American Forces Travel –   
Strategic Communications and Marketing Plan

# Overview

American Forces Travel℠ is a new Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) program arising from a joint-service initiative combining the efforts of each of the five branches of service (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy) and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Military Community & Family Policy.

Because the internet is now the most popular way to research and book travel, the Department of Defense chose to evolve its travel offering. MWR has contracted with a world leader in travel, Priceline®, to deliver high value travel benefits to the U.S. military and DoD community. A key feature of American Forces Travel℠ is pricing. Priceline® negotiates rates that are typically only available alongside “hidden” features: you can book a hotel room on Priceline® at a discount, for example, if you do so without knowing the name of the hotel up front. American Forces Travel℠ goes a step further. Those negotiated rates are available on American Forces Travel℠ with full visibility to eligible members. It’s the best of both worlds.

While there are many for-profit online leisure travel offerings marketed to the military today, American Forces Travel℠ is the only official DoD online program. American Forces Travel℠ proceeds will support MWR programs for the military community.

American Forces Travel℠ provides free access to the site for those who have served their country.

**Resources:**

American Forces Travel Branding Guide

American Forces Travel Marketing collateral and logos

<https://www.navymwr.org/resources/marketing/aft>

American Forces Travel Website: <https://www.americanforcestravel.com/>

**Eligible Patrons:**

* All current active-duty military personnel (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy)
* All members of the Reserve components and National Guard
* All retired military personnel, including those in the Reserves and National Guard who are retirement eligible
* All Medal of Honor recipients
* All Department of Defense civilians serving outside the United States, including appropriated funds (APF) employees and non-appropriated funds (NAF) employees
* Employees with current Navy Exchange privileges
* American Red Cross and United Service Organizations (USO) personnel currently serving outside the United States
* All eligible family members who are officially sponsored (ID card holder) by patrons in the above categories
* All Department of Defense civilians serving within the United States, including appropriated funds employees and non-appropriated funds employees – **Coming Soon**
* All Coast Guard and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) civilians, including appropriated and non-appropriated fund employees – **Coming Soon**
* Coast Guard Auxiliary – **Coming Soon**
* American Red Cross and USO personnel currently serving within the United States – **Coming Soon**

**Objectives**

* Increase awareness of the American Forces Travel program and its website to eligible patrons through various communication channels worldwide
* Develop strong brand name recognition and loyalty among customers
* Enhance web traffic to www.AmericanForcesTravel.com
* Provide consistent messaging and marketing across the Navy enterprise
* Outline the components of product launch
* Produce a playbook of tools and guidelines for all services to use at the installation level for promoting the program to patrons

**Strategic Intent**

1. Provide a solid customer journey to American Forces Travel
2. Communicate product value and benefits to all eligible patrons
3. Cast a wide distribution net of communication materials to ensure profitable notoriety
4. Provide travel value to which eligible patrons can commit

**Launch Plan**

The marketing of the program will be in phases:

1. Soft launch – November 2018; to selected test locations
2. Full launch –Jan. 22, 2019 – All Navy installations
3. Upon DoD approval, launch veteran and civilian access to the site – TBD
4. Campaign launch as new product lines become available

**Strategies**

**WEBSITE INTEGRATION**

* Add website banner (where applicable) or online advertisement that introduces the new program with a link to the AFT website
  + **hyperlink:** [**www.americanforcestravel.com**](http://www.americanforcestravel.com)
  + AFT banner should run consistently: Jan. 22 – April 30

**EBLAST/ENEWSLETTER**

* Include American Forces Travel in all monthly public e-communications subscriptions
* Include link and call-to-action in all inclusions
* Messaging:
  + “Visit www.americanforcestravel.com <http://www.americanforcestravel.com> to get started.”

**POINT OF SALE MATERIALS**

* Share marketing material with all Exchange command
* Provide AFT marketing collateral when possible
* Possible: Event collaboration with local Exchange coinciding with AFT sign-up event
* AFT marketing/logo included on POS machines (where applicable)

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

* **Hashtags:** While hashtags may be used on most social media platforms – they are most commonly used on Twitter and Instagram – this does not exclude their use on Facebook. All posts will incorporate to the best ability the following hashtags:
  + #AMERICANFORCESTRAVEL
  + #WHERETO
  + #LETSGO
* **Messages for Social Media Posts:**
  + Booking leisure travel at a deep discount is now simple. #AMERICANFORCESTRAVEL offers valuable member pricing for the DoD community – up to 60% off hotels! Visit www.americanforcestravel.com <http://www.americanforcestravel.com> to get going. #LETSGO
  + Booking leisure travel at a deep discount is now simple. #AMERICANFORCESTRAVEL offers valuable member pricing for the DoD community – up to 80% off cruises! Visit www.americanforcestravel.com <http://www.americanforcestravel.com> to get going. #LETSGO
  + Exclusive travel rates at your fingertips. #AMERICANFORCESTRAVEL your new unique trip planning tool backed by MWR. Visit www.americanforcestravel.com <http://www.americanforcestravel.com> to get going.
  + #LETSGO on an adventure with #AMERICANFORCESTRAVEL, MWR’s new online travel booking platform. Exclusive rates on flights, hotels, car rentals, cruises and more. Visit www.americanforcestravel.com <http://www.americanforcestravel.com> to get going.
  + #AMERICANFORCESTRAVEL makes booking leisure travel simple for the DoD and military community. The only question to ask is #WHERETO? Visit www.americanforcestravel.com <http://www.americanforcestravel.com> to access the best deals available.
  + Travel the world with #AMERICANFORCESTRAVEL. Active military and spouses can access discounted rates via www.americanforcestravel.com <http://www.americanforcestravel.com> #LETSGO
* **Links to use for Social Media** 
  + Facebook: [https://www.americanforcestravel.com/?refclickid=navyfb](https://webmail.east.nmci.navy.mil/owa/redir.aspx?C=S2akVrIMVdjGpo03eYBnfCYl6P_rceruX_4mnWuQPD_b0kRf_XvWCA..&URL=https%3a%2f%2fwww.americanforcestravel.com%2f%3frefclickid%3dnavyfb" \t "_blank)
  + Twitter: [https://www.americanforcestravel.com/?refclickid=navytwitter](https://webmail.east.nmci.navy.mil/owa/redir.aspx?C=auxFSVxdkCo4hDFYKZDyrXUa-k6yBaTwLgF7WqSJD1Hb0kRf_XvWCA..&URL=https%3a%2f%2fwww.americanforcestravel.com%2f%3frefclickid%3dnavytwitter" \t "_blank)
  + Email: [https://www.americanforcestravel.com/?refclickid=navyemail](https://webmail.east.nmci.navy.mil/owa/redir.aspx?C=08rz3XX2X91dRTURjMAcPGBllDNxZg5GoLaapW873w_b0kRf_XvWCA..&URL=https%3a%2f%2fwww.americanforcestravel.com%2f%3frefclickid%3dnavyemail" \t "_blank)
  + Instagram: <https://www.americanforcestravel.com/?refclickid=navyinstagram>
* **Message for Social Media Responses:** 
  + Hi [customers name]. Thank you for your (comment/feedback/question). Please visit www.americanforcestravel.com <http://www.americanforcestravel.com> for more information.
* **Action(s):**
  + Post engaging, shareable content, at least, once per day
  + Local offices share one post from HQ page twice a week
  + Include link on all social media posts
  + Link:
  + Only use the provided messages for social media

**DIGITAL MARQUEES**

* Run digital signage (static/video) on all MWR/promotion digital monitors where applicable
* Promotion should run for no less than 15 seconds
* **Digital Marquee Resources:**
* Animation: <https://www.navymwr.org/resources/marketing/aft/aft-collateral/aft-video>
* Static Promotions: All promotional material is cleared for use on digital marquees
* Short Video: <https://www.navymwr.org/resources/marketing/aft/hard-launch-marketing/video-promotion>

**BASE THEATER TRAILER**

* Run promotion (static/video) on all applicable movie screens
* Promotion should run for no less than 15 seconds.
* **Base Theater Resources:**
* Animation: <https://www.navymwr.org/resources/marketing/aft/aft-collateral/aft-video>
* Static Promotions: All promotional material is cleared for use on digital marquees
* Short Video: <https://www.navymwr.org/resources/marketing/aft/hard-launch-marketing/video-promotion>

**POINTS TO NOTE**

* DISCONTINUE USE OF MARKETING MATERIAL CONTAINING DOD SEAL.
* CNIC will produce and distribute all marketing materials for the American Forces Travel program.
* Local production of marketing materials is prohibited until further notice.
* Marketing materials locally produced must be sent to [janay.powell@navy.mil](mailto:Janay.powell@navy.mil) for review and approval.
* Use internal communication resources to encourage support by all hands.
* Employ all relevant and effective marketing tools, including digital signage, flyers, information cards, posters, information fairs, etc.
* Direct all inquiries regarding American Forces Travel to the local Navy MWR Tickets and Travel offices or [www.americanforcestravel.com](http://www.americanforcestravel.com/).

**Talking Points and Program Highlights**

* Flights
  + Real-time confirmation
  + Multiple fliers for different searches
  + Booking and change fees waived
  + Frequent flyer miles earned
  + Seat selections with partnered airlines
  + Insurance available through Allianz
* Hotels
  + Various discount and payment options
  + Ability to accommodate large groups (great for retiree reunions)
  + User-friendly search filters
  + Instant confirmation
  + Waived cancellation fees
  + Insurance available through Allianz
* Car Rental
  + Most major brands worldwide
  + Most reservations can be cancelled
  + Prepayment options available for additional savings
  + User-friendly search filters
  + Ability to link flight information with rental
  + SMS text messaging prior to arrival
  + Loyalty options available
  + Collision insurance available through Allianz
* Cruises
  + AFT member only pricing
  + Waived processing fee
  + Additional military extras such as upgrades, onboard amenities, spa credits or ship gift cards
  + 24/7 Helpdesk
  + User-friendly website
  + 110% price guarantee
  + Transfer of cruise rewards points

**Marketing Point of Contact**

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**Appendices:**

* Possible Questions and Answers

**Appendix X: Possible Questions and Answers**

1. ***Who is the vendor providing this new MWR online leisure travel service and how was it selected?***
   1. Priceline Partner Network (PPN), a division of Priceline.com, was selected after a competitive bid process.
2. ***What is the name of this new MWR online leisure travel service?***
   1. The name of this new service is American Forces Travel.
3. ***Why are we providing this new MWR online leisure travel service?***
   1. Currently, MWR’s only leisure travel services are provided through on-installation programs that require patrons to visit the office. We estimate that by only offering in-office services, we are capturing only 2 percent of the available market. The new online service will target the remaining 98 percent.
4. ***Who is eligible to participate in American Forces Travel?***
   1. Currently, all active-duty military, retirees, Reserve and National Guard, retired military, OCONUS civilians and eligible family members are eligible to participate. The program directors are working to include CONUS civilians and veterans.
5. ***What travel products will be offered when American Forces Travel is operational? When is the anticipated start date?***
   1. Airline, hotel, rental car and cruise services will be part of the initial offerings. Other products will be added as the program grows and advances. The program held a soft launch on Nov. 1, 2018, and will go live on Jan. 22, 2019
6. ***How does the validation process work to determine patron eligibility?***
   1. Patron eligibility will be validated through the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS).
7. ***If there is a problem with validation, or an eligible patron is denied access, who does the patron contact?***
   1. The initial online registration process will provide specific instructions and contact information to eligible patrons who are incorrectly denied access.
8. ***Will there be one website for everybody to access or will each service have a unique website?***
   1. There is a single online MWR leisure travel portal for all patrons, www.amercainforcestravel.com.
9. ***Will there be 24/7 travel agent support for customers during the booking process and continued support during the customer travel process in case problems arise with reservations during the trip?***
   1. Customer service agents will be available 24/7, both during and after the booking process.
10. ***Will American Forces Travel offer airline tickets that originate outside of the U.S. or those that are completely overseas?***
    1. Yes.
11. ***Will travel insurance be offered that covers military trip change contingencies?***
    1. Travel insurance is available for purchase with Allianz.
12. ***Is American Forces Travel going to be available in all countries?***
    1. Yes.
13. ***Does American Forces Travel offer a “best value guaranteed” feature?***
    1. PPN offers a “best value guaranteed” policy that is comparable to other industry providers.
14. ***Will American Forces Travel be available for booking official travel, as an alternate for Defense Travel Service (DTS)?***
    1. This program is not a substitute for, nor is in any way related to, the DTS.