

# GAO Topic of the Month – September 2023

## Travel – Lodging on FedRooms

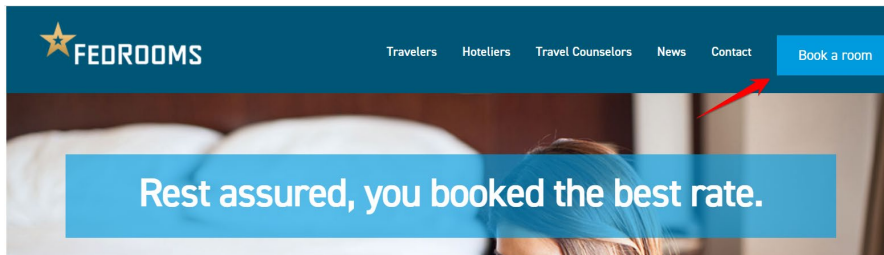


### Background

This month's topic is Travel – Lodging on FedRooms. FedRooms<sup>1</sup> is the official US government hotel program that is available for state employees traveling on official state business. A link is available on the Travel Information page of the GAO website. Its use is strongly encouraged for those who travel and for those who have a role in coordinating lodging arrangements for state travelers. FedRooms allows users to search and book hotel properties that meet government security regulations *at or below* the federal lodging rate. Searching for lodging establishments' government rates can take significant time and effort. FedRooms is a single source that can save agencies and employees significant time when researching and booking lodging for state employees traveling on official state business.

### Register for an Account

To be able use FedRooms, the user must first register for an account. This is a one-time process that can be accomplished in about 60 seconds. The FedRooms link is located on the Travel Information page of the GAO website and can be accessed directly at <https://www.fedrooms.com/home.html>. After going to the FedRooms website, click the blue box "Book a Room" in the upper right hand corner.



This will bring you to a second page where you can setup your user account. Simply click the "Create an account" icon, setup a user name and password.

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<sup>1</sup> The FedRooms.com and its online hotel-booking tool are security accredited by the U.S. General Services Administration.

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A screenshot of the FedRooms website's login page. At the top, there is an "Announcements" section with text about account creation and login. Below this is a "Please log in" section with a "Welcome! Log in to Get Started" heading. It contains two input fields: "User name" and "Password", both marked as required. There are "Forgot password" and "Log in" buttons. At the bottom of the login section, there is a "Create an account" link with a red arrow pointing to it. Below the login section is another "Announcements" section.

After creating an account, the user will use their username and password to log in.

Each user should establish their own account. A user can use their account to make reservations for others, but a payment card will be required. The use of FedRooms is restricted to state employees on official travel. FedRooms can not be used to book travel for personal travel or for non-state employees.

### Payment Methods

To book a room through FedRooms, account users can book lodging by using a state issued employee travel card (ETC), an agency issued central travel account (CTA/Ghost Card), or by using a personal debit/credit card. The online tool also allows for cancellations and modifications to reservations without having to contact the lodging property directly.

Lodging rates are always at or below federal rates. There are no additional fees, no booking fees, no hidden service or resort fees (unless the traveler asks for and uses the services), no early check out fees, free internet, and many properties also offer free breakfast and free parking. Cancellation policies can be as late as 4:00 p.m. on the day of arrival or later in the United States and 24 hours or less restrictive internationally.

### Benefits of Using FedRooms

FedRooms can be used for research to identify lodging options without having to actually book lodging. This can be helpful for staff who help support travelers and the travel process in order to identify lodging options and help those who actually book lodging.

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FedRooms can also be used to find and book lodging. FedRooms will email users reservation details at the time of booking confirming the reservation details and associated charges. FedRooms allows travelers/users additional flexibility, such as a generous cancellation policy, and free amenities. It provides comprehensive summaries of the costs so it is clear and transparent as to the cost of the room and the taxes/fees prior to completing the booking.

FedRooms also allows users/travelers the additional flexibility to make special travel requests at the time of booking. See the screenshot below for examples of special travel requests that can be made at the time of booking:

▼ **Special requests**

The hotel will be notified of your requests, but your selections may not be available at check-in. Please select up to three.

<input type="checkbox"/> non-smoking room	<input type="checkbox"/> king bed
<input type="checkbox"/> high floor	<input type="checkbox"/> low floor
<input type="checkbox"/> away from elevators	<input type="checkbox"/> away from ice machine
<input type="checkbox"/> hypoallergenic room	<input type="checkbox"/> wheelchair accessible
<input type="checkbox"/> smoking room	

### Conclusion

The GAO strongly encourages agencies, travelers, and those responsible for coordinating lodging for state employee travelers to register for and utilize FedRooms when searching for and/or booking lodging. The GAO uses this tool when researching travel exception requests. We have found rooms at or below the federal lodging rates which were either not available or available at a higher cost when searching the establishment's website directly.

FedRooms can save agencies significant time when coordinating travel arrangements and help agencies find lodging at or below the federal rate. While FedRooms may not have lodging in all places that state travelers need to stay, it is a great place to start. Travelers can still utilize other research tools and methods to research and obtain lodging at or below the current state reimbursement lodging rates.

### Resources

FedRooms - <https://www.fedrooms.com/home.html>

GAO Travel Information page - <https://gao.az.gov/travel/travel-information>