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Entrance fees at Colorado National Monument could double

Proposed fee increases part of National Park Service's first system-wide price increase since 2009



Colorado National Monument, near Fruita, Colo., preserves 32 square miles of canyons and mesas.

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Colorado National Monument wants to double the cost of entry to \$20, marking one of the steepest one-time fee increases in the 105-year-old monument's history.

The last time the monument increased its entrance fees was in 2011, when the price increased from \$7 per car and \$4 per pedestrian to \$10 per car and \$5 per pedestrian.

The increase is part of the cash-strapped National Park Service's nearly two-year effort to help fund improvements by increasing park entrance fees at 131 of its 401 properties. The service last year estimated all its properties had [\\$11.5 billion in backlogged deferred maintenance](#), including [\\$13.8 million of needed work](#) at Colorado National Monument. [Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis in August 2014](#) asked his regional directors to foster public support for the service's first across-the-board fee increase since 2009.

"Each park should identify how the additional revenue will be used to improve the park experience,"

Jarvis wrote [in his memo](#), which urged property superintendents to begin public outreach emphasizing how the additional revenue will improve the visitor experience.

Jarvis grouped Colorado National Monument into a group that should seek \$40 annual passes, \$20 week-long vehicle passes, \$10 pedestrian passes and \$15 motorcycle passes. The monument now charges \$25 for annual passes, and its seven-day passes are \$10 per vehicle, \$5 per pedestrian and \$5 per motorcycle.

Rocky Mountain National Park, the fifth most trafficked national park in the U.S. with more than 3.4 million annual visitors, [raised its entrance fees in October](#). The cost of a week-long pass for a vehicle entering Rocky Mountain National Park climbed to \$30 from \$20, with [a single-day pass costing \\$20](#).

The increased fees at Colorado National Monument will fund improvements inside the park. Many people think entrance fees for National Park Service properties are diverted into the national Treasury, Colorado National Monument chief ranger Mark Davison said.

“That is not true. It goes directly into the park,” Davison said. “We are really dependent on fee money for projects. This is one of the reasons for doing it. It also just improves the visitor experience. You can say it’s for sprucing things up and making it a better experience.”

Fee-funded projects at Colorado National Monument include paving tunnel, improving access at the Alcove Nature Trail and building new toilets at the Upper Liberty Cap Trailhead. This year fees are supporting improvements to the Old Gordon Trail.

Last year the Colorado National Monument [hosted a record 588,000 visitors](#), up from 416,862 in 2014.

This year, [visitation through June is down 31 percent](#) compared to the same period in 2015, according to National Park Service stats. But the park installed new traffic counters last December, and there’s an assumption that the old counters were not accurate, Davison said, because entrance-fee revenue is up for the year, he said.

“The visitation numbers are just not jibing with the revenue coming in,” he said.

The Colorado National Monument is holding public meetings in Fruita, Glade Park and Grand Junction on July 19, July 26 and July 27 to discuss the potential fee increases. Visit www.nps.gov/colm for more information on those meetings.