



U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)

## **GSA Order: Foreign Travel Policy**

OAS 5775.1A

Office of Administrative Services

oastravel-events@gsa.gov

### **Purpose:**

To publish internal GSA guidance for official travel to foreign areas. This directive contains standards, instructions, and procedures governing the approval, authorization, coordination, performance, and vouchering of official travel to, from, and between foreign area locations in connection with programs and operations of GSA. This guidance conforms with the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) and applicable Executive Orders, statutes, Comptroller General of the United States and Civilian Board of Contract Appeals (CBCA) decisions, and determinations of the Administrator of General Services.

### **Background:**

The FTR (Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 41, Chapters 300 through 304) is the Governmentwide 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 FTR Part 301-70.

### **Applicability:**

This directive applies to all GSA employees and other individuals authorized to travel to, from, and between foreign areas at GSA expense. This Order applies to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to the extent that the OIG determines it is consistent with the OIG's independent authority under the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008 and does not conflict with other OIG policies or the OIG mission. This Order applies to 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 its mission.

This directive supplements the FTR and is issued under the authority of the FTR. Supervisors, approving officials, 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. 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).

### **Cancellation:**

This Order supersedes OAS 5775.1 CHGE 2, Foreign Travel Policy.

### **Summary of Changes:**

The following changes have been made to the Order:

1. The format and numbering of paragraphs has been updated, consistent with [OAS 1832.1C, Internal Directives Management](#).
2. Subparagraph 1.2.1 has been updated to reflect the requirement to obtain Chief Administrative Services Officer (CASO) approval of foreign area travel for GSA employees stationed in the United States.
3. Subparagraphs 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 have been updated to clarify Event Tracker request submission requirements for international travel.
4. Subparagraph 1.2.2 has been updated to reflect supervisor approval of foreign area travel for GSA employees stationed outside the United States.
5. Paragraph 1.4 has been updated to account for the prohibition on rest stops when premium economy class seating has been authorized under the FTR's 8-hour rule.
6. Subparagraph 2.4.2 has been updated to reflect current procedures for passport renewal.
7. Paragraph 2.5 has been updated to provide current policy regarding obtaining visas for official travel with official or diplomatic passports.
8. Paragraph 3.2 has been updated to conform with the FTR's exceptions for reductions in per diem rates when meals are furnished.
9. Paragraph 5.5 has been updated to conform to the FTR for reimbursement of collision damage waiver and/or theft insurance for rental vehicles on foreign travel.
10. Appendix A has been updated to conform certain definitions to the FTR.

11. All policy references and links have been verified and updated, as needed.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

The Office of Travel and Charge Card Services is responsible for developing travel policy for GSA employees and for individuals authorized to travel at GSA's expense.

**Signature:**

/S/  
Bob Stafford  
Chief Administrative Services Officer  
Office of Administrative Services

9/8/25  
Date

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# Part 1. General

## 1.1 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.

## 1.2 Authorization of Foreign Travel

### 1.2.1 Travel to Foreign Areas

The CASO, OAS, may authorize official travel by employees with an official station in the United States to foreign areas. There is no further delegation of the CASO's authority. GSA employees stationed in the United States required to travel to foreign areas must obtain final approval of an international attendee request in Event Tracker by the CASO before travel begins and reference the approved request (e.g., Event Tracker Attendee # 00009999) or upload it as an attachment to the E-Gov Travel Service (ETS) travel authorization. Employees must submit their attendee requests as early as possible to allow time to submit their travel authorization and obtain State Department clearance.

### 1.2.2 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 granted to the employee's manager/supervisor and may be redelegated at the equivalent level (or higher). Event Tracker attendee requests are not required for foreign travel by employees stationed in a foreign area; however, if an employee stationed in a foreign area travels to the United States for an event, the employee's office must complete a domestic attendee request in accordance with [OAS 5785.1D. Conference and Event Management Policy](#).

## 1.3 Country Information and Clearance

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

### 1.3.1 Reporting Requirement to the Office of Mission Assurance (OMA)

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](mailto: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 debriefing upon completion of foreign travel. Employees must meet any additional requirements prescribed in [ADM 5400.1A, Meetings with Representatives of Foreign Governments or Foreign Industry, Foreign Travel, and Foreign Contacts](#), prior to travel.

GSA employees without a security clearance are encouraged but not required to notify the Threat Management Office of all foreign travel, conducted for either official or personal purposes. The Threat Management Office may provide such employees travel briefings prior to foreign travel and may ask them to participate in a security debriefing upon completion of foreign travel.

### **1.3.2 Clearance by the State Department**

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://myservices.servicenowservices.com/ecc> at least two weeks prior to travel. Employees will need their travel itinerary to complete the required steps of submitting the eCC.

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 \(STEP\) website](#). STEP notifies the closest U.S. Embassy or Consulate of the employee's 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.

## **1.4 Rest Stops**

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 the Continental United States (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.

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 first class or business class seating is authorized due to the 14-hour rule ([FTR 301-10.103\(b\)\(2\)](#)), then a rest stop will not be authorized. If premium economy class seating is authorized due to the 8-hour rule ([FTR 301-10.103\(a\)\(6\)](#)), then a rest stop will not be authorized.

## **1.5 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). Travelers should consult the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [Travelers' Health website](#) and the Department of State's [Country Information Website](#). The CDC website also provides general guidance on health precautions, such as food and water precautions and insect-bite protection.

# **Part 2. Passports**

## **2.1 General**

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.

### **2.1.1 Diplomatic Passports**

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.

### **2.1.2 Official Passports**

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.

### **2.1.3 Regular Passports**

Regular passports, also known as 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.

## **2.2 Passports for Official Travel**

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).

## **2.3 Obtaining Official or Diplomatic Passports**

### **2.3.1 Request for Passport Services**

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 for processing. Request procedures are available on the [GSA Passport Services Insite page](#).

### **2.3.2 Application Process**

The employee will submit a 2D bar coded passport application to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services using [Form DS-82](#), U.S. Passport Renewal Application for Eligible Individuals, or [Form DS-11](#), Application for a U.S. Passport. 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. All requests for official and diplomatic passports originating from the United States, including renewals



(see Subparagraph 2.4.2 below), are processed by the appointed GSA passport acceptance agent(s) in the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services. 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 CFR §51.22(e)(2)). Employees applying for or renewing a passport from foreign stations are required to submit their request to the nearest American Embassy or U.S. Consulate.

## **2.4 Control of Passports**

The Office of Travel and Charge Card Services is the liaison between GSA and SIA. Official and diplomatic passports for all employees must be obtained as outlined above. 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 for cancellation. [General Records Schedule 2.2](#) 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 via traceable delivery method or by hand-carry method before separating from GSA.

### **2.4.1 Passport Safekeeping**

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 a Valid Lost or Stolen U.S. Passport Book and/or Card, to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services along with a letter of justification from the GSA Passport Acceptance Agent to obtain a new passport.

### **2.4.2 Passport Renewal**

Individuals wishing to renew their official or diplomatic passport may complete a [passport request letter](#) and [Form DS-82](#) to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services. Employees who identify errors on their official or diplomatic passport or require name changes can submit [Form DS-5504](#), Application for a U.S. Passport For Eligible Individuals - Correction, Name Change to Passport Issued One Year Ago or Less, and Limited Passport Replacement, if they meet the form's eligibility requirements. Employees who do not meet Form DS-5504's eligibility requirements will be required to fill out Form DS-11 or DS-82 depending on the circumstances. Additional

visa pages cannot be added to a current passport book; employees are instructed to renew.

#### **2.4.3 Transferring Passports to/from Other Agencies**

To transfer custody of an official or diplomatic passport to another agency, the employee must mail the passport to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services via a traceable delivery method and include a brief letter of explanation. Upon receipt, the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services will process the transfer. To transfer custody of an official or diplomatic passport to GSA, the employee must submit [Form DS-4085](#), Application for Miscellaneous Services, to the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services 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.

### **2.5 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, employees conducting official travel or relocating under an official or diplomatic passport must coordinate their visa requests and applications through the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services, who will then coordinate with the Department of State, as necessary, to obtain a hand carry letter. OAS will provide a copy of the hand carry letter to the employee in order to obtain a visa from the respective country's embassy. The Office of Travel and Charge Card Services can obtain the visa in circumstances that the employee can not. Visa requirements for specific countries can be found at SIA's [Official and Diplomatic Visa Information website](#)).

## **Part 3. Foreign Per Diem Expenses**

### **3.1 Authorized Per Diem Rate**

#### **3.1.1 General**

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 4.1, below. These rates are published in their [Standardized Regulations \(Government Civilians, Foreign Areas\)](#).

### **3.1.2 Reductions in the Authorized Per Diem Rate**

The maximum foreign area 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 expenses. 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.

### **3.2 Reductions in Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) Rates when Meals are Furnished**

The M&IE rates for localities in foreign areas will be reduced by the applicable dollar amount as prescribed in [Appendix B to 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 medical requirements or religious beliefs ([FTR §301-11.18](#)).

## **Part 4. Foreign Actual Subsistence Expenses**

### **4.1 Authorized Rate**

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

### **4.2 Reimbursement of Actual Subsistence Expenses**

Authorization of actual subsistence expenses, in accordance with Paragraph 4.1 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.)

Per Diem = \$150 (\$100 for lodging; \$50 for M&IE)

Step 1:  $150 \times 3 = 450$

Step 2:  $450 - 50 = 400$

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

### 5.1 General

Paragraphs 5.2 through 5.5 below, provide policy for using and obtaining transportation services during all foreign travel.

### 5.2 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 Part 301-10, Subpart B](#). 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.

### 5.3 Use of United States Flag Ships

Requests to travel by ship must be authorized by the CASO, 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](#) and [301-10.181](#). 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.

### 5.4 Foreign Mileage Rates

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

### 5.5 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 collision damage waiver or theft insurance or both, in accordance with [FTR](#)

[§301-10.451](#), when the vehicle is rented or leased for foreign travel and 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

### 6.1 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 or miscellaneous voucher, as appropriate, 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 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 48 contiguous States, the District of Columbia and the States and areas defined under the term “Non-Foreign Area.”

**U.S. flag air carrier** – An air carrier holding a certificate under 49 U.S.C. 41102, but does not include foreign air carriers operating under permits. Also see 49 U.S.C. 40118.