

U.S. Department of the Interior

DOI TRAVEL NEWSLETTER

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IN THE NEWS

MWR Travel and Housing Manager Wins GSA Innovative Award

On Wednesday, June 28, 2006, the U.S. General Services Administration announced Midwest Region Travel and Housing Manager Gay Flynn as the recipient of the 2006 Travel Relocation Innovation Award for Honorable Mention. The award ceremony took place in Los Angeles, California. Ms. Flynn is responsible for overseeing the travel, relocation and housing program for the Midwest Region's 54 national park units. This GSA program champions innovators and promoters in the federal government who thrive in utilizing more innovative means to forge more results-oriented, cost effective travel and relocation programs and policy, accomplish world-class management of travel and relocation, and installation of travel and relocation best business practices while

expanding the use of E-Government in travel. Ms. Flynn was recognized for her development of a centralized, web-based travel and relocation program for the MWR.



Budget Adds Refueling Fee for Low-Mileage Rentals

Budget Rent A Car has started charging a \$9.50 refueling fee on all vehicles driven fewer than 75 miles. The charge is to cover renters who drive short distances and don't fill up their tanks before they return the vehicle because the gas gauge still reads "full." Some

customers have complained about being charged the fee even though they filled up the tank just before returning the car. Customers who fill up the tank before returning the car, should be prepared to present the gas receipt as verification to try to avoid the extra \$9.50 charge.

Airlines Enforce Excess Baggage Fees

Airlines have begun cracking down on overweight and oversized luggage. Anything over the 50 pound weight

limit (even a tenth of a pound) for luggage, will cost you an extra \$50 - \$100 in excess baggage fees. Most airlines allow two checked bags weighing 50 pounds each and measuring up to 62 linear inches each.

This means adding the height, plus width, plus length to get the total of 62 inches.

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Data Sources for DOI Travel Newsletter: Much of the travel industry information contained in this newsletter was obtained from public domain sources such as newspapers and the Internet, and was current at the time of publication. Travel industry information is provided solely for the use and information of DOI employees.

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Express Security for Frequent Travelers - Clear



Clear is a registered traveler program. After undergoing a security threat assessment performed by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), travelers are provided an ID card allowing them to speed through the security check area. The card includes a computer chip containing scans of the travelers' fingerprints and irises. The information stored on the card is matched to the traveler, who submits to a scan at the security gate. This program is operated by Verified Identity Pass, Inc., and is authorized and regulated by the operating airport and the TSA. Orlando was one of the first airports to implement this program. The cost to participate is \$80 per year. The cost is not reimbursable by the Government per GSA. One of the benefits of the program is getting through security at the airport faster and with less hassle. A second is you are less likely to be singled out for a secondary search of yourself or your carry-on bags. If you would like more information, please go to the Clear Website at:
<http://www.flyclear.com/clear.html>

Northwest Airlines Choice Seating Pilot

Northwest Airlines is testing a roomier seating pilot. The airline is charging an

extra \$15 per leg for certain seats—some aisle seats near the front of the plane and the exit row seats. The pilot applies this fee to 5% of Northwest's seats. "Choice seating" can be purchased through early check-in (within 24 hours) on the Northwest Website or through the Kiosk upon check-in. The kiosk will have a screen that opens asking the traveler if they would like to upgrade if any "choice seats" are available at check-in. GSA distributed policy stating this fee is not a reimbursable cost. GSA later commented the fee could be reimbursed by the Agency based on special needs.

Hidden Hotel Charges

The lodging industry is expected to generate over a billion dollars in fees and surcharges in 2006. Great rates should be verified by reading the fare rules to determine if there are add-ons. For example, in-room safe surcharges are not reimbursable. A cancellation must be in the best interest of the Department to have the cancellation fee reimbursed as well as early departure and arrival charges. Internet charges should be approved in advance of travel. Room service delivery fees and surcharges for housekeepers, bellhops and door concierge are considered part of your incidental expenses.

If you select a FedRoom hotel, change/cancellation fees are at no charge. Additionally, you can cancel or change anytime before 4:00 p.m. on the day of arrival without being charged. Some FedRoom hotels extend

this courtesy to 6:00 p.m. or later depending on market conditions. Many hotels are now requiring 24-72 hours to cancel or change without penalty. FedRoom hotels have also negotiated parking fees for hotels that typically charge a fee whether you have a car or not. GSA research revealed several hotels have included a parking charge for all rooms. This is a random charge that hotels are testing to expand profits. FedRoom hotels guarantee no in-room safe charges. Surcharges for housekeepers, bellhops and door concierge cannot be added on to a FedRoom hotel rate, however, it is considered courteous to tip them for their assistance.

Airlines Lose Luggage

Lost luggage is on the rise. A few reasons for increased loss are: increased number of travelers, airline budget cuts, backed up flights, and tighter inspections of luggage.

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DOI Policy Changes

Extension Granted for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

This FAM extends the expiration date from March 1, 2006, to September 30, 2006, for special provisions, unless extended or rescinded by the Office of Financial Management. These provisions, which went into effect after Hurricane's Katrina and Rita, were waived because finding lodging facilities and/or adequate meals was difficult, and the distances involved were great resulting in increased costs for per diem expenses.

<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fam06-02.html>

Revised Procedures for Authorizing and Processing Travel Vouchers of Senior Officials

This FAM revises policy for authorizing and processing travel vouchers for senior officials.

<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fam06-05.html>



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Travel of an Employee with Special Needs—Services of Attendants

This FAM clarifies existing authority to allow agencies to reimburse employees with special needs for expenses incurred for the services of an attendant while on official travel. Reimbursement for “services of an attendant traveling with an employee with special needs” is added to the FTR as a miscellaneous expense item.

<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fam06-06.html>

Conference Planning – Prepayment of Registration Fee

This FAM discusses advance payment of discounted conference fees to attend a conference or training seminar. The final rule also addresses situations when the traveler fails to attend the conference and identifies the circumstances when the registration fee must be collected from the traveler.

<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fam06-07.html>

E-Gov Travel Reminder

CW Government Travel is the single travel service supplier to the Department. CW Government Travel began servicing DOI over a year ago, on March 1, 2005.

The service included providing an online booking engine (OBE), called Get-There. Using a single travel agency increases data reliability and policy control, and is required by the Federal Travel Regulation.

Travel Profile Tips

Legal Name: Please use your “established” name when you create a profile or make reservations. The name on your reservation must match the name that appears on documents such

as your passport or your driver’s license. This simple practice will save you aggravation at the airport.

Charge Card

- If the travel arranger does not have a charge card, the “none” box should be selected in the profile.

- If the travel arranger has a charge card, the travel arranger and the traveler must both have a current charge card expiration date in their profile to reserve travel. Travelers must update their charge card expiration date in their profiles. Travel arrangers cannot change traveler information in the travel arranger profile.

- CWGT travel agents do not have access to profiles. When CWGT is aware of a charge card expiration date, an updated expiration date will be entered into the current trip record, but will not transfer to the profile. The traveler must enter the new expiration date in the profile.

Rental Car Option: The rental car in the profile defaults to the “2-4 doors” option. Alleviate frustration by keeping this option selected. There are very few rental car companies offering 2 door cars. Selecting anything other than “2-4 doors” limits rental car company displays, sometimes showing no available rental cars for a location.

Disconnected Users: Original profile sheets created through CWGT for disconnected users did not request a fax number. As a result, each time a reservation is made, the CWGT agent must request a fax number from the traveler/arranger to fax the itinerary and invoiced itinerary.

- **Personal Credit Cards:** Never enter a personal credit card number in your CWGT travel profile.

- **Emergency Contacts:** Always include emergency phone numbers and e-mail addresses in your profile. CWGT must be able to contact you if your flight is cancelled or your charge card could not be charged. Don’t cause yourself additional stress. If you only include your office or home information, and you are in a travel status, you may not become aware of issues until post-trip.

E2 Solutions Demo

View the demo for the new end-to-end travel system. Please click on the CWGT link:

<https://www.cwgt.com/default.asp?PageMode=ProfileOptions&AgencyIDPK=1194>

Purchasing Airline Tickets

The Department is a mandatory user of the GSA city-pair contract. Travelers on official business are required to use the contract carrier when one is available, unless a specific exception applies (41 CFR 301-10.107). This required use is the incentive necessary to obtain airline participation in the city pair program and allows the airlines the business volume necessary to offer discounted rates. If you do not use a city pair contract airline, and one is available, your reimbursement will be limited to the price of a ticket using the city-pair airline carrier. There are five exceptions for not using a contract city pair fare:

- Space or a scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of your travel, or use of contract service would require you to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs which would increase the total cost of the trip;

- The contractor’s flight schedule is inconsistent with explicit policies of your Federal department or agency with

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regard to scheduling travel during normal working hours;

- A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public, the use of which will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government, to include the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses;
- Rail service is available, and such service is cost effective and is consistent with mission requirements; or
- Smoking is permitted on the contract flight and the nonsmoking section of the aircraft for the contract flight is not acceptable to you.

Travelers may purchase a non-refundable flight, if one of the contract city pair fare exceptions applies, and their approving official authorized use of a non-refundable fare in advance. Additional costs or penalties incurred from unauthorized use of non-contract service are borne by the traveler. Travelers must know, or reasonably anticipate, based on the planned trip, that the ticket will be used, to avoid costly penalties. Consider and fully understand the airfare's applicable restrictions as well as change and cancellation penalties before accepting the itinerary. Such penalties are reimbursable only if your approving authority agrees that any itinerary change or cancellation was in the best interest of the Department. In the event of changed plans, cancellation and other penalties will be reimbursed provided that the cancellation or change was made for the convenience of the Department or was

necessitated by circumstances of an emergency nature affecting the traveler. The approving official must approve the costs.

If a traveler purchases a non-refundable airline ticket and is unable to travel on that ticket, the traveler must contact CWGT and cancel the ticket before the scheduled flight time. Failure to cancel the reservation before the travel date will make the unused ticket worthless. If the ticket is cancelled before the flight departs, the value of the unused ticket, in most cases, can be used toward the purchase of a new ticket to any destination that the airline flies.

Most airlines will charge you a \$100 reissue fee (except Southwest) and you must use the ticket within one year of the original date of purchase (except Northwest Airlines which only allows 90 days).

Process for Arranging Travel

DOI requires CWGT to offer GSA contract city pair fares first. If the traveler meets one of the exceptions (listed above), and the traveler requests a non-contract fare, the agent will abide



Whether a traveler/arranger plans a trip using the on-line booking engine (OBE) or the traditional travel agent service, the same process is followed.

OBE:

1. If available, the discounted contract city pair capacity controlled fare will

display first, also known as -CA. If a -CA fare is not available or does not exist for the city pair, the contract city pair fare (or YCA) fare is offered.

2. On the same screen, scroll down to see fully refundable non-contract city pair fares offered to the general public.
3. To include restricted flights in your search, select the "restricted/penalty" box on the initial booking page. The display will include -CA, YCA, refundable and restricted fares. It is extremely important to read fare rules prior to purchasing a ticket when this selection is made.

Traditional:

1. If available, the discounted contract city pair capacity controlled fare is offered, also known as -CA. If a -CA fare is not available or does not exist for the city pair, the contract city pair fare (or YCA) fare is offered. If a traveler refuses a -CA fare, a YCA fare is presented.
2. If the traveler asks an agent to look for a less costly fully refundable fare, if available, the agent will supply cheaper fully refundable flight offered to the general public.
3. Third, upon traveler request, the agent will provide restricted fares, and explain the fare rules.

Process for Flight Cancellations When a Traveler is in a Travel Status

Carlson will call every number in the travelers profile and e-mail every address in the profile. The emergency contact field is a required field in the profile.

- Traditional Agent Booking: The agent asks for an "after hours" number, and also refers to the information provided in the traveler profile.

- OBE booking: Relies only on information included in traveler profile.

When an airline cancels a flight, Carlson will be contacted depending on the time between the flight and the cancellation.

If the traveler is not in a travel status when a flight is cancelled, Carlson will

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call every number and e-mail every e-mail address in the traveler's profile in an attempt to inform the traveler.

Reissue vs. Exchanges

The Department is a mandatory user of the TMC (Carlson). The airlines continue to eliminate staff at the airport and expect travelers to use Kiosks.

When a traveler needs to make a last minute change to an issued ticket, the traveler will need to call Carlson to make the change. The traveler cannot use the OBE when travel occurs in less than 24 hours. Certain airlines require Carlson to re-issue tickets when changing flights after issuance: Alaska Airlines, America West, Delta, Hawaii, United, and Northwest. At this time, the other airlines will honor the original issued ticket, if routing, fare, etc. does not change. Carlson will receive a fine from the airline. If the change is not last minute, but is after the ticket has been issued, the traveler has the option to use the OBE to purchase another ticket. Calling Carlson or using the OBE prevents the traveler from standing in line and avoids potential fees that would later need to be resolved. Travelers have been denied boarding for not having an updated ticket or have been held up at the ticket counter and missed their flight.

Another option for last minute changes is to bypass the TMC. The traveler can go to the airport airline counter, or call the airline direct. This is where problems can arise. The airline gate agents are not always educated on the rules of Government travel. Six airlines charge a fee (ranges \$10 - \$20) to customers for changing tickets (Alaska Airlines, America West, Delta, Hawaii, United, and Northwest Airlines). Government contract city pair fares are not charged a fee for changing through the airline, but non-contract city pair fares are charged a fee. Some airlines also charge a "stand-by" fee, which should not be applied to contract city pair fares. The potential for a non-seasoned



traveler to receive a charge and/or stand-by fee is high. When the traveler submits a voucher with the extra charges, the traveler will take responsibility for these erroneous charges. Getting the charges removed will be time consuming. If Carlson did not participate in the change, they will not be responsible to correct the erroneous charges.

Here are some examples of what can happen:

Traveler 1: Purchased tickets using OBE (\$10.50). One business day before travel, traveler decides to change their issued ticket schedule. Traveler calls Carlson to make the change. Carlson re-issues ticket (\$24.50). Total transaction fee for this trip: \$35.00.

Traveler 2: Traditionally purchased tickets through an agent (\$24.50). One business day before travel, traveler needs to change their issued ticket schedule. Traveler calls Carlson to make the change. Carlson re-issues ticket (\$24.50). Total transaction fee for this trip: \$49.00.

Traveler 3: Purchased tickets using OBE (\$10.50). Ticket is issued on Friday for a trip on Tuesday. On Saturday, traveler is informed trip will extend one week longer. Traveler calls Carlson to cancel original trip. Traveler uses OBE to purchase a different flight (\$10.50). Ticket is reissued by Carlson. Total transaction fee for this trip: \$21.00.

Traveler 4: Traveler purchases ticket through OBE (\$10.50) or traditional agent (\$24.50). Traveler goes to airport, stands in line at airline counter,

and has ticket schedule changed. Airline Agent is not familiar with YCA, charges traveler fee to change ticket, and standby charge. Due to long lines at the airport, traveler misses expected flight, and has additional charges on travel charge card that need to be removed. Carlson was not involved with the change, and does not assist with removal of added charges. Traveler is frustrated and does not pursue removal of charges. Administrative fees that should not be charged become the responsibility of the traveler (approximately \$120).

Traveler 5: Traveler purchases ticket through OBE (\$10.50) or traditional agent (\$24.50). Traveler calls airline, and has ticket schedule changed.

Traveler is not charged any additional fees and glides through the Kiosk check-in without a hitch!

Although money might be saved with bypassing Carlson, the traveler can decide on how best to follow the "prudent traveler rule."

GetThere Pointers

Multiple Airport Option in OBE

Recently a traveler using the Online Booking Engine (OBE) selected Washington National Airport (DCA) on an outgoing flight and inadvertently selected Dulles International Airport (IAD) for the return. This traveler wasn't aware until the flight was in the air. The multiple airport option on the OBE continues to be a good idea. Although it took some time to get used to, show-



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ing costs at multiple airports does contribute to the Department's cost savings initiative. Travelers have opportunity to see the flight on the OBE, itinerary, and hear the flight announcement at the airport, and travelers should be aware of the flight destination prior to boarding the airplane.

OBE Simple International Trips

The Department requested that Carlson discontinue complicated international travel options in the Online Booking Engine (OBE), displaying only GSA city pair fares and simple international trips. Restrictions were placed on certain countries where it is considered complicated to arrange travel to prevent DOI travelers from possibly getting stranded or misdirected. A message appears on the OBE screen to call an agent when a traveler attempts to arrange a complex foreign trip. The restricted countries are those that do not have a GSA contract city pair fare. GetThere switches are built by country, not city. To accommodate Frankfurt, the whole country of Germany is turned on, including small towns in Germany. GetThere is available for all non-CONUS GSA city pair locations.

Traveler "TIP BITS"

If you are working on a cost comparison, there are several options and tools available.

The first option is to go to the GSA contract city pair fare site. Remember this site is ONE-WAY, so you will need to double the cost if you are going round trip.

<http://apps.fss.gsa.gov/citypairs/search/>

The second option is to use the OAG site: <http://www.fedtravel.com/gsa/>

The third option is to use GetThere, the Online Booking Engine. "Arrange" your trip, and when you get to the last screen, BEFORE you purchase, you will see pricing. DO NOT PURCHASE at that time! www.cwgt.com

Table 1

Month	BIA	BLM	BOR	FWS	MMS	NPS	OS	OSM	USGS
Jun 05	23%	54%	79%	61%	69	60%	35%	53%	72%
Jul 05	27%	26%	85%	65%	62%	58%	34%	49%	74%
Aug 05	21%	36%	86%	60%	66%	55%	34%	67%	68%
Sep 05	17%	41%	78%	53%	51%	46%	36%	80%	70%
Oct 05	22%	57%	79%	59%	44%	52%	35%	46%	72%
Nov 05	18%	68%	82%	65%	54%	56%	45%	66%	75%
Dec 05	21%	71%	78%	69%	67%	57%	33%	66%	74%
Jan 06	21%	64%	81%	67%	61%	60%	40%	68%	76%
Feb 06	22%	67%	83%	65%	66%	61%	44%	55%	73%
Mar 05	25%	65%	86%	67%	56%	63%	40%	66%	75%
Apr 06	28%	68%	87%	65%	62%	63%	39%	59%	74%
May 06	23%	57%	84%	64%	57%	61%	42%	59%	73%
Average	22%	56%	82%	63%	60%	57%	38%	61%	73%

The last option is to call an agent and request the information. We are not charged until a ticket is issued, so you will not be charged a fee. 1-866-227-5638.

Table 1 displays the percentage of tickets purchased through GetThere, the online booking engine (OBE). Note bureau percentages are influenced by: BIA: disconnected users; BLM: Fire fighter travel; OS: VIP travel and disconnected users; OSM: large volume of invitational travel.

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Table 2 illustrates the total number of tickets purchased (both online and by utilizing a Carlson travel agent).

Table 2

Month	BIA	BLM	BOR	FWS	MMS	NPS	OS	OSM	USGS	TOTAL
June 05	1047	1637	1121	1533	227	2007	1006	162	1690	10430
Jul 05	1199	2388	952	1399	249	1638	771	134	1638	10368
Aug 05	1042	1875	1049	1533	262	1709	985	111	1495	10061
Sep 05	864	1854	1205	1552	167	1595	883	98	1264	9482
Oct 05	941	1667	1384	1726	289	2461	918	153	2177	11716
Nov 05	852	1294	957	1137	259	1796	744	93	1281	8413
Dec 05	507	833	857	996	167	809	463	35	885	5282
Jan 06	913	1674	1233	1905	303	1645	823	120	1600	10216
Feb 06	957	1753	1133	1932	237	1653	856	129	1712	10362
Mar 06	1498	1920	1472	2278	353	2236	1023	158	2375	13313
Apr 06	1063	1657	1177	1454	340	1693	862	154	1934	10334
May 06	1050	1396	1246	1609	317	1552	863	190	1777	10000
TOTAL	11933	19948	13516	19054	3170	20794	10197	1537	19828	119977

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TMC Comments and Feedback Form:

<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/tmc/feedback.html>

DOI Travel Profile and SABRE/GetThere:

<http://www.cwgt.com/default.asp?PageMode=Profile&AgencyIDPK=721>

DOI Travel Policy:

<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/travel.html>

This newsletter is available on the Internet at:

http://www.doi.gov/pfm/travel_newsletter