

The Virgin Islands Consortium

NPS Pulls Back December 2023 Parking Fee Reintroduction and Seeks Public Comment

Public input will shape the future of the Christiansted National Historic Site's parking policies, addressing maintenance and economic challenges

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Fort Christianvaern Parking Lot in downtown Christiansted, St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

The National Park Service is inviting public comments on the reimplementation of a daily parking fee at the Christiansted National Historic Site visitor parking lot.

This decision marks a significant change as the parking lot has offered free parking for nearly a decade. NPS had announced last year that the fee would have been reintroduced in December 2023, but the implementation never took place. The announcement had elicited [strong community feedback](#) following its publication on the Consortium, with residents pushing back on the planned fee reintroduction.

According to the NPS, from the early 2000s until 2010, parking fees were collected at the Christiansted National Historic Site. However, due to an internal restructure and staff shortages in 2009, the collection of these fees was paused. A regional review conducted in April 2022 highlighted that economic inflation and the costs associated with maintaining the parking lot have created financial challenges for the site.

The reintroduction of a parking fee is seen as a way to streamline operations and improve efficiency for park visitors. An automated fee machine will be installed, allowing visitors to make contactless payments, which will reduce operational costs for the NPS.

Revenue from the proposed parking fee will be reinvested into the park, funding improvements to the parking lot and the rehabilitation of historic structures within the Christiansted National Historic Site. Additionally, the collected revenue will enhance the overall security of park visitors, the NPS said.

"The current Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) allows the National Park Service to collect and retain revenue, ensuring that fee revenue is used to enhance the visitor experience. At least 80 percent of funding from recreation fees stays in the park where it is collected, and the remaining 20 percent benefits parks that do not collect fees or generate only a small amount of revenue," the NPS explained.

The National Park Service is seeking public input on this matter from June 6, 2024, through July 6, 2024. Comments can be submitted via email at chri_comments@nps.gov, by mail at 2100 Church St #100, Christiansted, VI 00820, or by phone on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM at 340-713-1460.

Public comments are crucial in the planning and decision-making processes of the NPS. They help ensure that actions taken are consistent with the mission of the NPS, enabling legislation, and other relevant laws and policies. Comments can influence the consideration of alternative approaches, highlight environmental and socioeconomic issues, identify related research, and provide information on how visitors use the park.

The NPS emphasized the importance of visitor feedback in managing the Christiansted National Historic Site, known as the "gem of the Caribbean." The site preserves historic structures and grounds, interpreting the Danish economy and way of life in Christiansted from 1733 to 1917. Visitors are encouraged to tour the grounds, enjoy a picnic lunch, and take in the majestic ocean views.

The Christiansted National Historic Site includes seven acres on the Christiansted waterfront, featuring five historic structures: Fort Christiansvaern, the Danish West India & Guinea Company Warehouse, the Steeple Building, the Danish Custom House, and the Scale House. No place in the Caribbean still demonstrates the architectural, economic, and political influence of Europe like Christiansted National Historic Site.

The NPS looks forward to hearing from the public and values each comment as a contribution to the future planning and enhancement of the site.

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