Frequently Asked Travel Questions

General Questions
What is the ARC Travel Guide?
What is the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR)?

Prior to Traveling
What must be done prior to traveling for the first time?
How do I prepare travel authorizations and vouchers in the travel system?
Does the traveler need a printed copy of the travel authorization?
When should I turn in my voucher and when will I be paid?
How do I know if my travel voucher has been processed?

Transportation Reservations
How do I make reservations?
What types of airfare may I select?
How do I account for the TMC transaction fee?
How do I charge my airline tickets?
Can I make personal travel plans along with my official travel plans?
Can I use frequent flyer points?

Government Travel Charge Cards
Is it mandatory to use a travel charge card when traveling?
Can I get a cash advance for travel expenses?
How much money should/may I get from the ATM while on official travel?
When should I pay the travel charge card statement?
How do I get reimbursed for ATM fees?
Can I use my travel charge card for retail purchases?

Lodging and FedRooms
How must I make lodging reservations?

Where can I stay when on official travel?
Which states are tax exempt?
Will I be reimbursed for taxes charged on lodging expenses?

Per Diem
When am I eligible for per diem expenses?
How do I determine per diem rates?
When do I use a local travel voucher?
When may actual expenses be authorized?

Government Vehicle, Car Rental, POV
Must I use a government vehicle for official travel or can a rental car or POV be used?
Telephone Calls
How am I reimbursed for phone calls made while in travel status?

More Questions
If I have more questions, whom do I contact?

Disclaimer – this document is for quick reference and is not intended to address all travel policy situations. The ARC Travel Help Desk is available on (304) 480-8000, Option 1 - Monday through Friday from 7am to 6pm, EST.

General

What is the ARC Travel Guide?
The ARC Travel Guide is the travel policy for Fiscal Service employees and those ARC customer agencies that have adopted this guide as their agency policy. (Note that some ARC customer agencies may have additional policies in place, and travelers are encouraged to verify policy with their agency travel contact).

What is the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR)?
The Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) is the government-wide travel policy issued by the General Services Administration (GSA) as mandated by Congressional legislation. The FTR has the force and effect of law, and all travelers and approvers must adhere to these rules and may not waive any provisions. The FTR may be supplemented where legislation allows an agency to have discretionary policies in place. (See ARC Travel Guide).

Prior to Traveling

What must be done prior to traveling for the first time?
The following documents should be sent to ARC Travel Services:

- Direct Deposit Form
- Government Travel Charge Card Application
- Self - register in the E-Gov travel system

How do I prepare travel authorizations and vouchers in the travel system?
Quarterly training sessions and monthly webinars are held for travelers and approving officials. Information on these session is available on the Travel Training page on ALEX. Please contact Travel Services on (304) 480-8000, Option 1 if you have specific questions not addressed in the FAQs.

Does the traveler need a printed copy of the travel authorization?
Electronic routing of travel documents eliminates the need for printing the authorization in order to obtain approvals. The traveler is responsible for knowing what is authorized
and may request a printed copy. Most hotels accept Government identification as proof that a traveler is entitled to government rates. Some car rental agencies, however, may request a copy of the travel authorization.

**When should I submit my voucher and when will I be paid?**

Travelers and travel planners should complete a travel voucher in the travel system within 5 days after the end of the trip. Payments are made by split disbursement directly to the traveler and/or the traveler’s individually billed Government travel charge card *(or centrally billed account per agency policy)*. Travelers normally have reimbursements in their account within 2 to 3 business days after the voucher has been electronically approved by the approving official.

The TAV fee is the Travel Authorization and Voucher fee which is charged by the travel system vendor. This fee is paid directly to the travel system vendor, but will still appear in the voucher.

**How do I know if my travel voucher has been processed?**

Travel planners can verify the travel system to see if the document has been transferred to the accounting system. The term *"auth 24 hour passed"* is used to show the status of fully processed documents.

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**Transportation Reservations**

**How do I make reservations?**

You must use the agency travel system and/or the associated Travel Management Center (TMC) to make all transportation and hotel reservations. Keep in mind that the transaction fee for self-booking a reservation is considerably cheaper than calling a reservation agent at the TMC.

The FTR states travelers are responsible for additional costs if transportation and lodging reservations are not made using the travel system or TMC. **Travelers may NOT make reservations using commercial websites (Orbitz, Travelocity, Hotels.com, etc.) or airline websites.** Travelers are liable for any additional costs booking outside the agency system, and may also be subject to agency disciplinary actions.

**What types of airfare may I select?**

Travelers must use the **Government Contract City Pair** contract airfare rates unless they meet one of the **FTR exceptions**, and use is allowed by the approving official. Types of common fares are:

- **Traditional Contract Fares (YCA) **ALWAYS USE
  - Fully refundable
  - Last seat availability
  - No restrictions
  - Ticketed 2 days prior to departure
• **Capacity Controlled Contract Fares (-CA)** MAY USE IF NO YCA FARE, AND MUST USE IF BOTH YCA AND –CA FARES AVAILABLE
  - Fully Refundable/lower priced than standard City Pair fare
  - Limited seats and not available in all markets
  - Can purchase until departure if available
  - Ticketed 2 business days prior to departure
  - Agency approval must be granted within 24 hours

• **Commercial Fares** USE AT YOUR OWN RISK IF ALLOWED BY YOUR AGENCY POLICY AND IF APPROVED BY YOUR APPROVING OFFICIAL.
  - Usually non-refundable
  - Penalty for cancellation/fee for rebooking
  - Restrictions usually include Saturday stays
  - Advanced booking/ticketing required
  - Fare not guaranteed until purchased/ticketed
  - Must justify

• **Matching Contract Fare** ONLY IF CONTRACT FARES ARE NOT AVAILABLE
  - May have a penalty for cancellation/fee for rebooking ($150 to $300) and generally not refundable
  - May have to be reserved/ticketed early
  - Fare not guaranteed until ticketed
  - Limited availability
  - Must justify

How do I account for the TMC transaction fee?
The TMC transaction fee is fully reimbursable and should be included along with the airline ticket in the voucher as a separate expense.

**Government Travel Charge Cards**

How do I charge my airline tickets?
Frequent travelers must use their individually billed Government travel charge card. New employees without a travel card and some ARC customer agencies use the centrally billed account (CBA, or GTA). Contact ARC Travel Services should you have any questions.

Can I make personal travel plans along with my official travel plans?
Yes, personal travel plans can be combined with official travel however this must be reflected in travel system. A constructive cost voucher must be prepared comparing the travel cost that would normally have been incurred (official travel) to the actual cost incurred (official and personal). The employee may only be reimbursed the lesser of the two amounts.

Travelers must separately identify the official travel needs to the TMC for determination of the transportation cost to be charged to a Government travel charge card. Any
additional costs must be charged to the traveler's personal credit card. If the addition of personal travel places any cancellation restrictions on the ticket, any penalty may be billed to the traveler if the trip is cancelled for any reason. A Cost Comparison Worksheet (FS Form 5672) is available on the Travel page on ALEX.

Can I use my frequent flyer points?
Federal employees are allowed to retain frequent flyer miles/promotional benefits earned on official travel. You may accumulate and/or use frequent flyer miles for free trips or upgrades in seating.

Frequent Traveler Benefits At-A-Glance

- Travelers should establish their accounts with the airlines they normally use. Any costs to do this are not reimbursable expenses.
- Call your authorized TMC with your frequent flyer numbers and/or have your Travel Planner update your self-booking profile. The TMC reports the account number with each ticket, but may charge the traveler for any research questions about mileage not crediting.
- Redemptions of mileage for free tickets must not involve the TMC. Travelers should call the airlines directly.
- All other FTR provisions must be followed.
  - Tickets must be charged to a Government-issued charge card.
  - Contract Air carriers must be used unless you meet an FTR exception.
  - Do not select non-contract carriers in order to maximize mileage.

Is it mandatory to use a Government travel charge card when traveling?
Employees who travel more than one trip a year are required to use a Government travel charge card. All other travelers are encouraged to use one. The card enables travelers to carry less cash, obtain government discounts, and obtain cash advances from automated teller machines (ATMs). [ARC customer agencies may have different policies for Government travel card use].

Can I get a cash advance for travel expenses?
If an advance is required and you have a travel charge card, use your ATM access to obtain an advance for the amount of expenses you reasonably expect not to be able to be charged to the card.

If you do not have a travel charge card, you may obtain an advance if requested on the travel authorization. The advance is by direct deposit only and must be requested as least 7 days prior to travel.

How much money should/may I get from the ATM while on official travel?
The travel system provides an "advance authorized amount" on travel authorizations for specific trips. This amount can serve as a guide to determine the maximum amount you may withdraw (limited to $200 daily).
You should only withdraw the amount of cash needed for cash expenses, since many travel expenses can be charged to the credit card. The rule of thumb is to take about 80% of your cash needs (those expenses which you anticipate that cannot be charged to the Government travel card), or no more than $50.00 per day.

When should I pay the travel charge card statement?
The credit card statement should be paid in full as soon as it is received. By that time, a voucher will have been submitted and payment received. Maintaining a good payment record is essential for remaining in the travel charge card program.

How do I get reimbursed for ATM fees?
The travel charge card is assessed a fee for each cash withdrawal from an ATM. The current fee is 2.00% of the cash amount withdrawn. An ATM or teller receipt may not state this fee, but it is charged to your credit card along with the cash advance amount. In addition, some financial institutions may assess a user fee for ATM withdrawals, but this amount will be printed on the receipt. These fees are reimbursable if included on the travel voucher.

Can I use my travel charge card for retail purchases?
No. Personal expenses cannot be charged to the Government travel charge card. Official travel expenses such as lodging, meals, gasoline, etc. may be charged on the card. Travel Services (or ARC Customer agencies) monitors the timeliness of payments and the types of expenses charged to the card. In addition, merchants not associated with official travel are blocked from accepting the Government card.

Lodging and FedRooms

How must I make lodging reservations?
The Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) §301-11.11 states you must make your lodging reservations through your agency’s travel management service. That mean you must either self-book your lodging reservations in the E-Gov travel system, or call the travel management center (TMC). Do not contact hotels directly or use commercial booking systems to make lodging reservations. One exception is for large groups attending a conference or event.

Where can I stay when on official travel?
The FTR states travelers should give first consideration to FedRooms properties. FedRooms is the official government-wide, GSA-sponsored lodging program. The FedRooms rate is guaranteed to always be at or below the per diem rate. (Note that the “Government rate”, which is set by hotels may be higher than the FedRooms
FedRooms rates are negotiated and guarantee:

- Rates at or below per diem
- Over 14,000 hotels to choose from
- 4 p.m. or later day-of-arrival cancel policy
- No early departure fees
- U.S. hotels are U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) certified as fire safe hotels (formerly FEMA certification)
- No minimum stay requirements
- No reservation deposits
- No add on fees
- Travelers retain frequent stay points

If FedRooms (XVU rate code) properties are not available, travelers should look for the “Government rate” when making lodging reservations. (*The FTR requires lodging reservations to be made in the travel system or using the TMC, or the traveler may be liable for additional costs and or agency disciplinary action.*)

Travelers must ensure that non-FedRooms properties are compliant with the U.S. Fire Administration’s (USFA) website for fire safe hotels. All FedRooms properties meet the USFA fire safety requirements.

**Which states are tax-exempt?**

Lodging expenses charged to an individual are not exempt from state and local taxes in most states. Hotels in some states require a tax exemption form from the traveler. A list of tax exempt states is located on the [GSA SmartPay website](#).

**Will I be reimbursed for taxes charged on lodging expenses?**

Yes. Domestic lodging taxes are reimbursed as a miscellaneous expense. Do not include as part of the lodging cost. Foreign lodging taxes are included in the foreign per diem rates.

**Per Diem**

**When am I eligible for per diem expenses?**

- You perform official travel away from your official station, or other areas defined by your agency *
- You incur per diem expenses while performing official travel; and
- You are in a travel status for more than 12 hours.

* *Treasury Directive (TD) 74-15 defines local travel for all Treasury employees.* [ARC customer agencies may have different policies]. TD 74-15 determines per diem eligibility. Local travel is defined as travel performed within 50 miles of the permanent duty station (PDS) or residence from which an employee commutes daily. This may be reduced to 30 miles from the PDS.
/residence when travel involves training/conference attendance or severe conditions that may endanger the health or safety of an employee.

How do I determine per diem rates?
The travel system contains per diem rates for most areas of the country. Entitlement to per diem is explained in the FTR and the Travel Program Guide. If a specific location is not listed, contact the Travel Services Branch for assistance. Per Diem rates

When may actual expenses be authorized?
The approving official may determine that the maximum per diem rate is inadequate and authorize reimbursement of actual subsistence expenses because of special or unusual circumstances. The actual expense allowable may not exceed 300% of the total maximum applicable per diem rate.

Possible Reasons for Actual Expense Authorizations

- Lodging needed at a particular hotel because of conference, meetings or training.
- Costs in an area have temporarily escalated due to a special event or function (Olympics, Mardi Gras, etc.).
- Affordable lodging is not available within reasonable commuting distance and the extra transportation costs result in little or no savings.
- Government rate not available.

When do I use a local travel voucher?
A local travel voucher is used to obtain reimbursement for official travel within the area of your permanent duty station (see above question). There is no pre-authorization form required, but local travel should only be performed when an approving official directs the traveler to do so. Local travel claims must be submitted at least quarterly and before the end of the fiscal year. Non-travel related expenses may also be reimbursed by using an SF 1164, “Claim for Reimbursement For Expenditures on Official Business”, which is the local voucher in the travel system. Non-travel expenses should be charged to a budget object class other than travel.

Rental Cars and POV

Do I have to use a government vehicle for official travel, or can I use a rental car or POV?
In most cases when a government owned vehicle (GOV) is available the approving official will select GOV as the mode of transportation most advantageous to the Government.

A traveler may rent a vehicle, if authorized (in advance of the trip) or approved as advantageous to the government. Rental cars must be booked in the travel system and should be made with a Government rate vendor that participates in the Defense Travel
Management Office (DTMO) Government car rental contract. These rates appear in the travel system and include CDW insurance coverage.

Use of a privately owned vehicle (POV) may also be authorized when advantageous to the government. Reduced POV mileage rates may be authorized if there is a government vehicle available, and POV is chosen.

**Telephone Calls**

**How do I get reimbursed for phone calls made while in travel status?**

**Travelers with an agency phone card:** charge calls to the card and not the lodging statement. These are not listed on the travel voucher as calls are charged to the agency.

**Travelers without an agency phone card:** Approving officials may approve personal calls home up to the suggested limit of $10.00 per day, averaged for multiple days. Exceptions should be noted on the travel voucher. All reimbursable calls should be listed on the voucher with an indication if the call was for business or personal reasons. Phone calls should only be claimed if used. *(ARC Customer agencies may have different policies for telephone call reimbursement.)*

If I have more travel questions, whom do I contact?

**Travel Customer Service**............................ (304) 480-8000 Option 1

- Temporary duty (TDY) questions
- Long term temporary duty
- Travel system data entry, access, password resets, and navigation
- General TDY travel policy
- Government travel charge card
- Post payment travel voucher audits
- E-Gov travel system and travel policy training
- Accounting and travel reimbursements

**Relocation Customer Service**........................ (304) 480-8469

- Permanent change of station (PCS) questions
- Temporary change of station (TCS) questions
- Relocation travel policy

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