

<http://www.desertsun.com/story/opinion/contributors/valley-voice/2017/11/18/valley-voice-push-back-against-joshua-tree-national-park-entry-fee-increase/876336001/>

Desert Sun (CA)

Valley Voice: Push back against Joshua Tree National Park entry fee increase

Bob Schneider, Special to The Desert Sun Published 7:30 a.m. PT Nov. 18, 2017

This fall, Desert Adventures Red Jeep Tours and Events is celebrating 30 years of business as an integral part of the Greater Palm Springs destination experience. Throughout the decades we've showcased the truly authentic assets of our destination — namely, our area's vast and unique outdoor beauty and recreation. We proudly offer visitors tours of Joshua Tree National Park with educational narrative on the rich history, plants and animals on guided explorations within this 800,000-acre national treasure.

If you are not aware, the National Park Service is proposing to implement peak season entrance fee increases at its busiest national parks in order to increase revenue to help address the deferred maintenance backlog. Joshua Tree National Park is one of the 17 parks selected for fee increases.

The proposed fee increase at Joshua Tree National Park would take the current per vehicle fee from \$25 per vehicle to \$70 per vehicle in peak season (January-May).

This dramatic increase would potentially have a devastating effect on tourism and the local economy. Visitors who arrive to enjoy Joshua Tree National Park support local hotels, restaurants, tour companies and many other businesses, bringing vital dollars to our destination. In fact, in 2016, 2.5 million park visitors spent an estimated \$123.3 million in local gateway regions while visiting Joshua Tree National Park.

The park is a top destination for eco-travelers, outdoor adventurers, naturalists and adrenaline junkies alike. It is also a favorite of international visitors in the summer months, bringing valuable income to tourism during our industry's slowest period.

Not only will the dramatic price increase be prohibitive for individual visitors, the increase will radically affect tour operators. As a tour company, Desert Adventures may not be able to afford to continue our popular tours in Joshua Tree National Park during high season. If these increases are allowed to go through, my tour company alone will be impacted by a loss of more than \$50,000 of revenue normally generated by tours to the park during this period.

All can have a say in this, however.

Urge the Trump administration to back off the proposed \$400 million cut to the National Park Service and not force the raising of fees at these 17 beloved facilities.

Please take part in the public comment period and express your concern about the proposed fee increase at <http://bit.ly/JTNPComments> or write to 1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop: 2346 Washington, DC 20240. Comments will only be accepted until Nov. 23, 2017.

Thank you for your support and for sharing Desert Adventure's dedication to preserving our scenic desert lands for all to enjoy!

Bob Schneider is the owner of Desert Adventures Red Jeep Tours and Events. Email him at bobs@red-jeep.com.