

Common Frequently Asked Questions

Q. I received an email from S&L Travel Corp., dba BTI The Travel consultants, regarding Safe to Go. Is this legitimate?

A. Safe to Go mobile application is available to University registered travelers; this is in addition to Concur. The Safe to Go app monitors your trip and provides immediate alerts as to delays, gate changes, weather issues, or safety concerns.

Q. When searching for the best price airfare, I am finding lower fares on other online sites.

A. When comparing airfare rates, Concur fares are live inventory that is available at that moment; online sites are showing what was available, not necessarily available now. Additionally, the Concur pricing that is showing is inclusive of all taxes and fees. The online sites show taxes and fees at the actual point of purchase.

Q. Is airfare purchased on the Concur or other online sites refundable?

A. Airfare purchased on the Concur site can be cancelled and refunded within 24 hours of purchase. Many of the online sites permit this also. After 24 hours, all airfare on Concur is able to be cancelled with a credit issued to the traveler's profile as an unused ticket. Unused tickets may be used for future travel, up to one year. When the unused tickets are re-issued, the airlines will deduct a re-issue fee. Online sites do not offer refunds or credits due to cancelled trips on standard fares.

Q. Our department has frequent guests and visitors. Do we have to book their travel through BTI or Concur?

A. University guests and visitors are encouraged to utilize BTI/Concur, but are not required to do so.

Q. When traveling to attend a conference, is it required to make the hotel reservations on Concur?

A. Exceptions for the use of hotel conference rates that are below what Concur can provide are acceptable.

Q. When in Concur, how can I shop for best price?

A. When in Concur, there are two options: Shop by Schedule / Shop by Fares. Select the Shop by Fares tab – all prices will list.

Q. How do I obtain my invoices for reimbursements when booking in Concur?

A. Travelers will receive emails from BTI after the tickets are issued, confirming the travel arrangements. Within this email, click on Itinerary/Documents, and a new window will open. Select the invoice number link; the transactions and fees are on this invoice. Also, sign up for electronic invoices on the Concur site so all invoices will be available on line.

Q. When making travel arrangements, it is not possible to book for multiple travelers. How can I do this?

A. Book the flight arrangements for one traveler, complete the transaction and make the purchase. Then go to the upcoming trip tab, select that trip. Select tools on the top menu and select clone trip. This will permit you to make travel plans duplicating the trip just made.

Q. If a traveler is using the per diem option for lodging, do they need to book the hotel through Concur?

A. Yes, the booking and payment of lodging are two separate processes. When staying in a hotel that is available on Concur, the booking should be done on Concur. Receipts will not be required when submitting reimbursements. Lodging that is not available on Concur such as Airbnb, independently owned motels or others, are not required to be booked on Concur.

Q. How are Per Diem Rates determined?

A. Find the city (or county if city not listed) and corresponding rates at these government sites:

- For travel within the contiguous United States (excluding Alaska, Hawaii), see [Domestic Per Diem Rates](#) on the U.S. General Services Administration web site.

Note: If the county in which you stayed is not listed, use the Basic Rate, noted at the top of the government page above the city and county listings.

- For travel in foreign countries, see [Foreign Per Diem Rates by Location](#) on the U.S. Department of State web site.

Note: If the location of your stay is not listed for the country selected, use the "Other" rate listed in the "Post Name" column (listed alphabetically). For an unlisted suburb of a listed "Post Name," use the "Other" rate, not the rate listed for the location of which it is a suburb.

Q. What is the calculation for Per Diem on the first and last day of travel?

A. Once you have determined the appropriate rate for the city or county visited and entered it in an expense report, the correct amount for the first and last day of travel, at 75% of the meals rate for the first day based on government listed rate for the city traveled to, and 75% of meals rate for the last day, based on the government listed rate for your place of business.

Q. What are deductions for meals included in registration fees and hotel charges?

A. When meals are included in conference registration fees or hotel rates, a deduction must be made from the applicable per diem rate. To determine the appropriate deduction amount by travel location, select **Meals and Incidental Expense Breakdown** from the [Domestic Per Diem Rates](#) page of the U.S. General Services Administration web site.

Example

A SU business traveler stayed in a Marriot Hotel in Chicago, Illinois. The cost of breakfast was included in the hotel rate. At the time of travel, the maximum daily per diem rate for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) for Chicago, Illinois was

\$64 (\$12 breakfast, \$18 lunch, \$31 dinner, and \$3 incidentals). Therefore the traveler would adjust the daily per diem rate to \$52 (\$64 - \$12).

Q. Staying longer than 30 days?

- A. Multiply the daily rate listed on the government sites by .55.

Note: When an individual's original estimated travel is for more than 30 days in one location, these reduced rates (.55 x listed rate) apply from the first day. When an individual in travel status at a location is granted extension to a trip originally estimated at less than 30 days, the 30-days-or-less rate applies for the first 30 days and the more-than-30-days rate applies from the 31st day through the end of the trip.

Q. What is allowable use of per diem and actual expense reimbursement for Athletic teams?

- A. Coaches may arrange for sit-down meals for the team (e.g., pre-game meals) in lieu of giving a meal allowance and are encouraged to secure the best possible rates. All sit-down meals must be supported by an itemized receipt showing the name of the establishment, the total cost of the meal, and the number of people served. In addition, a signed list must be submitted with the voucher identifying who ate the meal.

Coaches may also choose to provide a per diem instead of team meals. Student-athletes cannot receive a per diem that exceeds the rate provided to all institutional employees. Student-athletes are required to sign for the receipt of meal allowances.

Q. What does the Meals & Incidental Expenses per diem include?

- A. The Meals & Incidental Expenses (M&IE) per diem include meals as well as incidental expenses such as tips for services and laundry.

Standard Meal Allowance (M&IE) (Domestic Travel—48 States)

The term "standard meal allowance" includes incidental expenses. Incidental expenses include costs for laundry, cleaning, and tips for services.

Meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) combined will be reimbursed without receipts or other documentation of expense when using the standard meal allowance.

Standard Daily Allowance (Foreign Travel, Alaska, and Hawaii)

Lodging, meal and incidental expense per day allowances will be permitted in accordance with per diem rates as indicated in the federal publication, *Maximum Travel Per Diem Allowances for Foreign Areas*. Receipts or other documentation of expense are not required.

Q. When I use per diem Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE), what costs must I keep track of for my Expense Report? Which receipts are required?

Do retain receipts for the following:

- Conference registration fee,
- airline ticket,
- hotel bill,
- Internet bill,

- buses,
- trains,
- Parking fee if you parked your own car at the airport.
- ...anything not listed above as a qualifying M&IE

When using per diem, there is no need to retain receipts for:

- Meals,
- snacks,
- tips and fees,
- bellhops,
- baggage carriers,
- hotel maids
- **Not included:** Cab rides -- save receipts for these, so you can claim these expenses in addition to per diem.

Q. What are Incidental Expenses?

- A. Incidental expenses are fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, hotel staff, and staff on ships.

Q. What per diem rate do I use if the city to which I am traveling is not listed?

- A. if your destination, or the county that the destination is in, is not listed on the per diem site, the standard rate is to be used. The rates are \$89 for lodging, \$51 for meals, and the incidental applies.

If you are visiting a foreign country and the city is not listed individually, use the "other" per diem rate listed for that country.

Q. Where do I find the meal per diem for Alaska and Hawaii?

- A. Even though Alaska and Hawaii are part of the United States, per diem for those states are listed with foreign per diem and titled "Non-Foreign Overseas Per Diem Rates."

Q. Can I request a lesser amount than the established government per diem rate?

- A. Yes. However, you must still provide the information from the government link indicating the M & IE per diem rate for the city and then note that you are opting for lesser amount, which might be more in line with your actual expenses.

Q. If two or more employees in travel status dine together and one employee pays the bill, how is reimbursement handled?

- A. It is recommended that the employees' request separate checks or each employee claim their per diem and "work it out themselves" after being reimbursed.

Q. If I go under the allowable amount for lunch, can I spend more than the allowable amount for dinner?

A. If a traveler is in travel status long enough to qualify for more than one meal the total of all meals is considered rather than the individual amounts.

Q. If I go under the allowable amount for one day, can I spend more than the allowable amount for another day on the same trip?

A. No, each day is treated separately regarding the maximum allowable meal amounts.

Q. If I'm traveling overseas and have a long layover before continuing to my final destination, which city do I use for the first day's per diem rate?

A. The general rule is to use the city in which you have your first meal.

The per diem rate for the first and last day of travel is 75%, regardless of the length of the trip. This is consistent with the U.S. General Services Administration Federal Travel Regulations.

Q. When an employee's trip involves multiple cities (e.g. Chicago in the afternoon and London in the evening) what is the appropriate meal per diem rate?

A. They would claim the meal per diem for the city where they had the meal.

Q. What is the formula for computing a travel advance?

A. For U.S. Travel:
 $(\text{M\&IE Per Diem} \times \text{Number of Days}) + \100

For Foreign Travel:
 $[(\text{Estimated Lodging Costs} + \text{M\&IE Per Diem}) \times \text{Number of Days}] + \100

Q. Can I mix and match per diem and detailed receipt reimbursement for the same trip?

A. No. Only one method of reimbursement can be used per trip. If you choose per diem, you may decide to opt for a lesser amount after the trip.

Q. Is the cost of Internet included in per diem rate?

A. No. If it's itemized on your hotel bill, or billed separately, save the receipt: it will be reimbursed outside of the per diem rate. See above for more expenses for which you do not need to retain receipts.

Q. Is ground transportation part of the per diem?

A. Ground transportation, such as taxi fare, tolls, metro passes, subways, are not part of the per diem. Such expenses are reimbursed separately. The traveler should obtain receipts for ground transportation if at all possible. If a receipt is not provided, the traveler should retain any ticket stub. If absolutely no receipt or stub is available for ground transportation, the traveler should indicate the expense on the Travel Expense report and provide a detailed explanation of why a receipt is not available. If the amount is reasonable and the Travel

Expense Report is approved by the traveler's supervisor, the ground transportation expenditure will be reimbursed

Q. The conference includes a continental breakfast (rolls, juice, coffee). Can I eat a full breakfast elsewhere and claim the per diem?

A. Yes.

Q. Are there limitations on how the per diem can be spent?

A. The purpose of per diem is to reimburse employees a flat rate for travel related meal expenses. Broad discretion is granted to travelers on how and where the per diem is spent.

Q. While entertaining a non-employee (recruitment, fundraising, etc.) while in travel status, am I required to stay within the meal per diem allowance for my meal?

A. No. Higher expenses are permitted if employees are expected to entertain non-University business contacts as part of the purpose of the meal, such as for a meeting with donors or alumni.

Q. How often is a study conducted on the M&IE expense rates?

A. An M&IE study is conducted approximately every three to five years. In FY 09, GSA conducted a nationwide meals study, effective in FY 10, 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 tiers range from \$51-\$74.

Q. If the per diem rate for meals seems too low for the location, can I be reimbursed at a higher rate, exceeding the per diem (for Domestic & International)?

A. No, meal reimbursement is limited to the per diem rate. The GSA has an email process that allows users to provide feedback for regarding inadequate per diem rates. This information is considered when the rates are reviewed.

Q. My department claims I cannot use a per diem option, why not?

Academic or Administrative units may impose further restrictions or limit travel policy options within their areas.

Q. What's the rule on alcoholic beverages?

Alcoholic beverages purchased while traveling on university business are permitted. The costs of alcoholic beverages are unallowable to be charged to federal grants and contracts.

Q. Am I required to register with any sources prior to traveling internationally?

A. Yes, anyone traveling internationally is required to register with International SOS (ISOS), this is a University vendor that provides worldwide access to emergency medical, security, and travel assistance, as well as evacuation services, if necessary.

In addition, before traveling internationally for extended periods, travelers are required to register with STEP (Smart Traveler Enrollment Program). This is to allow the local embassy to contact the traveler in an emergency.

Q. What should I do if I'm involved in an automobile accident while using a University-owned or rented vehicle?

A. The following procedures should be followed in the event a University vehicle is involved in an accident:

When an accident occurs on-campus, contact the Department of Public Safety (711) or x2224 so that an accident report can be filed regarding the accident. Please also notify Risk Management of the accident at x5334.

When an accident occurs off-campus, contact the Police Department to file a report. Please make sure the Risk Management Department is notified and receives a copy of the Police Report (obtain the number of the Police Report). Complete the glove compartment accident report form (located in University owned vehicles) and send to the Risk Management Department. If you need to obtain more vehicle glove compartment accident report forms, please contact Michael DeHart (mdehart@syr.edu), Risk Management Department or call ext. 2804.

Obtain the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all witnesses.

Do not make any statement concerning the assumption of liability. Give out only that information required by authorities.

Report the accident to your supervisor. Failure to report an accident would be in violation of the University's Vehicle Safety Policy Procedures and also may jeopardize appropriate insurance coverages when liability is involved.

Forward a copy of the estimate to Risk Management prior to having repairs completed to a University owned vehicle.

In the event of an accident, the Risk Management Department shall coordinate any claims made by or against the University with the University's insurance carrier and the involved department or student group.

Any department or individual using a motor vehicle rented in the University's name is required to maintain and abide by the program measures indicated in Part IV as found on the Risk Management website http://eho.syr.edu/EHO/display.cfm?content_ID=%23%2BX1-%0A

Additional departmental procedures or policies for drivers of rental vehicles may be developed by department heads or chairpersons as they deem appropriate. The Risk Management Department may be consulted for advice relating to additional departmental procedures.

Q. When using my personal vehicle for business, is mileage computed from my place of business or from my home?

A. Mileage is computed from your place of business to your destination. The [mileage allowance](#) covers vehicle operating costs such as fuel, repairs, and insurance.

Q. May I buy a First Class airfare when traveling on University business?

A. You may not purchase First Class airfares for University business. However, it is possible to purchase coach/economy class fares and use your frequent flier miles to upgrade, if you choose. For flights with scheduled in air flying time in excess of six (6) continuous hours, upgrades to business class are permitted. On those flights where business class is not offered by the airline, first class is permitted.

Q. Do University-approved travel agents charge fees for their services?

A. Yes, our travel agents charge for services they provide.

Q. What about Faculty supervisors that do not have responsibility for sponsored projects?

A. Department Chair or designee needs to sign off.

Q. What happens if I use my University credit card, but want to do per diem?

A. Using the Travel credit card requires obtaining receipts and performing a reconciliation; then payments are made directly to JPMC. Therefore, if you use the Travel card, you cannot use a per diem option.

Q. Are travel advances issued in other than US dollars?

A. No, all are issued in US dollars; the traveler will need to convert the advance to the local currency.

Q. Am I required to use a preferred vendor hotel?

A. Travelers should choose convenient, safe and reasonably priced accommodations.

Q. When renting a vehicle, should I purchase or waive the Collision Damage Waiver (CDW)?

A. Enterprise and Hertz automatically include the CDW in the University rates. If the CDW is purchased, it will be paid utilizing a departmental operating chart string.

Q. What is an unallowable expense?

A. Mostly these are expenses that are considered personal and are not reimbursable. Examples are defined on page 16.

Q. What do I do if a receipt was not obtained or misplaced?

A. A detailed explanation of why a receipt is not available must be provided, including the date, place, amount, and explicit business purpose of each expense. This explanation must be signed and approved by the traveler's expense approver before charges will be reimbursed.