



Highlights of [GAO-03-354](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives

# NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## Actions Needed to Improve Travel Cost Management

### Why GAO Did This Study

Unable to obtain information on the National Park Service's (Park Service) travel costs to ensure that the agency is spending appropriated funds effectively and efficiently, the Subcommittee asked GAO to assess the availability of travel cost information and provide certain travel cost information, such as the cost of foreign travel and for attending conferences, for the Park Service for each of the past 4 fiscal years.

### What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the National Park Service implement the following procedures:

- Establish procedures for capturing travel data, including travel type and purpose as required by the *Federal Travel Regulation*.
- Enforce existing policy that requires all foreign travel vouchers to be processed electronically by the Accounting Operations Center.
- Address federal travel system requirements when designing and implementing the travel system scheduled for completion later this year as well as any future travel systems.

DOI officials concurred with our recommendations and noted steps underway to manage travel costs. [www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-354](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-354).

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact McCoy Williams on (202) 512-6906 or [williamsm@gao.gov](mailto:williamsm@gao.gov).

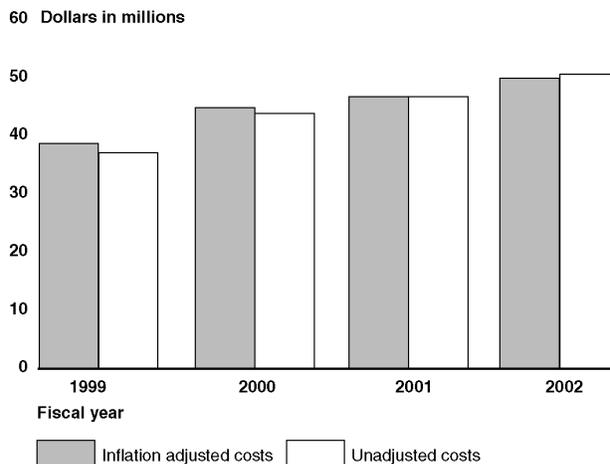
### What GAO Found

The Park Service reported that it incurred from \$39 million to \$50 million, in inflation-adjusted dollars annually, on travel costs during the past 4 fiscal years, but it does not know its actual costs for foreign travel or the travel costs related to attending conferences because it does not routinely record this required information.

The *Federal Travel Regulation* requires that agency travel accounting systems capture certain data, including travel type, such as foreign or domestic travel, and purpose, such as training or conference attendance. In addition, the Park Service requires that all vouchers for foreign travel be processed at its Accounting Operations Center, but this policy is not consistently followed. The current procedures for processing travel vouchers and recording travel costs make it difficult for the Park Service to report reliable travel data that are consistent with the *Federal Travel Regulation*. Officials at the Park Service told us that they are implementing a new travel management system that will track travel type and purpose. The system is expected to be operating throughout the agency by approximately September 2003.

Reliable, detailed travel information that is consistent with the *Federal Travel Regulation* is critical so that the Park Service and the Congress can perform their respective roles and responsibilities with regard to efficient travel cost management.

**Park Service Reported Total Travel Costs, Fiscal Years 1999-2002, Actual and Adjusted for Inflation to 2001 Dollars**



Source: GAO.

Note: This figure represents GAO's analysis of data provided by the National Park Service.