

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
Washington, DC 20405

OAS 5775.1 CHGE 2
August 2, 2017

GSA ORDER

SUBJECT: Foreign Travel Policy

1. Purpose. To publish internal GSA guidance for official travel to foreign areas.
2. Background. The Federal Travel Regulation (Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 41, Chapters 300 through 304) (FTR) is the Government-wide regulation that implements statutory requirements and Executive Branch policies for travel by Federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at Government expense. This directive provides internal agency policies and procedures regarding foreign travel as required by the FTR, Part 301-70.
3. Scope and applicability.
 - a. This directive contains standards, instructions, and procedures governing the approval, authorization, coordination, performance, and vouchering of official travel to, from, and between foreign locations in connection with General Services Administration (GSA) programs and operations. The instructions related to allowances for subsistence and transportation expenses conforms with the provisions of the FTR, Executive Orders, appropriate statutes, numerous decisions of the Comptroller General of the United States and Civilian Board of Contract Appeals, and determinations of the Administrator of General Services.
 - b. The provisions of this directive apply to all GSA employees and for individuals authorized to travel to foreign areas at GSA expense. This Order applies to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to the extent that the OIG determines it is consistent with the OIG's independent authority under the Inspector General Act and does not conflict with other OIG policies or the OIG mission. This Order applies to the Civilian Board of Contract Appeals (CBCA) to the extent that the CBCA determines it is consistent with the CBCA's independent authority under the Contract Disputes Act and applicable Federal Court decisions and does not conflict with other CBCA policies or the CBCA mission.
 - c. This directive supplements the FTR and is issued under the authority of the FTR. Supervisors, approval authorities, and employees must still consult the FTR to ensure

compliance with the regulations related to all travel-related expenses not specifically addressed in this supplement.

d. Any regional directives containing instructions and/or procedures that differ from provisions herein must be cleared in advance through the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, Office of Administrative Services (OAS).

4. Revisions. This directive provides updated policies and procedures pertaining to foreign travel previously contained in PFM P 4290.1, Chapter 2, Paragraph 5, and Chapter 6. It references relevant FTR citations rather than repeating FTR text. Major revisions include requiring Event Tracker requests for travel to foreign locations to be attached or referenced on the travel authorization; amending the policy for actual expense subsistence reimbursements; and eliminating the requirement for the Administrator and Deputy Administrator to obtain foreign area clearance through the White House in accordance with White House Memorandum 003641, dated July 22, 2015.

5. Definitions. Refer to Appendix A for a list of definitions pertaining to foreign travel.

6. Responsibilities. The Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, Office of Administrative Services (OAS) is responsible for developing travel policy for GSA employees and other authorized individuals traveling on official Government business for GSA. Additionally, the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS, will:

a. Identify at least one employee to serve as passport acceptance agent on behalf of GSA;

b. Review all passport and visa requests within three business days upon receipt;

c. Serve as liaison with the Department of State on behalf of GSA's foreign travelers;

d. Conduct passport acceptance agent responsibilities in accordance with 22 CFR § 51.22;

e. Request the cancellation or transfer of official and diplomatic passports issued to separating GSA employees and their dependents; and

f. Review all travel requests submitted via Event Tracker related to foreign travel.

7. Explanation of change paragraph. This Change Order adds the requirement for GSA employees to obtain country clearance via the Department of State's electronic Country Clearance (eCC) online program.

8. Signature.

/S/

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FOREIGN TRAVEL POLICY

Part 1. General

1. Requirement for a proper travel authorization. Foreign travel will not begin until each traveler has a properly authorized travel authorization, except in an emergency. Travel performed without a properly signed authorization is considered travel performed without authorization.

2. Authorization of foreign travel.

a. Travel to foreign areas. The Administrator or designees in the Office of the Administrator may authorize official travel by employees with an official station in the United States to foreign areas. GSA employees stationed in the United States required to travel to foreign areas must submit a request in Event Tracker before travel begins and reference the approved request (e.g., Event Tracker Attendee # 00009999) or upload it as an attachment to the ETS travel authorization.

b. Travel for GSA employees stationed in foreign areas. Authority to authorize official travel for an employee whose official station is in a foreign area when such travel returns them to the United States or to another foreign area for official business or for home leave is delegated to the Division Director or comparable level supervisor for all GSA organizations.

3. Country information and clearance. The traveler is responsible for obtaining the necessary security briefings and Department of State clearances prior to travel.

a. Reporting requirement to the Office of Mission Assurance (OMA).

(1) GSA employees with a confidential, secret, or top secret security clearance are required to provide notice to the Threat Management Office, OMA (threat-management-office@gsa.gov) of all foreign travel, conducted for either official or personal purposes, at least 2 weeks in advance of travel. Such employees may be required to receive a travel briefing prior to foreign travel and may be subject to a security debrief upon completion of foreign travel. Employees must meet any additional requirements prescribed in [ADM 5400.1, Meetings with Representatives of Foreign Governments or Foreign Industry, Foreign Travel, and Foreign Contacts](#) prior to travel.

(2) GSA employees without a security clearance are encouraged but not required to notify the Threat Management Office, OMA (threat-management-office@gsa.gov) of all foreign travel, conducted for either official or personal purposes. The Threat Management Office, OMA may provide such employees travel briefings prior to foreign travel and may ask them to participate in a security debrief upon completion of foreign travel.

b. Clearance by the Department of State.

(1) GSA employees traveling to a foreign area on official GSA business must obtain country clearance in advance of travel. Employees are required to submit requests through the Department of State's electronic Country Clearance (eCC) online program at <https://ecc.state.gov/security/EccLogin.aspx>.

(2) GSA employees traveling to a foreign area on official GSA business or personal travel, or residing overseas, are highly encouraged to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate via the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step/>. STEP notifies the closest U.S. Embassy or Consulate of their contact information so that, in an emergency, they can be contacted with important safety and security information, or support during a crisis. Alternatively, employees may visit the Embassy or Consulate in person.

4. Rest stops.

a. A rest period may be authorized or approved in accordance with FTR §301-11.20. The rest stop may be authorized at any intermediate point, including points within CONUS, provided the point is midway in the journey or as near to midway as requirements for use of U.S. flag air carriers and carrier scheduling permit. A rest stop will not be authorized when an employee, for personal convenience, travels by an indirect route resulting in excess travel time. When carrier schedules or the requirements for use of U.S. flag air carriers preclude an intermediate rest stop, or a rest stop is not authorized, the employee may be scheduled to arrive no more than 24 hours before reporting for duty either at the temporary duty location or upon return to the employee's official station.

b. The travel authorization must clearly indicate the authorized rest stop(s) and show a cost comparison between the direct route and the routing with the rest stop(s). If other-than-coach class (i.e., first class or business class) seating is authorized due to the 14-hour rule, then a rest stop will not be authorized.

5. Health issues. All travelers should familiarize themselves with conditions at their destination that could affect their health (e.g., high altitude or pollution, types of medical facilities, required immunizations, availability of required pharmaceuticals, etc.). Travelers should consult the Travelers' Health page of the Department of Health and Human Services - Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel> and the Department of State's country information website at <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html>. The CDC website also provides general guidance on health precautions, such as food and water precautions and insect-bite protection.

Part 2. Passports

6. General.

a. The passport serves as official verification of the bearer's origin, identity, and nationality. A U.S. passport is required of U.S. citizens for international travel and re-entry into the United States. There are three types of passports: diplomatic, official, and regular. A Government official may possess a valid regular passport and a valid official or diplomatic passport at the same time.

(1) Diplomatic passports have a black cover; are issued to persons having diplomatic or comparable status because they are traveling abroad to carry out diplomatic duties on behalf of the U.S. Government; are valid for a period appropriate to the applicant's entitlement, not to exceed five years; and no fee is charged for their issuance. Where appropriate, dependents included on the travel authorization of such persons may be issued diplomatic passports.

(2) Official passports have a maroon cover; are issued to officials or employees of the U.S. Government traveling abroad in the discharge of official duties; are valid as long as the bearer maintains their position with GSA, validity not to exceed five years; and no fee is charged for their issuance. Where appropriate, dependents included on the travel authorization of such persons may be issued official passports.

(3) Regular passports, also known as a personal or tourist passports, have a blue cover; are issued to citizens of the United States proceeding abroad for personal or business reasons; are valid 10 years for adults and 5 years for minors under age 16; and a fee is charged for their issuance. A regular passport may be issued as a passport book or passport card. A passport book is valid for travel by air, sea, or land. A passport card is valid when entering the United States from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda at land border crossings or sea ports-of-entry. A passport card is not valid for international travel by air.

b. Unless otherwise prohibited by a foreign country's domestic law, GSA employees may proceed abroad for official business using a regular passport. When required by a foreign country's domestic laws, GSA employees will be issued an official passport of a distinctive maroon color by the Special Issuance Agency (SIA) of the Department of State. Where appropriate, dependents of these employees may also be issued official passports (e.g., dependents authorized to travel overseas on a change of official station or accompanying a spouse on official business trips abroad). An official passport must not be used for a trip that is solely personal; however, it may be used by the bearer for incidental personal travel while on official foreign travel, en route to, or returning from a foreign destination, as determined by the laws and regulations of the foreign government(s).

7. Obtaining official or diplomatic passports.

a. Upon identification of the need to obtain an official or diplomatic passport to perform official travel abroad, the employee's supervisor will prepare a request for passport services and send it to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS for processing. Request procedures are available on *InSite* at <https://insite.gsa.gov/portal/content/617606>.

b. The employee will submit a 2D bar coded passport application to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS using Form DS-82 or DS-11. The bar coded application eliminates manual entry of an applicant's data at the Department of State. Applicants should allow at least four weeks of processing time.

c. All requests for official and diplomatic passports originating from the United States, including renewals (see paragraph 8.e below), are processed by the appointed GSA passport acceptance agent(s) in the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS. Upon receipt of an official or diplomatic passport from the Department of State, the passport information is recorded and the passport(s), including the bearer's regular passport when used as evidence of citizenship, is/are dispatched by traceable delivery service. GSA passport acceptance agents are prohibited from retaining copies of executed passport applications (22 C.F.R. §51.22(e)(2)). Employees applying for or renewing (see paragraph 8.e below) a passport from foreign stations are required to submit their request to the nearest American Embassy or US Consulate.

8. Control of passports.

a. The Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS is the liaison between GSA and SIA. Official and diplomatic passports for all employees must be obtained as outlined above.

b. Upon completion of travel, the official or diplomatic passport may be retained by the traveler. Employees not anticipating travel abroad within the next five years should return the passport to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS for cancellation. [General Records Schedule 9](#) requires that each official passport be returned to the Department of State upon expiration or separation of the employee. Employees must return their official or diplomatic passports to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS via traceable delivery method or by hand-carry method before separating from GSA.

c. Travelers are responsible for the safe keeping of their official or diplomatic passports. In case of loss or destruction, new passports are issued only after exhaustive investigation by SIA. If a passport is lost or stolen, the traveler must submit a Form DS-64, Statement Regarding Lost or Stolen U.S. Passport Book and/or Card, to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS along with a letter of justification from the GSA Passport Acceptance Agent to obtain a new passport.

d. Employees who identify errors on their official or diplomatic passport, require name changes, or require additional visa pages must re-apply for a new passport.

e. Individuals wishing to renew their official or diplomatic passport may complete a passport request and Form DS-82, U.S. Passport Renewal Application for Eligible Individuals.

f. To transfer custody of an official or diplomatic passport to GSA, the employee must submit Department of State Form DS-4085, Application for Additional Visa Pages or Miscellaneous Services, to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS along with a brief letter of explanation, including the name of the applicant's former agency. If the former agency did not maintain physical custody of the passport, the employee must also provide the passport when submitting the request. To transfer custody of an official or diplomatic passport to another agency, the employee must mail the passport and brief letter of explanation to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS via a traceable delivery method. Upon receipt, the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS will process the transfer.

9. Visas. A visa is an endorsement made on a passport by proper authorities of the country to be visited. Many countries have visa requirements for official or diplomatic passports that are more stringent than regular passports. Not all countries require visas; however, when required, travelers must coordinate their visa requests and visa applications through the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, OAS, who will then coordinate with the Department of State, as necessary, to process the visa application(s).

Part 3. Foreign Per Diem Expenses

10. Authorized rate.

a. The per diem allowance payable for official travel in foreign areas, as defined in Appendix A, are established by the Department of State for the locality to be visited except when reduced per diem rates are authorized in accordance with this paragraph, or actual subsistence expenses are authorized due to special or unusual circumstances in accordance with paragraph 12, below. These rates are published in their Standardized Regulations (Government Civilians, Foreign Areas) and can be found at https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp.

b. The maximum foreign per diem rate should be reduced, as provided in FTR §301-11.200, when circumstances make the maximum rate more than adequate to meet necessary subsistence expense. All travelers are advised to request information on hotel discounts for U.S. Government employees when arranging for hotel reservations. They should also seek information on the possible avoidance of taxes, or a refund upon return to the United States or their post of assignment. Separate claims for lodging taxes and laundry incurred in foreign areas are not allowed, as

reimbursement for these expenses is already included in the foreign area per diem rates.

11. Reductions in maximum per diem rates when meals are furnished. The M&IE rates for localities in foreign areas will be reduced by the applicable dollar amount shown in Appendix B of Chapter 301 of the FTR when meals are furnished by the Government or included in a Government-paid registration fee. Exceptions for reductions in maximum per diem allowances are provided when complimentary meals are provided by a hotel or common carrier (FTR §301-11.17) and to accommodate a special need (FTR §301-11.18).

Part 4. Foreign Actual Subsistence Expenses

12. Authorized rate. Travel to foreign locations may be authorized on an actual expense reimbursement in accordance with FTR §301-11.300. The maximum rate allowable will not exceed 300 percent of the applicable maximum per diem allowance.

13. Reimbursement of actual subsistence expenses. Authorization of actual subsistence expenses, in accordance with paragraph 12 above, allows the traveler to be reimbursed a greater amount for lodging than under the lodgings-plus per diem method. Reimbursement for M&IE under actual expenses will not exceed the prescribed rate for the locality and does not require itemization or receipts for meals. To determine the maximum actual expense lodging reimbursement rate for a calendar day, multiply the combined daily M&IE per diem and lodging allowance by 3. The M&IE per diem rate is then subtracted from the product and the difference is the maximum actual expense lodging reimbursement rate. (See example below.)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Per Diem} &= \$150 (\$100 \text{ for lodging; } \$50 \text{ for M\&IE}) \\ \text{Step 1: } &150 \times 3 = 450 \\ \text{Step 2: } &450 - 50 = 400 \end{aligned}$$

Lodging reimbursed up to \$400 with actual expenses authorization (receipt required)
M&IE per diem is \$50 (receipts not required)

Part 5. Foreign Transportation Expenses

14. General. The policy in Chapter 3 of OAS 5700.1 CHGE 1, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Policy, for using and obtaining transportation services apply for all foreign travel with the addition of paragraphs 15 through 18, below.

15. Use of United States flag air carriers. All GSA travelers are required to use U.S. flag air carrier service for all air travel funded by the U.S. Government in accordance with FTR §§ 301-10.131 through 301-10.143. When authorized to use a foreign air carrier, travelers will provide a copy of the special certification as described in FTR §§

301-10.141 and 301-10.142 with their travel authorization. Travelers who do not provide the special certification are responsible for reimbursing GSA for any transportation cost for which they improperly used a foreign air carrier service.

16. Use of United States flag ships. Requests to travel by ship must be authorized by OAS. All GSA travelers are required to use a U.S. flag ship for vessel travel funded by the U.S. Government in accordance with FTR §§301-10.180 through 301-10.183. No traveler will be credited any allowance for travel expenses incurred on a foreign ship in the absence of satisfactory proof for the necessity of the transport.

17. Foreign mileage rates. The mileage rates published on the GSA website (<http://www.gsa.gov/mileage>) apply to foreign travel.

18. Rental cars. Commercial rental cars will be obtained through the e-Government Travel Service, when available. The authorizing official will authorize reimbursement of the cost for additional insurance (collision damage waiver or collision damage insurance), in accordance with FTR §301-10.451, when the vehicle is rented or leased for foreign travel and such insurance is necessary because the rental or leasing agency requirements, foreign statute, or legal procedures could cause extreme difficulty for an employee involved in an accident.

Part 6. Foreign Miscellaneous Expenses

19. Miscellaneous expenses. FTR §301-12.1 allows for reimbursement of various miscellaneous expenses incurred while performing official travel, including expenses unique to foreign travel, such as passport and visa fees, and inoculations fees. Some of these expenses may be incurred prior to travel. If an authorized fee is incurred before travel, but the trip is then canceled for official reasons or for other reasons beyond the traveler's control that are acceptable to the authorizing official, the traveler may submit a local travel voucher to be reimbursed for the expense(s).

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Authorizing official – The official delegated the authority to authorize travel for official business and sign travel authorizations.

Approving official – The official delegated authority to sign the SF 1038, Advance of Funds, Application and Account, the OF 1012, Travel Voucher, or electronic approval using the e-Government Travel Service (ETS).

Continental United States (CONUS) – The 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia. This area does not include Alaska or Hawaii.

Foreign area – Any area, including the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, situated both outside CONUS and the non-foreign areas.

Non-foreign area – The states of Alaska and Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the territories and possessions of the United States.

Passport acceptance agent – A U.S. citizen or a U.S. non-citizen national designated to accept passport applications and administer oaths and affirmations in connection with such applications.

United States – The 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the territories and possessions of the United States.

U.S. flag air carrier – An air carrier holding a certificate under section 401 of the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, 49 U.S.C. 41102, but does not include foreign air carriers operating under permits. Also see 49 U.S.C. 40118.