



JO VOICE: SPACE A TRAVEL April 2018

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The information below, developed by CDR Hobart Rogers in collaboration with the Junior Officers Advisory Group (JOAG), is designed to serve as an unofficial guide.

Questions/Responses

1. Can you please make this Space-A Travel process more understandable?

Space-A (space available) travel is a benefit (privilege) that allows Uniformed Services members and their dependents to occupy unused seats on DoD-owned or -controlled aircraft. These unused seats can be utilized (for free in most cases) to travel to various destinations. Please utilize the resources below to familiarize yourself with this benefit:

<http://www.amc.af.mil/Home/AMC-Travel-Site/>

www.spacea.net

www.takeahop.net

download MilspaceA app (note: there is a fee ~ \$7)

2. Can you advise step-by-step on how one goes to research, book, and board a Space-A Travel flight?

Familiarize yourself with the resources listed under question 1.

A step-by-step list might look as follows:

1. Identify flight(s) that you may be interested in taking.
2. Once you are on leave status, sign-up for Space-A travel (www.takeahop.com). Note you must remain on leave to utilize Space-A so take adequate leave. The amount of leave you request is ultimately up to you, but make sure you take adequate leave. I like to allow myself at least 5 days from the end of my trip to get back to my duty station, otherwise you may have to purchase last-minute commercial airfare to avoid being AWOL.
3. Proceed to the flight terminal and mark yourself present for said flight. You will need to have your leave slip (make copies), CAC card, copies of Space-A signup request(s), and Passport if traveling to a foreign country. I suggest arriving up to 2 hours before roll-call. Roll call will be listed on the flight schedule.
4. Park your car in long-term parking. The passenger terminal will assist you on where/how to do this.
5. Listen to roll-call to see if you've made the manifest. If so, follow instructions for going through security (same as TSA regulations) and get on the aircraft.
6. If not, try to find another flight to mark yourself present for and start over.

3. What are the best times for traveling and how likely is it to get on a flight with a family of four? Also, any information websites and tips would be appreciated.

Typically, the “best” times to fly Space-A are during the spring and fall. There tends to be more available seats because kids are in school. However, I should note that the “best” time is quite subjective depending where you would like to go and what the flight schedule for the next 72 hours is. Likelihood of flight depends on many variables, just know that there are no “sure” things in Space-A, but if you don’t try you’ll never succeed.

4. (A). My family and I go on Category (Cat) III AD Ordinary Leave. When competing for a return flight home, we are right on the cutoff line and the flight has seats available for only part of the family.

- (I). Can the family split itself?

No. Dependents must accompany their sponsor.

- (II). What happens if the sponsor flies first? Can the remaining family members compete for future flights and in what category?

See above.

- (III). Can the sponsor's spouse plus some kids fly first?

See above.

- (B). Regarding Cat IV and V unaccompanied dependents:

- (I). Are PHS Officers considered "deployed" to their normal duty stations?

No. For the purposes of Space-A, we are considered CATIII similar to the majority of other active duty officers.

- (II). Is there a PHS template or form to obtain Command Sponsorship for Cat V travel?

Not that I’m aware of.

5. I would like to know about Space-A Travel from Atlanta. There are military flights out of Atlanta, but I have been unable to identify Space A opportunities in the flights. Are there opportunities in Atlanta? If not, why are there no participating flights from Atlanta?

Military flights out of ATL are uncommon and are mission based. I’d recommend looking to other nearby bases (e.g. Charleston, Jacksonville) with more routine flight schedules.

6. What are the popular Space-A routes that PHS officers have traveled in which they did not encounter major problems/delays?

Military members utilize Space-A flights to travel across the globe every day. Officers have traveled to many destinations including Germany, Italy, Spain, Korea, Japan, Hawaii, and many others. Delays and problems will occasionally happen, but you learn as you go. Remaining flexible is important. Space-A is ultimately a risk/benefit

proposition. Risk/benefit is a personal decision. Please utilize the resources listed above in question 1 to educate yourself to better inform your decision making.

7. Are your immediate family members allowed to travel with you on Space A Travel?
Yes, if they are considered a dependent (i.e. registered in DEERS). Note, dependents over 10 years of age will need a military ID. For dependents under 10 years of age a copy of the birth certificate or social security card will suffice.

8. I have heard mixed things about traveling with kids on Space A flights, what are your thoughts?

While I haven't personally traveled with my own children on a Space-A flight, I would have no problem doing so. In some ways, Space-A might be better for children as there might be more things to keep them distracted and sometimes more room to spread out. I know plenty of officers who have traveled with kids and I've witnessed children on numerous flights. Of note, delays can be longer than with commercial airlines, so plan accordingly (e.g. bring snacks, games, clothing, etc....).

9. Is it difficult to get to international countries, specifically, Japan? If so, is it flexible on dates? I have heard you need to be willing to be flexible on location (i.e. be happy spending time in a number of countries).

You can definitely travel to Japan via Space-A. Aircraft are going back and forth between our military bases every day. Mission requirements will determine the flight schedules. In my opinion, the best way to utilize Space-A is to be flexible on the destination and go where the flights are, rather than try to go where you desire.

10. How would I be able to travel to Korea or Japan from New York City using Space-A Travel?

You would most likely not be able to fly from NYC to Korea or Japan by Space-A as NYC is not a typical area where flights to Korea/Japan originate from. From NYC I would look to fly commercial airfare or find a nearby (e.g. McGuire AFB) Space-A flight to SEATAC and take the more routine patriot express flights to Korea/Japan. Note there are other routes that can take you to Korea.

11. How do you "sign up" and follow flight information without using Facebook?

You can sign-up with www.takeahop.com, the MilSpaceA app, or by emailing the bases you plan on flying from. You can also find out about flight information by calling the terminals and listen to the flight recording. You do not have to have a Facebook account in order to see the flight schedules posted on Facebook.

12. Can parents that are claimed as dependents participate in Space-A Travel without the active duty officer present? If so, how does it work?

No. Dependents are not allowed to travel Space-A without the sponsor, except in extreme circumstances (OCONUS deployments greater than 120 days).

13. What are the requirements needed for Space-A Travel for an active duty officer? What is the process?

The main requirement is that the officer be on and maintain leave status. See the response to question 2 for more details about the process.

14. If officers leave the service before the required 20 years of service, are they still eligible for Space A travel? If so, how does the process work? (I was told officers are still in Active Status within 60 days of leaving the service.)

No. Space-A is only available to active duty officers and full retirees.

15. What documents do we need to bring to the passenger terminal? (For example, documents for dependents, proof of leave status, etc.)

See the response in question 2.

16. When can we sign up for Space-A Travel?

12:01AM and thereafter the first day of your leave.

17. What can and should you bring on the plane? What is not allowed on the plane?

The same TSA rules apply for Space-A. In addition, open-toed shoes or high heels are not allowed. You are allowed two pieces of checked baggage < 70lbs each + a carry on. Some aircraft may limit you to baggage < 30lbs to pack wisely. I recommend dressing in layers as the temperature on different aircraft can vary considerably.