



# Relocation & Travel

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## Introduction

In this document, we describe our relocation and travel policy, which we created in line with our continued commitment to Spooner freedom and responsibility.

The document begins with an explanation of the principles behind our approach, and some other pertinent information. Next, we discuss the case of a Spooner who relocates to the benefit of Bending Spoons, and the support we provide them with. We then detail the support we offer to a Spooner who requires a residency permit. We end the document by addressing the issue of Spooner travel, providing examples of travel that would and wouldn't be eligible for receiving support.



Unless otherwise specified, **the benefits detailed in this document apply to fixed-term, intern, and permanent Spooners.**

## Principles and general information

Rather than imposing lots of detailed rules or fixed expense budgets for relocation and travel, **we trust each Spooner to act in the company's best interests, making the most efficient use of its resources.** In many cases, this means electing to go for the less costly choice. However, we're also happy to finance an expense that's higher than would be typical or expected—provided that it's in the company's best interests to do so.

When making such judgments, a Spooner may find it helpful to ask themselves the following question: **"If I were tasked with running Bending Spoons and another Spooner generated this expense, would I consider it an efficient use of company resources?"** The answer they arrive at should provide a suitable guide in most cases.

Although we favor empowering the Spooner by electing not to impose lots of detailed rules or fixed expense budgets, we recognize that ambiguity can be stressful. As such, **we provide several guidelines in this document to aid the Spooner with their decision making.** These guidelines aren't exhaustive.

Where relevant, **the Spooner is assigned either a relocation support buddy or a travel support buddy from People Operations, or a residency permit support buddy from People Administration.** The Spooner should turn to their assigned buddy for help, including when they have any questions.

**The Spooner is free to deviate from these guidelines when they determine in good faith that doing so is the most appropriate action.** Again, it's up to the individual to make such judgments. If the deviation is significant, we recommend that they first consult their assigned buddy.

**The support we provide entails Bending Spoons bearing expenses on behalf of the Spooner.** Barring cases of fraudulent behavior, we never ask the Spooner to reimburse us, even if they leave the company soon after generating the expense.

**We periodically audit a sample of relocation and travel expenses.** In the process, we might ask a Spooner for their rationale behind generating a particular expense. If a relocation or travel expense appears to be wasteful, we give the Spooner constructive feedback about their use of the company's resources. Barring cases of fraudulent behavior, that's the end of the matter.



When the company finances a Spooner's relocation or travel expenses, this can qualify as a form of compensation and trigger certain taxes, including personal income and social security taxes. If so, **Bending Spoons pays the relevant taxes on behalf of the Spooner.**

**We're committed to making the necessary accommodations for anyone who has a legitimate need for them,** such as people with disabilities.

The Bending Spoons HQ is located in Milan, Italy, and is, at present, our only office. Nevertheless, in this document, we refer to a Spooner's *primary office*. We do so to make it easier to support multiple offices in the future.

Additional resources, including guidelines on how to book travel, are available on the People Operations page.

## Relocation

### Eligibility criteria

Our relocation package (detailed below) is intended to lessen the stress and financial burden on a Spooner who is relocating to the benefit of Bending Spoons.

**We generally consider a Spooner's relocation to be to the benefit of Bending Spoons in either of the following two cases:**

- **The Spooner is relocating to be much closer to their primary office,** with the intention of spending considerably more in-person time with colleagues in and outside of that office. For example, a Spooner whose primary office is in Milan and who is relocating to northern Italy from another country would be eligible.
- **The Spooner is relocating to pursue a company objective.** For example, they're relocating to Japan to open a new company office there.

When a Spooner relocates to be much closer to a *non*-primary office, the relocation isn't considered to be to the company's benefit. Therefore, we probably wouldn't provide support for such a relocation. At any rate, **all relocations are assessed on a case-by-case basis.**



Within reason, a **Spooner can leverage the benefit for multiple relocation events during their tenure with us**. For example, the Spooner may use the benefit to move from Canada to Bergamo in northern Italy, and then again a couple of years later to move from Bergamo to Milan.

## Buddy

People Operations supports the Spooner with matters related to relocation, except for those detailed in [Residency permits](#) below (which are handled by People Administration). **A People Operations team member is assigned to the Spooner as a relocation support buddy.**

## Package

The relocation package consists of the following:

- **Coverage of reasonable transportation expenses for the Spooner, their close family members, and their pets.** The transportation options selected should strike a reasonable balance between cost and comfort, as detailed below in [Practical guidance](#).
- **Coverage of reasonable temporary accommodation expenses for the Spooner, their close family members, and their pets.** We can finance a stay of *up to three months* in temporary accommodation.<sup>1</sup> We encourage the Spooner to stay at a partner residence, as doing so helps us achieve superior cost and tax efficiency. Where this isn't a viable option, we're open to reasonable alternatives.
- **Coverage of reasonable moving expenses.** These expenses include the cost of packing and shipping the Spooner's belongings, moving insurance, customs duties, and temporary storage and vehicle rental. However, we don't coordinate these things on the Spooner's behalf. For convenience, we recommend they engage the services of a moving company.
- **[Test] Support in finding permanent accommodation.** We're testing a service that provides assistance to the Spooner in finding permanent accommodation. Currently, this service is only available to a Spooner who is relocating to be close to the Milan office.

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<sup>1</sup> We deliberately use *up to three months* rather than, for example, *up to 90 nights*, as it allows for a degree of flexibility. A stay of 92 nights will likely be fine, but a stay of 120 nights probably won't.



- **Support in gaining and renewing the necessary residency permits for the Spooner and their close family members.** See [Residency permits](#) below.
- **Coverage of temporary health insurance expenses for the Spooner and their close family members.** When relocating to a new country, those involved may temporarily lack the appropriate health insurance coverage. We're happy to propose a solution and finance the cost.
- **Support in dealing with the other relevant bureaucracy.** This support may include getting a SIM card, setting up utility contracts, opening a bank account, and so on. Rather than being financial, this support extends to matters like identifying and evaluating options, and supporting the Spooner in dealing with the paperwork involved (if needed).

If the Spooner requires additional help, they should refer to their relocation support buddy.

## Practical guidance

**Bending Spoons offers the relocation package listed above, always aiming to strike a reasonable balance between cost and comfort.** No Spooner is expected to endure serious inconvenience just to save the company a few bucks, but neither should they use the company's resources inefficiently.

**The following are some relevant practical guidelines:**

- **Flights.** Plane tickets should be economy class.
- **Taxis.** It's fine to favor a taxi over public transportation if the latter is substantially less convenient, particularly if the Spooner has a lot of luggage or faces time pressure.

**We encourage each Spooner to use TravelPerk to book and pay for their travel directly. We recommend that the Spooner ask their relocation support buddy to assist with selecting and paying for any significant additional expenses, such as those for transportation not covered by TravelPerk, temporary accommodation, moving, and temporary health insurance.** This method reduces the logistical burden on the Spooner and simplifies the company's administration.

**With expenses that Bending Spoons doesn't pay for directly, the Spooner can either pay and request a reimbursement, or they can estimate the cost, request a preemptive reimbursement, and then proceed with the payment.** In some cases, we might be able to temporarily provide the Spooner with a company credit card. Once again, their relocation support buddy will assist.



We proactively offer relocation support to a new Spooner who has yet to start working at the company. **A current Spooner seeking relocation support should open a ticket in *#people-operations-requests* on Slack.**

## Residency permits

### Eligibility criteria

When, and only when, a Spooner relocates to the benefit of Bending Spoons (as defined in [Eligibility criteria](#) above), we provide assistance related to residency permits.

### Package

Our support includes the following:

- **Coverage of reasonable expenses related to *gaining* and to *maintaining* the residency permits for the Spooner and their close family members.** This coverage is also extended to a Spooner who wishes to pursue citizenship, where applicable. Reasonable expenses include the cost of retaining appropriate expert counsel, such as an immigration lawyer.
- **Support in identifying the appropriate expert counsel (including an immigration lawyer) and dealing with the paperwork.**

### Buddy

People Administration supports the Spooner with matters related to residency permits. **A People Administration team member is assigned to the Spooner as a residency permit support buddy.**

### Practical guidance

**We recommend that the Spooner ask their residency permit support buddy to assist with selecting and paying for the appropriate expert counsel (including an immigration lawyer).** This method reduces the logistical burden on the Spooner and simplifies the company's administration.



**With expenses that Bending Spoons doesn't pay for directly, the Spooner can either pay and request a reimbursement, or they can estimate the cost, request a preemptive reimbursement, and then proceed with the payment.** In some cases, we might be able to temporarily provide the Spooner with a company credit card. Once again, their residency permit support buddy will provide assistance.

We proactively offer residency permit support to a new Spooner who has yet to start at the company. **A current Spooner seeking residency permit support should open a ticket in *#afl-requests* on Slack.**

## Travel

### Eligibility criteria

**A Spooner traveling to the benefit of Bending Spoons may receive travel support.** In the following scenarios, we generally consider the Spooner's travel to be to the benefit of Bending Spoons:

- **The Spooner is traveling to pursue a business objective for which traveling is critical.** For example, the Spooner may be going to meet a potential investor who we expect to respond favorably to an in-person meeting.
- **The Spooner is traveling for a company activity or event at which in-person attendance is encouraged and travel coverage to the activity or event is expressly offered.** Examples include our yearly company birthday party and our retreats. If office staff are encouraged to attend the activity or event in person, then they're welcome to leverage the travel package.
- **The Spooner is traveling to leverage a learning investment.** Assuming that the learning investment is compatible with the principles laid out in *Learning Investments*, then it's to the benefit of Bending Spoons, and any travel involved is eligible for being covered. If office staff are making a learning investment that justifies such travel, then they're welcome to leverage the travel package.
- **The Spooner is traveling simply to spend time with colleagues at their primary office.** In this case, our travel package is more limited (see [Package](#) below). It's OK for the Spooner to extend their stay to include weekends. We strongly encourage a new Spooner to be in their primary office for around three months early on, so they can enjoy valuable in-person time with their new



colleagues.<sup>2</sup> Afterward, it's up to the Spooner to determine how frequently they travel to their primary office in their efforts to maximize their contribution to the company. If the Spooner subsequently chooses to relocate to be much closer to their primary office, their eligibility to receive the relevant relocation support isn't affected by the frequency of their prior visits.

The following are some travel scenarios that *wouldn't* be eligible for receiving travel support:

- **The Spooner is traveling to spend time with colleagues away from their primary office** (unless it's for a reason covered in the list above). We love it when Spooners go on an adventure together, either for a vacation or to work from elsewhere for a while. Similarly, we're happy to welcome a Spooner to an office other than their primary one. Some of these instances could conceivably be in the best interests of Bending Spoons. However, to keep ambiguity to a minimum, we consider such cases ineligible for receiving travel support.
- **The Spooner is traveling on a trip taken for personal reasons, despite it potentially being relevant for the company.** For example, the Spooner may wish to hold a university lecture in a different city, but our Recruiting and Communications teams don't deem the potential of the opportunity worth the travel investment involved. The Spooner is still free to hold the lecture, but they wouldn't be eligible for receiving travel support.
- **The Spooner resides outside the country where their primary office is located, and has already traveled to that office—simply to spend time with their colleagues—during the same calendar year.** For legal reasons, the Spooner may not be permitted to make repeat visits in a single calendar year on the company's dime. To determine whether these limitations apply in their case, the Spooner should contact People Administration before planning or booking any such travel.
- **Travel for the *Bonding Spooners* initiative may include additional restrictions or exceptions to this policy.** We ask the Spooner to refer to the relevant guidelines on the People Operations page, and encourage them to reach out to People Operations before planning or booking travel for any activity.

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<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, certain labor laws may prevent a Spooner from leveraging this benefit. Therefore, we ask Spooners to check with People Administration before doing so. Should the Spooner become eligible for the benefit later on in their tenure at the company, they're welcome to leverage it at that point.



## Package

**Our support includes the coverage of all reasonable travel expenses**, such as for transportation, accommodation, and meals.

However, **in the case of a Spooner choosing to come to their primary office simply to spend time with colleagues, the package is limited to the financing of flights<sup>3</sup> and accommodation at a partner residence**. If no such accommodation is available and the Spooner still intends to visit their primary office, we're happy to help them find alternative accommodation, but the Spooner should finance it themselves.

**The duration of a Spooner's trip should be appropriate given the associated objective**. For a company activity or event (such as our yearly company birthday party), People Operations specifies the appropriate duration of the trip for a Spooner who needs travel support to attend. For a trip initiated by the Spooner (for example, when they're traveling to meet an investor), it's up to the Spooner to determine the duration that's in the company's best interests. Bending Spoons will cover expenses for a trip of the appropriate duration. Should the Spooner wish to extend their trip, they're welcome to finance the associated extra expenses themselves.

**A Spooner may wish to extend a visit to their primary office beyond what's appropriate given its objective, so they can spend some more time with colleagues. In such a case, they're welcome to stay at a partner residence for as long as availability permits**. If no such accommodation is available and the Spooner still intends to extend their visit, we're happy to help them find alternative accommodation, but the Spooner should finance it themselves.

**When at their primary office for whatever reason, unless otherwise communicated by People Operations, the Spooner should eat at the office or finance meals themselves**. In such a case, barring the occasional legitimate exception, we don't finance meals on the weekend.

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<sup>3</sup> In this scenario, we don't finance travel involving alternative transportation methods, such as trains, to prevent Accounting, Finance & Legal and People Operations from having the onerous task of handling a large number of shorter-distance commute reimbursement requests. This restriction ensures we retain the bandwidth to efficiently handle the main use case: that of a remote Spooner periodically visiting their primary office from far afield. Also, this restriction helps reduce ambiguity for all involved, as determining eligibility becomes simple. We make an exception when a Spooner is traveling from a location where both train and flight options to their primary office are available—in such a case, the Spooner may opt to take the train. Note that a Spooner traveling to their primary office via alternative transportation methods on their own is still welcome to stay at a partner residence, where available.



## Buddy

People Operations supports the Spooner with matters related to travel. **A People Operations team member is assigned to the Spooner as a travel support buddy.**

## Practical guidance

**Bending Spoons offers travel support, aiming to strike a reasonable balance between cost and comfort.** No Spooner is expected to endure serious inconvenience just to save the company a few bucks, but neither should they use the company's resources inefficiently.

**The following are some relevant practical guidelines:<sup>4</sup>**

- **Flights.** Plane tickets should be economy class. An exception can be made if the flight is long-haul, in which case business class is an acceptable option.
- **Taxis.** It's fine to favor a taxi over public transportation if the latter is substantially less convenient, particularly if the Spooner has a lot of luggage or faces time pressure.
- **Trains.** If the Spooner intends to work during their journey, it's OK to book a business class ticket as long as the price is reasonable.
- **Accommodation.** The main consideration is convenience. When there's more than one suitably convenient accommodation option available, we select for price.
- **Meals.** These should be reasonably priced. Unless there's an exceptionally compelling business reason, we don't cover the cost of fancy meals.

**We encourage each Spooner to use TravelPerk to book and pay for their travel directly. We recommend that the Spooner ask their travel support buddy to assist with selecting and paying for any significant travel expenses not covered by TravelPerk.** This method reduces the logistical burden on the Spooner and simplifies the company's administration.

**With expenses that Bending Spoons doesn't pay for directly, the Spooner can either pay and request a reimbursement, or they can estimate the cost, request a preemptive reimbursement, and then proceed with the payment.** Once again, their travel support buddy will assist. Reimbursements—whether

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<sup>4</sup> In the case of a Spooner choosing to come to their primary office simply to spend time with colleagues, some of the guidelines listed don't apply. More specifically, the package is limited to the financing of flights and accommodation at a partner residence. When at their primary office for whatever reason, unless otherwise communicated by People Operations, the Spooner should eat at the office or finance meals themselves. In such a case, barring the occasional legitimate exception, we don't finance meals on the weekend.



preemptive or retrospective—are recommended for small, ad-hoc expenses such as meals, metro rides, and most taxi rides. Wherever possible, the Spooner should collect a valid receipt or invoice and submit it to their travel support buddy, as otherwise the company can't achieve tax efficiency. However, even if the Spooner doesn't have a valid receipt or invoice for the travel expense, they should still report it to their travel support buddy—despite the inefficiency borne by the company, the Spooner will be reimbursed in full.

**In some cases, we might be able to temporarily provide the Spooner with a company credit card.** If the Spooner's role requires frequent travel to places other than their primary office, they'll receive a company credit card.

**A Spooner who requires travel support should open a ticket in *#people-operations-requests* on Slack.**

## Conclusion

Relocation and travel can be daunting, expensive, and time-consuming. At Bending Spoons, **we relieve a lot of the burden on the individual through the policy detailed in this document.** Our People Operations and People Administration teams are adept at helping navigate the inherent bureaucracy and ambiguity, all with the intention of minimizing the inconvenience caused to a Spooner who relocates or travels to the benefit of Bending Spoons. As always, we encourage each Spooner to make their decisions in a manner that uses the company's resources efficiently.