

<http://www.dailynews.com/opinion/20160916/an-adventure-pass-victory-for-southern-california>

Los Angeles Daily News

EDITORIAL

An Adventure Pass victory for Southern California



Forest Service Adventure Pass sign on Highway 39. (Photo by Leo Jarzomb/Staff Photographer)

By [The Editorial Board](#), LA Daily News

Posted: 09/16/16, 12:38 PM PDT

Although [a July court ruling](#) said the United States Forest Service can continue in limited fashion to charge money to enter the four national forests in Southern California, the ruling was also a partial victory for those who like us believe these fees are bunk.

After implementing the so-called Adventure Pass beginning in 1997, the Forest Service has essentially pretended, through its intimidating signage, that even driving on one of our state highways through the Los Padres, Angeles, San Bernardino and Cleveland national forests requires motorists to first head to

an REI store or a ranger station to buy a \$5 daily or \$30 annual pass — to enter public land.

Well, it has technically been, through the Forest Service's binoculars, that you had to pull over to the side of the road in order to have the long arm of the law pick your pocket. But who wouldn't want to pull over to the side of the road when up near the Santiago Peak Trail in the Cleveland or below Mount Waterman in the Angeles?

Now a federal court has ruled that visitors only have to pay the piper if they stop at Forest Service facilities that have picnic tables, restrooms — or, absurdly — simply trash cans. So, thank goodness for small favors.

But what [the Forest Service isn't touting in its press releases](#) is that the court also ordered it to stop with the misleading signs at the forest boundaries and to post demands for Adventure Passes only at the areas with amenities. It must also provide free parking within a half-mile of trailheads where backpackers and day hikers can head into the true wilds. Still, with the service's zeal for payment as if our mountains were amusement parks, imagine all the cash-poor young people in Southern California who will never head for the hills.

Thanks go to four California hikers who filed a civil lawsuit to get this settlement, and to their ongoing efforts against similar fees in Sequoia National Park and elsewhere, for fighting the good fight.

Forest Service, it's not that we mind adding to your meager coffers, so much of which has to go to fighting wildfires in this age of drought and climate change. It's that if you just asked rather than required, the donations would flow in. Post a volunteer with a cashbox at the entrance to the wildlands and we will give.