

Alternative Lodging Guide

The Commonwealth of Virginia (CAPP Manual 20335, pg. 17) states, "When lodging other than hotels and motels is used, apartments for example, a comparison statement including authorization by the Agency Head or designee must be submitted with the travel reimbursement. The comparison statement should show the total cost for using the alternate accommodations and length of contract, the cost of the alternative accommodations, and net savings."

* Because of concerns that these services are not regulated and do not protect users to the same extent as commercially regulated business, university employees choosing to use these services do so at their own risk.

Submit a Request

Requests for alternative lodging, described above, must be submitted for approval prior to making the purchase. A Travel Authorization, approved by the traveler's Authorized Approver/Supervisor and Fund/Org Approver, and a comparison statement must be submitted to the Travel Office at least **14 days prior to the trip start date**. The Controller's approval must be included with the Travel Reimbursement.

- Review all cancellation and prepayment policies that exist in order to determine the proper payment method for the alternate accommodation. (See Cancellation and Prepayment Policies below.)
- Send an email request to travel@gmu.edu explaining the circumstances, proposed payment method and alternate accommodations. Requests must include length of contract, the cost of the alternative accommodations, and net savings.

Cancellation and Prepayment Policies: Compared to traditional hotel and motel providers, who typically allow cancellations and refunds within 24 hours of arrival, alternative lodging providers may have stricter rules. In addition, alternative lodging providers typically require the traveler to pay for the entire stay well in advance of the travel date. For example, Airbnb, a popular apartment booking company, allows apartments to be listed with cancellation and refund policies that range from "Flexible" (most similar to a hotel/motel) to "Super Strict" (no refunds). Read more about the differences here:

- ✓ https://www.airbnb.com/home/cancellation_policies#flexible
- ✓ https://www.airbnb.com/home/cancellation_policies#moderate
- ✓ https://www.airbnb.com/home/cancellation_policies#strict

- ✓ https://www.airbnb.com/home/cancellation_policies#super-strict-30
- ✓ https://www.airbnb.com/home/cancellation_policies#super-strict-60

Travelers assume all risk when placing travel charges on their personal card or debit card. The university will not reimburse travelers for charges related to cancellations, no shows or travel insurance. Travelers may only seek reimbursed for lodging costs after the trip is completed. Travelers are discouraged from agreeing to any cancellation policy that does not provide a full refund if cancelled with one days' notice. If travelers choose accommodations that do not provide this flexibility, they must use a personal form of payment and wait to be reimbursed once the trip is completed.

Alternative accommodations that **do provide for a full refund when cancelled with one days' notice** may be purchased using one of the following payment methods:

1. Mason Travel Card (individual liability card)
2. Mason P-Card, temporary lift provided **for group travel only**
3. eVA purchase order, if accepted by the vendor **for group travel only**

***Group Travel:** Faculty and staff members who are supervising groups of students on university-sponsored activities such as forensics, athletics, music, etc.

For additional questions, please contact the Travel Office at ext. 3-2580 or travel@gmu.edu.