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'Let the buyer beware'  
also applies on air tours

You've traveled thousands of miles overseas, stayed in some classy hotels and have a confirmed reservation in hand to take a scenic tour over the Grand Canyon.

But when you get to the airport, you're told that you haven't yet paid the airport user fee, the federal excise tax, a pickup and drop-off fee for ground transportation from the hotel to the airport and the National Park Service's entrance fee to Grand Canyon. For a family of four, the extra total is around \$120. Without paying the hidden extras, there's no flight. What do you do?

Most tourists who have come this far aren't going to quibble about an extra \$100, so they pay it.

But it's wrong, say Strip-based tour brokers who have identified two companies they say employ "bait-and-switch" tactics with tourists and have the potential of giving the entire industry as well as the whole city a bad reputation.

Tony Mancuso, president of Reservations Guaranteed, said the entire problem is only going to get worse as Las Vegas alters its marketing strategy to promote family attractions.

"It hurts the industry as a whole," said Mancuso, who said he gets the brunt of the complaints because one of his operations is called Official Tourist Bureau, which

visitors mistakenly believe has jurisdiction over the industry.

A number of sources identified Grand Canyon Specialists, which has also operated under the name of Discount Sightseeing and Nevada State Sightseeing, and Wild West Tour Co., which also goes by Cactus Jack's Wild West Tour Co., as companies that have hidden costs in their tour packages.

Although several industry spokesmen criticized those companies' tactics, there has been no official action taken by regulatory agencies. Ron Shutt, chief of compliance for the Nevada Department of Commerce's Consumer Affairs Division, said there are no investigations pending against any scenic tour company.

Some advertisements by Grand Canyon Specialists and Wild West have small-print disclaimers warning of possible extra costs - but not all of them. In phone inquiries to both companies by the SUN, no specific extra fees were explained until the caller made pointed inquiries.

**By Richard N. Velotta**

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