submitting CUA Application if you are planning to begin conducting trips on January 01, 2022.

January 31, 2022 – Deadline for submitting 2021 Annual Report. Even if you did not conduct any tours in the park during 2021, you still must submit an Annual Report by this date.

March 31, 2022 – Deadline for paying Market Price Management Fee.

October 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023 – First CUA application window for 2-year authorizations that will expire on December 31, 2024.

October 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024 – Second CUA application window for 2-year authorizations that will expire on December 31, 2024.
F.A.Q.’s

What is a Commercial Use Authorization (CUA)?
A CUA is a permit to operate commercially in the park for a specific set of authorized uses. CUAs are issued for services that are deemed appropriate to the park, but not deemed necessary to facilitating visitor experiences or protecting park resources. Necessary services are provided under competitive concession contracts.

Public Law 105-391, Section 418, which was signed in 1998, provides for the issuance of Commercial Use Authorizations (CUAs) to a private person, corporation, or other entity to provide suitable commercial services for park area visitors. Commercial activities are generally prohibited in National Parks unless authorized by a CUA, concessions contract, or commercial entrance pass.

What types of activities are authorized in Grand Canyon National Park under a CUA?
The following activities are eligible for authorization in Grand Canyon, and to provide these services you must obtain a CUA:

- Guided Backcountry Hiking (includes Backpacking and Day Hiking)
- Guided Bicycle Tours
- Photography and Art Workshops
- River Equipment Rental
- Road Based Tour-Transportation (includes Interpretive Tours, Motorcoach Charters, Recreational Shuttle Services, and Motorcycle Tours)
- Guided Tuweep Tours (includes Road Based Interpretive Tours and Stock Tours)

The park does not accept applications for activities not listed above such as lodging, campgrounds, food and beverage, retail, commercial rafting trips, and bike rentals. These activities are deemed both appropriate and necessary to resource protection and visitor experiences are under competitive concession contracts, which are generally put up for bid every 10 to 20 years.

All other commercial activities not authorized under a CUA, concession contract, or Special Use Permit for any commercial operation and are prohibited in Grand Canyon National Park.

The implementation of the National Park Service (NPS) standardized Road-based Commercial Tour (RBCT) CUA Park Service wide program and changes to commercial tour entrance fees has been DELAYED. For additional information and status updates, please visit the National CUA web page for the NPS.
What is the definition of each CUA category?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authorization Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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| **Guided Backcountry Hiking** | **Definition**<br>Overnight Backpacking: Organized groups of 1 to 11 persons (including guides) traveling on an itinerary which has been packaged, priced, or sold as a guided overnight backpacking tour for leisure/recreational purposes on authorized trails below the rim in Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA). Only trails identified in the Guided Hiking Backcountry Locations document and specified in the CUA Conditions are authorized. A separate backpacking permit is required for overnight backcountry camping.  
**Day Hiking**: Organized groups of 1 to 11 persons (including guides) traveling on an itinerary which has been packaged, priced, or sold as a guided day hiking tour for leisure/recreational purposes on authorized trails above or below the rim in Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA). Only trails identified in the Guided Hiking Backcountry Locations document and specified in the CUA Conditions are authorized. |
| **Guided Bicycle Tours** | Organized groups of 1 to 14 persons (including guides) traveling on an itinerary which has been packaged, priced, or sold as a guided bicycle tour for leisure/recreational purposes in Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA). Tour groups consist of guides/tour leaders, participants, and support vehicles. Bicycles may be traditional human-powered pedal bikes and/or Class 1 e-bikes. Bicyclists are required to follow all applicable traffic regulations and safety guidelines. Bicycle tours are authorized on unpaved roads specified in the CUA conditions.  
**Class 1 electric bicycle (e-bike)**: is defined as an electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour. All other classes and types of e-bikes are prohibited. |
| **Photography and Art Workshops** | **Photography Workshops**: An organized group of 1 to 15 visitors (including guides/instructors) using an itinerary that has been packaged, priced, or sold as a guided photography instructional session for leisure/recreational purposes in Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA). Photography Workshops embrace the scenic, cultural, and/or natural resources of GRCA to create an instructional based experience designed to improve a photographer’s skills and/or photography techniques.  
**Art Workshops**: An organized group of 1 to 15 visitors (including guides/instructors) using an itinerary that has been packaged, priced, or sold as a guided painting instructional session for leisure/recreational purposes in Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA). Art Workshops embrace the scenic, cultural, and/or natural resources GRCA to create an instructional based experience designed to improve an artist’s skills and/or painting techniques. Only locations above the rim specified in the CUA conditions are authorized. |
| **River Equipment Rental** | Delivery service of rental equipment to Lee's Ferry and pick up of same at Pearce Ferry for authorized river permit holders. The CUA holder may also transport clients to and from put-in/take-out trailheads for passenger exchanges. |
### Road Based Tour-Transportation

**Includes:**
- Interpretive Tours
- Motorcoach Charters
- Recreational Shuttle Services
- Motorcycle Tours

**Interpretive tours** (Tour Operator may or may not be traveling in company-owned or rented vehicle): One or more persons traveling by vehicle on an improved roadway on an itinerary that a company or individual has packaged, priced, and sold as a guided interpretive or scenic tour for leisure/recreational purposes in Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA). Interpretive tours take visitors through the GRCA’s road system with a focus on interpreting the parks features and wildlife. Limited guided hiking above the rim is authorized; Guided hiking below the rim is prohibited.

**Motorcoach Charter** (provides vehicle and driver for a Tour Operator): The Motorcoach Charter Company typically does not conduct their own interpretive tours but is hired by a Tour Operator that was issued a Road Based Tour/Transportation CUA to conduct guided interpretive or scenic tours but is not traveling in a vehicle owned or rented by the Tour Operator. The Motorcoach Charter company is required to have a CUA to transport the Tour Operator’s guests into Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA).

**Recreational Shuttle Services**: One or more persons traveling by vehicle on an improved roadway a company or individual has packaged, priced, and sold for the point-to-point pick-up and drop-off of passengers in Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA) at trailheads, parking areas, pullouts and developed areas for leisure/recreational purposes in GRCA. Passengers shall not be picked up or dropped off on roadways or in any area where traffic or terrain creates an unsafe condition. Only locations appearing on official GRCA publications, such as the Trip Planner and the Pocket Map and Services Guides for the South and North Rim, and on the GRCA website are authorized.

**Motorcycle Tour**: One or more persons traveling by motorcycle on an improved roadway on an itinerary that a company or individual has packaged, priced, and sold as a guided interpretive or scenic tour for leisure/recreational purposes in Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA). Interpretive tours take visitors through the GRCA’s road system with a focus on interpreting the parks features and wildlife. Limited guided hiking above the rim is authorized; Guided hiking below the rim is prohibited.

### Guided Tuweep Tours

**Includes:**
- Road Based Interpretive Tours
- Stock Tours

**Road Based Interpretive Tours:**
- **Day Use** - One to 15 persons (including guides) traveling in a single vehicle on an improved roadway on an itinerary that a company or individual has packaged, priced, and sold as a guided interpretive or scenic tour for leisure/recreational purposes in Grand Canyon National Park’s (GRCA) Tuweep area. Interpretive tours take visitors through GRCA’s Tuweep road system with a focus on interpreting the parks features and wildlife.
- **Overnight Use** - 6 or 11 persons (including guides, based on the TCG permit obtained) traveling in no more than 2 vehicles on an improved roadway on an itinerary that a company or individual has packaged, priced, and sold as a guided interpretive or scenic tour for leisure/recreational purposes in Grand Canyon National Park’s (GRCA) Tuweep area. Interpretive tours take visitors through the GRCA’s Tuweep road system with a focus on interpreting the parks features and wildlife.

**Stock Tours**: Day Use Only: A group of 1 to 12 persons (including guides) and no more than 12 stock animals with support vehicles traveling by stock on an itinerary that a company or individual has packaged, priced, and sold as a guided interpretive or scenic tour for leisure/recreational purposes in Grand Canyon National Park’s (GRCA) Tuweep area. Interpretive tours take visitors through the GRCA’s Tuweep road system with a focus on interpreting the parks features and wildlife. Only locations specified in the CUA Conditions are authorized.
What criteria must commercial operations meet to qualify for a CUA?

- The activity authorized must be appropriate to the preservation of the park and be consistent with all park management plans and must fit into one of the definitions listed above.
- Commercial operators must be based outside of the park. Services must initiate and terminate outside of the park, except for concession lodging facilities. All aspects of the business (such as advertising, exchange of money, etc.) must take place outside the park boundary.
- Authorization holders may not construct any facilities within the park, including temporary tent/canopy structures.
- The services provided may not conflict with the services provided by concessioners under contract or the National Park Service’s operations.
- Authorization holders must comply with all applicable state, local and National Park Service laws in the conduct of their business. The Superintendent’s Compendium details park-level regulations and is subject to change annually.
- A complete application form (NPS form 10-550) and Application Fee along with other required documents identified on the Checklist for Applicants (located at the end of the handbook) must be submitted.
- Annual Reports for the previous operating year must be submitted no later than January 31st of the current year.
- Management Fees calculated by Market Price from the previous year’s Annual Report must be paid no later than March 31st of the current year.
- Commercial operators may be required to submit other information to the NPS upon request (guide registration forms, workshop itineraries, CPR and WFR certifications etc.)

Note: The National Park Service monitors activities authorized through CUAs. Any violation of CUA conditions or operating plan requirements is grounds for revoking the current authorization and/or not issuing future authorizations under the authority of the park Superintendent.

How do I apply for a CUA?

Review the Checklist for Applicants at the end of this handbook. Once you have gathered all the required documentation, you may submit a complete application package electronically or by mail.

Electronically: Preferred Method
Download and email this checklist with a complete application package to: grca_mail_permits@nps.gov
Use the email Subject Line format: "[Company Name dba Name] 2022 CUA Application"

By Mail: Takes longer to process
Send this checklist with a complete application package to:
Commercial Services – Permits Program
3 Camper Services / P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023

OR

When is the application period? *
The CUA application period for calendar year 2022 opens November 1, 2021. We require up to 30 days to process and issue a CUA.

*Beginning in 2023, there will be a March 31 application cut-off date and CUAs will be issued for 2 years expiring December 31, 2024.

The CUA application period for calendar year 2023 opens October 1, 2022 and closes on March 31, 2023. CUA applications received at grca_mail_permits@nps.gov or post-marked after March 31st will not be accepted and not authorized to operate in GRCA. Incomplete application packages will not be processed after May 1st. A second application period opens October 1, 2023 and closes March 31, 2024.
What happens once I apply for a CUA?

1. Once the Permits Office has received a complete application package and reviewed the application, the Permits Office will notify you of receipt of the complete application.
2. Once the application package is complete, it is sent for final approval and signature to the Grand Canyon National Park Director of Commercial Services. It may take several days for the signature.
3. The Permits Office will then email the fully executed CUA to you and you may begin operating in Grand Canyon National Park within the authorization dates. You are not allowed to operate in Grand Canyon Nation Park without a fully executed CUA in hand.
4. To continue to operate commercially in Grand Canyon National Park, CUA Holders are required to ensure compliance with all Grand Canyon National Park CUA Conditions, activity/category specific conditions, and all laws and park regulations and in addition, document gross receipts through the Annual Report (due January 31st following the operating year) and pay applicable Management Fees due March 1st following the operating year.

How long does it take to obtain a CUA?

On average, it takes at least 30 days to receive a fully executed CUA. The process could take longer if the application package is incomplete or requested information to complete the application package is not returned promptly from the applicant.

Beginning in 2023, applications may be submitted October 1st – March 31st annually and processed October 1st – May 1st annually. Processing an application will take longer when the initial submission is incomplete or if preliminary authorization returned for the holders’ signature is not returned promptly. Incomplete CUA applications will not be processed after May 1st.

What kind of insurance do I need?

Commercial General Liability Insurance is required for all CUA holders under the terms of the authorization. Such insurance should be of sufficient scope to cover all potential risks and in an amount to cover claims that can reasonably be expected in the event of serious injury or death. The minimum commercial general liability insurance is $1,000,000 per occurrence. Liability insurance policies must name the United States of America as additional insured. The business or person that is providing the service must be the named insured policy holder. Companies that provide transportation only are not required to have Commercial General Liability as long as the passengers do not disembark.

Commercial Auto Liability Insurance is required if a CUA holder transports passengers or uses a vehicle in the performance of the service in the park. If a CUA holder charters the vehicle and those chartered vehicles are owned and operated by another company, the CUA holder is not required to have Commercial Automobile Liability insurance. Auto liability insurance policies must name the United States of America as additional insured. The business or person that is providing the service must be the named insured policy holder.

The minimum Commercial Auto Liability Insurance for passenger transport is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercial Vehicle Insurance – Passenger Transport (bodily injury and property damage)</th>
<th>Minimum per Occurrence Liability Limits*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 6 passengers</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 15 passengers</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 25 passengers</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26+ passengers</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the cost of holding a CUA and how are CUA fees assessed?

A $300.00 Application Fee is a requirement of applying for a CUA. The Application Fee is cost recovery of staff time to process and issue a CUA. CUA holders will also be charged a reasonable fee to ensure program cost recovery and for the identifiable economic privileges received from conducting business inside Grand Canyon National Park. Reasonable fees will be based on a percentage of gross receipts (Management Fee). A Market
Price fee calculator is used to determine the Management Fee (see page 7). Because the $300 Application Fee acts as a credit toward the percentage of gross receipts (Management Fee), operators grossing amounts less than $10,000 will not owe additional fees (3% of $10,000 = $300) unless other actions of the operator necessitate further cost recovery.

“Gross receipts” means the revenue for the most recent business year the company brought in while operating in Grand Canyon National Park, regardless of whether or not the gross receipts are a result of the service provided under this CUA.

Operators who hold multiple CUAs with GRCA should divide their gross receipts per CUA according to the percentage of the total trip time spent on each activity. An Annual Report is required for each CUA an operator holds. The CUA holder is responsible for maintaining accounting records that demonstrate evidence of gross receipts and required fee payment. The Service may audit CUA holder financial reports at any time.

**When is the Application fee due?**
The $300.00 Application fee is due at the time of application submittal. Payments should be paid through Pay.gov and the receipt emailed to the Permits Office at grca_permits_mail@nps.gov. The CUA Application Fee is non-refundable.

**When is the Management Fee and Annual Report due?**
The Management Fee is due by **March 31st** annually (for the prior operating year). The Annual Report, which determines the Management Fee due through the required reporting of gross receipts, is due by **January 31st** annually (for the prior operating year). The $300.00 Application Fee is credited towards the Management Fee, which is calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gross Receipt Amount</th>
<th>Percent Management Fee Payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0.01 - $250,000.00</td>
<td>3% of gross receipts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250,000.01 - $500,000.00</td>
<td>4% of gross receipts in addition to the prior amount.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $500,000.01</td>
<td>5% of total gross receipts in addition to the prior amounts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How do I pay the Application and Management Fees?**
1. Pay electronically by visiting [Pay.gov - Grand Canyon NP CUA Application Fee](#).
2. Check the services you are applying for and pay the **non-refundable Application Fee**.
3. Ensure you enter the correct amount, as our office cannot issue refunds.
4. Please email us before submitting payment if you have any questions.
5. Include a copy of the receipt with your application packet.

**What is the term of a CUA?**
For the 2022 calendar year, a CUA will be issued for a one-year term. The authority begins January 1, 2022 and ends December 31, 2022.

Beginning in 2023, a CUA will be issued for a two-year term. The authority begins January 1, 2023 and ends December 31, 2024.

**What happens if the Annual Report and/or the Management Fees are not submitted on time?**
If we do not receive your Annual Report for the previous operating year by **January 31st** and/or your Management Fees for the previous operating year are not paid by **March 31st**, your CUA issued for the current operating year could be suspended. You would not be able to conduct business in Grand Canyon National Park until the Annual Report is received by our office and all fees are paid.
Upcoming Changes for 2023

Beginning in 2023, CUAs will be issued for two (2) years with an expiration date of December 31, 2024. Complete CUA applications may be submitted between October 1st and March 31st. A complete CUA application packet MUST be received by the Permit Office prior to 11:59 pm March 31st for consideration. Applications are processed in the order they are received. Incomplete application packages will not be processed after May 1st.
Checklist for Applicants

A complete CUA application packet must include:

☐ A completed Grand Canyon National Park CUA Application form (NPS form 10-550). Application must include a signature, which certifies your statements are true and accurate and you have read and will comply with all conditions of the authorization.

☐ A completed Authorized Activity CUA form (NPS form 10-115) for each of the specific activities you wish to conduct in the park.

☐ Receipt for the $300.00 Application Fee. Payments must be made at Pay.gov - Grand Canyon NP Commercial Use Authorization Application Fee. The CUA Application Fee is non-refundable. Cash, checks, and Personal Authorized Debit (PAD) payments are not accepted.

☐ A current Certificate of Insurance naming the United States Government as an additional insured. Refer to NPS form 10-550, “Attachment A” for required coverage amounts.

☐ Provide an Operating Plan describing the type of service you are providing and how you will conduct your activities in the park. Refer to NPS form 10-550, “Attachment C” for details.

☐ Provide an ‘Acknowledgement of Risk’ form or other participation forms guests are required to sign that involve legal rights and authorities. Refer to NPS form 10-550, “Attachment D” for details.

☐ Annual Report (NPS form 10-660) from previous calendar year must be submitted no later than January 31, 2022 (only if you were issued a CUA in the previous calendar year.)

☐ A copy of this checklist to confirm submission of a complete application packet.

All forms and documents can be found on our website:
Commercial Use Authorizations (CUA) - Grand Canyon National Park (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov)