

Guidelines for Getting Excursion Airfares Fare Approved

JFTR/JTR, Appendix O, paragraph T4020-B.4. states:

“It is ***mandatory*** that the traveler makes the official travel and transportation arrangements through the CTO.” (bold italics are as written)

JFTR/JTR, Appendix O, paragraph T4025-A.1. states:

“It is DOD ***mandatory policy*** that each traveler uses an available CTO to arrange official travel, including transportation and rental cars.” (bold italics are as written)

DOD Policy also requires the use of non-restricted GSA air fares whenever possible. GSA fares are not available on public booking sites such as Expedia and Travelocity. DTS is specifically designed to assist the traveler and SATO in meeting these travel requirements.

There are, however, instances where the use of restricted fares may be appropriate. NPS local policy permits the use of restricted, or “excursion” fares— if these conditions are met:

- If the use of an excursion fare will result in savings when compared to a regular government-negotiated fare.

The savings should be *material*. If the use of an excursion will result in only a nominal financial benefit, then the traveler will likely be asked to re-assess the request.

- If the traveler can attest that there is a *reasonably high probability* that the travel will occur.
- If the traveler obtains prior approval via email from the Deputy Comptroller

Here are the steps:

- 1) Look up the contracted fare in DTS.
- 2) If it seems high, look up the commercially available fare on similar days and flights on United.com, expedia.com, cheaptickets.com, or the like.
- 3) If the two figures seem significantly different, AND there is a reasonably high probability the traveler will make the trip, save each route and price estimate as a PDF file.
- 4) Send the two PDF files to Jack Shishido via email with the following request and details:

I would like to request permission to purchase an excursion flight for [person’s name] to travel to [place] on [dates, including year] as a participant presenter in our conference [event title; or list other purpose such as research or briefings].

Using the commercial fare [\$xxx] as opposed to the negotiated fare [\$xxx] will save the government a significant amount of money. Please see attached price quotes from the commercial site and DTS.

We have relatively high certainty that this participant will be attending our event based on [recent conversations and past reliability]. We and the traveler understand that purchasing this ticket is subject to change fees and that it is non-refundable.

Thank you for your consideration.

- 5) If Jack approves, save his email as a PDF.
- 6) Enter the itinerary for your traveler into DTS. Upload Jack's approval as a supporting document, as well as the commercial PDF file.
- 7) In the **Comments Section** of DTS, write: "Approval for excursion fare attached. Requesting SATO/CTO assistance in booking excursion ticket."
- 8) Work with SATO to book the ticket and then send the itinerary and e-ticket info to the traveler. Let him/her know you will need a receipt to reimburse change fees, if any.

FAQ:

Can we reimburse travelers for change fees?

Yes, we can, if we get receipts. Even with these fees, the total ticket will likely be significantly less than the contracted fare.

Does this apply to ITO travelers?

We can request excursion fares for ITOs and procure their tickets as noted above, and for other USG employees not based at NPS. Alternatively, ITOs can book their own tickets and be reimbursed up to an amount determined by SATO (receipt for ticket needed). If the "reimburse up to" rate quoted by SATO seems unreasonably low, ask about excursion fares.

Is cost savings the only consideration for approval of excursion fares?

No, special circumstances are subject to evaluation and may also be approved. When seeking such approval, be sure to provide a reasonable justification for your request.

What might constitute "reasonable doubt" to travel?

You might doubt a participant's commitment to travel as the result of reputation, high position, health issues, family circumstances, or communication with the traveler.

Why do we need to request early ticketing?

Unlike contracted fares, excursion fares increase as your trip date nears and can also fluctuate significantly day-to-day. You want to lock in the fare you downloaded, and for that to be done SATO has to procure the ticket at the time the reservation is made.

How will excursion fares be billed?

Since flights are ticketed and purchased right away, your government credit card will be charged at that time. As such, you will need to make payment in a timely manner, even if your travel is not completed, so that your CITI Bank Account does not become delinquent and/or suspended. You then claim the fare price as paid by "GCC" when you voucher off after your trip. For ITOs, the standard Centrally Billed Account (CBA) will be charged.