

Google Photos might put some editing features behind a subscription paywall

Google Photos is a superb photo management and editing app. As it has grown in popularity, Google has made the occasional attempt to monetize Photos – most recently by launching a subscription service where customers receive a selection of 10 printed shots every month. But now, according to *XDA Developers* (and also highlighted by *Android Police*), Google might be planning to reserve certain editing tricks – some that were previously available for free – for Google One subscribers. That's one way to start ruining a beloved service, Google. Maybe rethink this.

Inside the code for the latest update to Google Photos, there are strings that clearly point to the app moving in this direction:

As a Google One member, you get access to extra editing features.

Get extra editing features with a Google One membership.

Unlock this feature and more with a Google One membership.

Unlock more editing features and {storage_amount} of storage with a Google One membership.

But these aren't just hidden code snippets; it seems that Google is already testing this approach with some people right now, as you can see in the below screenshots shared with *XDA's* Mishaal Rahman.

However, Google tells *The Verge* it's not actually locking the free "color pop" tool behind a paywall; it's simply offering a new version that can be used on more photos than before:

In Google Photos, color pop is a feature that continues to be available for anyone to use, at no cost, for photos with depth information (such as portrait mode). As a part of an ongoing roll out that began earlier this year, Google One members can apply the feature to even more photos of people, including those without depth information.

That said, Google wouldn't tell us which other editing tools and features it might decide to exclusively offer to its Google One subscribers, saying it had "nothing to share."

With monthly subscriptions that start at \$1.99 per month (for 100GB of cloud storage spread across your Google services), Google One isn't terribly expensive. It's also used for Android device backups, and the company recently announced that it's adding a VPN feature for Google One subscribers on the \$9.99/month (2TB storage) plan. But the notion that you soon might have to pay a recurring fee to unlock everything Google Photos has to offer is still pretty frustrating. Maybe this is the cost of all that free photos storage.

Update, 7:30PM ET: Added Google statement and clarification that the paywalled "color pop" feature works with more photos than the original free version did.

<https://www.theverge.com/2020/11/6/21553303/google-photos-editing-features-color-pop-one-subscription>