Fee hikes not affecting national park attendance

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BY H. JOSET HEBERT ASSOCIATED PRISS WHITER

SHENANDOAH NATIONAL FARK, Va. (AP) On a perfect August day, \$10 bought James Röberteon, his wife and two grandchildren a breathaking view across the Blue Ridge mogunatians.

The retired painting contractor from Victoria, Va., didn't mind that the fee was double the \$5 charged last year to enter the 105-mile Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park.

"I don't pay attention to that little \$10 thing," he said as his grandchildren, ages 6 and 8, berambled up i pigged rock for a bétter vantage point.

Others, it seems, share his view. Despite the doubling of entry fees in many national parks, the number of visitors to the 53 74 fedoral parks, monuments and historic sites during the first half of the year is up nearly 6 percent over last year.

Tim Stone, fee program managor for the National Park Service, said more than 12 million people visited national parks this year through June, an increase of 5.3 million over the han 200 free sites, but some of the biggest jumps in attendance are at a parks where fees have feet a parks where fees have feet at parks where fees have feet.

National Park in Arizona is up 16 porcent this year. A 13-porcent increase was recorded at the Budlands National Park in South Dakota. The fees at both parks rose from \$2 last year to \$5 this year for individuals and from \$5 to \$10 for a car carrying two or more people.

In Washington state, the \$10 fee per car hasn't slowed the flow of visitors to Olympic National Park.

of visitors to Olympic National Park.

The sprawling park on the Olympic Peninsula has been vis-ited by an estimated 2.1 million people through June, up 40 per-cent from 1.5 million during the cent from 1.5 million during the same period last year. Exact fig-ures aren't available because soveral traffic counters are bro-ken, said Karin Massaros, an official in the Park Service's Port

Angeles office.

Mount Rainier National Park

Mount Rainier National Park has seen attendance drop nearly 17 percent this year, with 363,819 visitors in 1997 versus 436,425 during the first half of last year.

But park spokeswoman Donna Rahier says the decline of visitors to the 14,410-foot volcano probably is affected more by unusually heavy snowfall and late read-openings than the new contrance fees.

Congress approved the higher fees, earmarking much of the money for park repairs and improvements.

Attendance is down at three of

the best-known and most expensive scenic parks in the West Yosemite (13 percent) Yellowstone (5 percent) and the Grand Canyon (3 percent). But Park Service officials say the dropoff is due to a decrease in foreign visitors, not the foes, which jumped from \$10 to \$20 per carload.

Stone explained that travel agents and European tour operators, who make arrangements six months in advance, wore roluctant to book customers at Yosemite because of last winter's floods. About 16 percent of the 276 million park visitors annually are foreigners, according to ly are foreigners, according to the Park Service.

Attendance was also hurt because flooding closed the park for more than two months at the

PLYMOUTH

beginning of the year, although that happened when the number of visitors is traditionally low because of the weather.

Stone said he thinks the avere winter may have held down advance bockings at Yallowstone as well.

"Fees arent going to affect visitation at destination parks, it and it is a national park, a handful of dollars is not going to affect your visit."

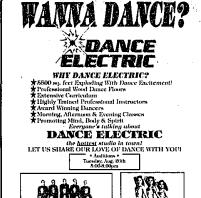
Cary Machlia, a sociology professor at the University of Idaho who is examining public attitudes about park fees, says most people are willing to pay a little more if the fees are clearly explained and fair and if most of the money returns to the park where it is collected.

Sept. 8 6:00 pm to 10 pm Sept. 10 6:00 pm to 10 pm

Sept. 10 6:00 pm to 10 Sept. 15 6:30 pm to 10 6:00 pm to 10 pm "The majority of visitors sup-port the new fees as long as they meet these conditions," he said

meet these concurues, its said in an interview.
Visitors to Shenandonh, a dren.
Visitors to Shenandonh, a from DeRose of Greenfield, Tom DeRose of G

bargain," said Stan Krev of Cleveland, who was visiting with his wife, Jan, and their four chil-





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SEATILE ARTS FEST

Labor Day weekend is the time for Seattle's giant Arts Festival, sumbershook, held at the Seattle Center. The festivals features more than 25 indoor and outdoor stages, exhibit halls and performance sites, showcasing music, literary arts, dance, all visual arts, theater, comedy, film, kids performances and the trademark feets spectacles. Key commitment for the festival is to regional talent from the Northwest. Call 1-206-281-8111.

FALL IN BOYNE COUNTRY
Cyclists can ride through the
tunnel of trees along M-119 during the annual shoreline bike
tour Saturday, Sopt. 6, with
starting point at the Birchwood
Inn, Harbor Springs. A fee
includes refreshments, a barbetou and pool party. Call 1-800530-9955.

Stone 1 and post party. Call 1-800Another Boyno Country event is the Taste of Harbor Springs Sept. 20 at the city's waterfront. Taste of Harbor Springs show-cases many area restaurants, microbrowries and wineries. Call 1-816-528-7999.
From mid-September through mid-October is peak fall color time in Boyno. Call 1-800-846-2828 for free information on fall color tours.

BACKPACKING CLASSES
The School of Outdoor Leader-ship Adventure and Recreation will offer a backpacking class (5:45 to 8:45 p.m.) on five successive Wednosdays beginning on Sept. 3. An overnight trip to Pinckney Recreation Area is set for Sept. 20:21; a Picture Rocks trip will be held Oct. 3-5. Classes are in Farmington; call Carol McCririe at 1-810-229-5232.

GRAND JAZZ FEST

GRAND JAZZ FEST

The Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island will salute American workers and jazz lovers alike with a spoctacular lineup of nationally ronown jazz greats during its 10th annual Labor Day Jazz Festival Friday, Aug. 29; through Monday, Sept. 1. Featured are the Phil Woods Quintet on Friday, Aug. 29; Boots Randolph and John Boutte and Juanita Brooks on Saturday, Aug. 30; and Pote Fountain on Sunday, Aug. 31. For reservations or more information, call 1:800-33-GRAND (1:800-334-7263).

Travel agent Lana Gordon of Lana Gordon Travels in Farm-ington Hills recently returned from a trip to Switzerland where

she completed the Switzerland Network educational program to become an expert in Swiss trav-



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