

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### Per Diem

1. What is per diem?  
Per diem is the allowance for lodging (excluding taxes), meals and incidental expenses. The General Services Administration (GSA) establishes per diem rates for destinations within the Continental United States (CONUS). The State Department establishes the foreign rates (for example, Russia, Aruba, Bahamas, Europe, etc.). The Department of Defense (DOD) establishes non-foreign rates such as Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Guam. For more information on non-foreign rates, visit DOD's Per Diem, Travel, and Transportation Allowance Committee at <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/>  
Foreign rates can be found at [http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content\\_id=184&menu\\_id=78](http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78)
2. What is the difference between non-standard areas and standard CONUS locations?  
Non-standard areas (NSA) are frequently traveled by the federal community and are reviewed on an annual basis. Standard CONUS locations are less frequently traveled by the federal community and are not specifically listed on our web site. Currently, the standard CONUS per

not specifically noted on our web site. Currently, the standard CONUS per diem rate is \$116 (\$70 lodging, \$46 meals and incidental expenses).

3. How are the CONUS per diem rates set for NSAs?

Per diem rates for NSAs are set based upon contractor-provided average daily rate (ADR) data of Fire-Safe properties in the local lodging industry. The ADR is a travel industry metric that divides room sales rental revenue by the number of rooms sold of mid-range properties in a non-standard location. All rates are evaluated to ensure that they are fair and equitable in the GSA and Office of Management and Budget approval process.

4. How can a CONUS NSA receive a special review?

In order for GSA to conduct a "special" review of a NSA during the current fiscal year, a Federal Agency Travel Manager or an equivalent individual in grade or title must submit a signed letter on agency letterhead or stationery stating that the present per diem rate is inadequate. The request should contain the following information:

A. The geographical areas you want us to study, especially zip codes.

B. The property names (including addresses, zip codes, and rates) where your federal travelers stay while on temporary duty and those properties (including addresses, zip codes, and rates) that will not honor the federal lodging per diem rate.

C. The number of times actual expenses were used and/or federal travelers had to use another lodging facility to stay within the maximum allowable lodging per diem rate, which resulted in additional transportation expenses (rental car, taxi, etc) being incurred.

All valid requests postmarked no later than 12/31 will be eligible for this review. All valid requests received after 12/31, but before 4/1 will be evaluated during the following fiscal year's annual review cycle. After all the requirements are submitted, GSA will obtain updated data from our contractor to determine whether a per diem rate should be increased, decreased or remain unchanged. We will conduct no more than one "special" review for a particular NSA annually. Letters should be sent to: Per Diem Team Leader, Travel Management Policy (MTT), General Services Administration, 1800 F Street, NW Room G-219 Washington, DC 20405. You can also email your request (a signed letter on agency letterhead must be attached) to [jill.denning@gsa.gov](mailto:jill.denning@gsa.gov).

5. How can I request the establishment of a new NSA?

The procedure and the request deadline are the same as FAQ #4. However, requests received after 3/31 will not be included in the following fiscal year's annual review cycle because the annual review will have already begun.

6. What if a city is not listed on the CONUS Per Diem website?

If a city is not listed, check to ensure that the county within which it is

located is also not listed. On our website there is a link to the National Association of Counties which can help determine the county a destination is located in. If the city is not listed, but the county is, then the per diem rate is the rate for that entire county. If the city and the county are not listed, then that area is considered to be a Standard CONUS location which is currently \$70 for lodging and \$39 for meals and incidental expenses.

7. How often is a study conducted on the Meals and Incidental (M&IE) expenses?

A study is conducted every 3-5 years. In FY 09, a nationwide meals study was completed to more accurately reflect actual prices charged by restaurants in areas frequented by federal travelers. Based upon data received from more than 9,000 restaurants, the M&IE for FY 10 tiers will now range from \$46 - \$71.

8. Are lodging taxes included in the CONUS per diem rate?

Lodging taxes are not included in the CONUS per diem rate. As stated in the Federal Travel Regulation § 301-11.27 ([www.gsa.gov/ftr](http://www.gsa.gov/ftr)), in CONUS "lodging taxes paid by the federal traveler are reimbursable as a miscellaneous travel expense limited to the taxes on reimbursable lodging costs. For foreign areas, lodging taxes have not been removed from the foreign per diem rates established by the Department of State. Separate claims for lodging taxes incurred in foreign areas not allowed". However, some states and local governments may exempt federal travelers from the payment of taxes. For more information regarding tax exempt status, travelers should visit our website at [www.gsa.gov/perdiem](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem) and click in the "State Tax Exemption" link. This site contains the proper forms travelers may use to claim tax exempt status and other information. If a state is not listed on this site, travelers are to assume that they are not exempt from taxes.

9. How much per diem are you allowed without receipts?

For any official temporary travel destination, you must provide a receipt to substantiate your claimed travel expenses for lodging and a receipt for any authorized expenses incurred costing over \$75, or a reason acceptable to your agency explaining why you are unable to provide the necessary receipt (see FTR 301-11.25).

10. What is the meal reimbursement rate during the first and last travel day?  
On the first and last travel day, Federal employees are only eligible for 75 percent of the total M&IE rate for their temporary duty travel location (not the official duty station location). For your convenience, the per diem web page has a column showing the calculated amount for the "First and Last Day of Travel (75% of M&IE)."

11. What is included in incidental expenses?

Chapter 301, Part 301.2, in the Federal Travel Regulation ([www.gsa.gov/ftr](http://www.gsa.gov/ftr))

Chapter 300, Part 300-3, in the Federal Travel Regulation ([www.gsa.gov/ftr](http://www.gsa.gov/ftr)), under Per Diem Allowance, describes Incidental Expenses as: A. Fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel maids, stewards or stewardesses and others on ships, and hotel servants in foreign countries. B. Transportation between places of lodging or business and places where meals are taken, if suitable meals cannot be obtained at the temporary duty site. C. Mailing cost associated with filing travel vouchers and payment of Government charge card billings.

12. What do I do if there are no hotels available at per diem?  
Chapter 301-11.300 of the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) ([www.gsa.gov/ftr](http://www.gsa.gov/ftr)) states, "If lodging is not available at your temporary duty location, your agency may authorize or approve the maximum per diem rate of up to 300% of per diem for the location where lodging is obtained."
13. How much can a trucker deduct for meals per day?  
GSA establishes per diem rates, along with its policies for federal employees on official travel only. Truck related questions should be addressed either to the Department of Transportation ([www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov)) or the Internal Revenue Service ([www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)).
14. Do I receive a meal reimbursement for day travel away from my regular duty station?  
According to the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), travelers are entitled to 75% of the prescribed meals and incidental expenses for one day travel away from your TDY location if it is longer than 12 hours. Please see FTR Section 301-11.101. An electronic version of the FTR can be found at [www.gsa.gov/ftr](http://www.gsa.gov/ftr).
15. How much per diem can I pay a contractor?  
GSA establishes per diem rates and related policies for permanent federal travelers on official travel only, and therefore cannot address your specific inquiry concerning the payment of contractors. If the contractor is on a federal contract, check with the contracting officer to see what is stated in their contract. If they are not on a government contract, we recommend checking the travel regulations of your company.
16. Can hotels refuse to honor the per diem rate to federal government employees?  
Hotels are not required to honor the government's per diem rates. It is a business decision. Additionally, they may or may not extend the rate to other individuals such as government contractors.
17. Is the GOV rate the same as per diem?  
Instead of offering the per diem rate, hotels sometimes offer a "GOV" rate. This may be higher than the per diem rate in your TDY location and would therefore require approval for actual expense prior to travel. See the FTR

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Chapter 301, Subpart D-Actual Expense and follow your agencies guidelines.

## **Enter Address to Geocode**

Address

City

State

Country

Latitude

Longitude