The Miles Game Isn’t Dead. Half of It Just Moved to the Last 30 Pre-Departure Days.

August 2026

Business Class awards now ransom for 300,000-plus miles – until roughly 30 days out, when airlines quietly dump saver seats on 32 routes. Here’s how to seize them.

A Business Class seat is like a crate of peaches.

Fly it empty and it’s totally spoiled at wheels-up. So in the final 30 days before departure, some airlines quietly mark down what the loyalty program spent all year calling priceless, on some routes.

Our count: 60 of 64 route legs on our hot list have saver space this month. Only 14 show anything next month. The window is real – and it slams.

FANTASY IS QUICKSAND. REALITY IS YOUR RUNWAY.

You know the ugly arithmetic. Business Class awards now run 300,000 to 500,000 miles round-trip, leaving three doors:

- Fly coach, or
- Pay through the nose in cash, or
- Pay through the nose in miles.

Most flyers default to a fourth activity: mourning the old award chart.

That's a fantasy baseline, and fantasy is quicksand. Reality is your launch pad, which says award availability didn't die. It just migrated to the final 30 days.

BRINKMANSHIP IN THE BOOKING BINS

Why the dump? Grocery store economics.

A flat bed is spoiling inventory, so close to departure the airlines mark it down – quietly, unevenly, and never predictably enough to train you to wait. There's simply no accounting for the airline's decision in which routes open up.

Which is exactly why we checked them for you.

STEP THREE: LOAD UP BEFORE YOU LIFT OFF

Step Three of the Upgrade Process is Options – and the Desperation Trap is its enemy. The desperate traveler sees no way out of the ransom. The option-loaded traveler sees 32.

Collect 10, need three, use one.

Our treasure map below tracks 32 deals across 64 route legs – for one, two, and four travelers, this month and next. The the decoder ring matters:

- American Airlines seats book best with Alaska miles
- Lufthansa, SWISS, and LOT Polish with Air Canada points
- LATAM with Virgin Atlantic points
- Fiji Airways and Etihad with American miles

- British Airways and Iberia with Avios.

Two truths hide in the table. First, close-in couples and even foursomes ride nearly free – New York to London is wide open for one, two, and four seats – while Dublin, Warsaw, and Krakow are solo-only stashes.

Second, direction decides everything: New York to London shows many days out but only a handful back, and Sydney offers many dates home but only a few out.

Hunt each direction separately. And remember – an award you can't actually book is a phantom option. Everything on this map was real, bookable space when we checked.

Think about mixing and matching your segments in an "open jaw" ticket to leverage where the opportunity is.

That's option loading, and it works everywhere.

The negotiator with three live alternatives never pays retail.

THE STANDOUT STASHES

The London Lode. Chicago and Boston run deep in both directions – and London is the only corridor holding real space into next month.

The Tokyo Twins. Japan Airlines from Seattle and Los Angeles shows wide open Business Class space, even for four travelers.

The South American Steady. LATAM from Miami to Buenos Aires is wide open, both directions, both months, every party size. The unicorn.

Honorable mentions: Geneva, Sydney, Naples, Athens, Prague, and Madrid.

Prices vary by program roughly 34,000 miles one-way on Iberia up to 110,000 at American's dynamic worst. Either way, a fraction of the 300,000-mile ransom.

STEP FOUR: DECIDE AT 70 PERCENT

Step Four is Decisions, and here's the myth that murders them: perfect information. Waiting for perfect information guarantees perfect failure. At 70 percent certainty, you book.

[You can always cancel, and repeat the process.]

The Cancel-and-Rebook:

Are you booked next week in coach or on an expensive ticket? Cancel for a miles redeposit or cash credit, then grab the hot saver seat. Change fees are largely dead, so it's not worth thinking twice.

Your first booking was never a vow. It was an experiment – and revising a decision that reality outdated isn't flip-flopping, it's intelligence.

The Spontaneous Seize:

Your calendar is flexible, the map shows space, you pounce.

Spontaneity is a luxury of the prepared.

STEP FIVE: THE KAIZEN FLYER'S LOOP

Step Five is Implementation – the graveyard where 95 percent of plans perish. Perfect plans assume static reality, and award space changes hourly.

So run the loop instead: Book the placeholder, monitor weekly, strike when the window opens, rebook.

Say it out loud: "I'm simply not going to get it right the first time." That's not defeat. That's the most liberating sentence in travel.

You don't need to win the whole trip at once, either. Upgrade one leg, one direction, one cabin at a time. Momentum is small wins times consistency.

And patience pays. Impatience is the number one killer of upgrades. Friction is data, and a "no" today is not a "no" in the window.

The Good Little Traveler obeys the calendar and pays retail. The Kaizen Flyer iterates and flies flat.

Same miles. Different operating system.

FINE PRINT, STRAIGHT TALK

Availability is a moving target – verify the saver seat before you cancel anything. Confirm redeposit terms and credit rules first.

NOT MORE MILES. BETTER TIMING.

The airlines will keep dumping peaches at midnight – they can't help it, because empty flat beds spoil at wheels-up.

The crowd will keep mourning the award chart. But you'll be standing in the window with the map, at 70 percent certainty, ready to revise.

That's not luck. That's Upgrade Intelligence: not more miles – better timing.

FCF'S TREASURE MAP

Route	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days per Month	9 to 12 Days per Month	13+ Days per Month	4 to 8 Days per Month	9 to 12 Days per Month	13+ Days per Month
Boston - London	Feb.			Feb., March		
New York - London	Feb.			Feb., May	Feb., March	April
New York - Madrid	Feb.	July, Aug.	July, Aug.	July, Jan., Feb.		
Charlotte - Madrid			July, Aug.	July, Aug.	Aug.	
Philadelphia - Madrid	July, Aug.	July, Aug.		July	Aug.	Aug.
Philadelphia - Naples	July, Aug.	Aug.		Aug.		
New York - Beunos Aires	July		June	Sept.	July	June
Miami - Beunos Aires	June, Aug.	June, Aug.		June, Aug., Sept.	July, Aug.	
Philadelphia - Dublin	June, July			June to Aug.		

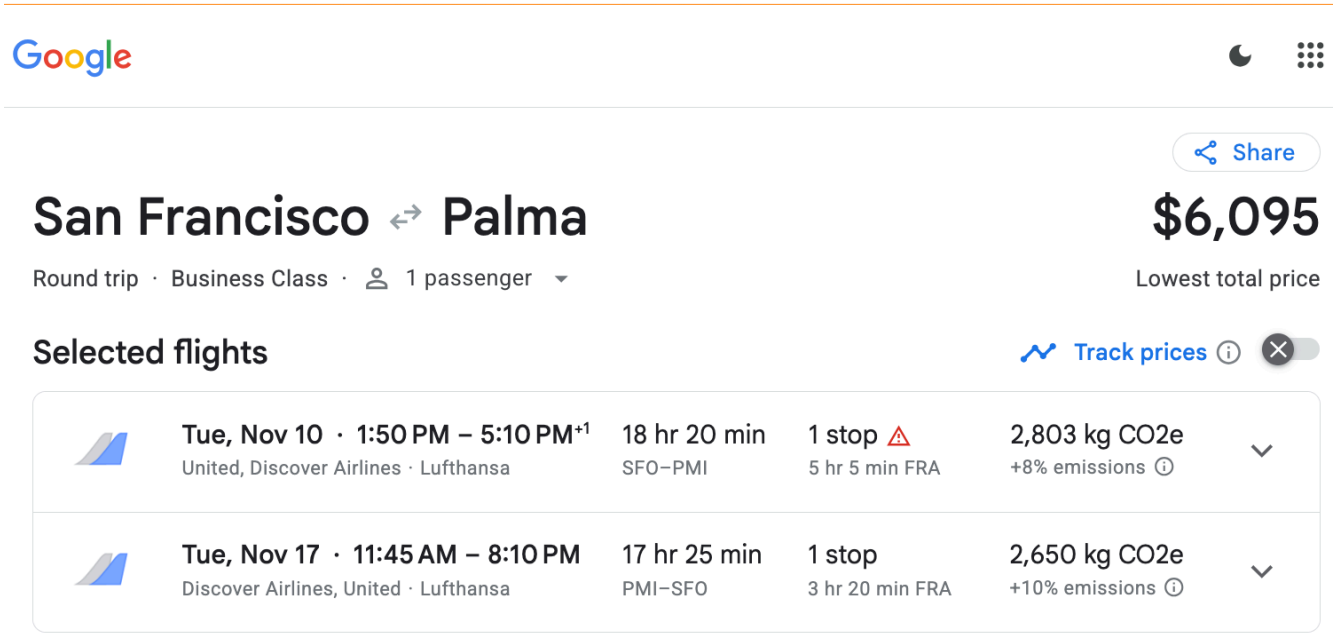
Charlotte - Dublin	June to Aug.			Aug.		
Philadelphia - Edinburgh	July			July		

Months in black have at least one seat available; in blue, at least two seats; in green, at least four seats. Remember to use the data as a guide since availability can be volatile.

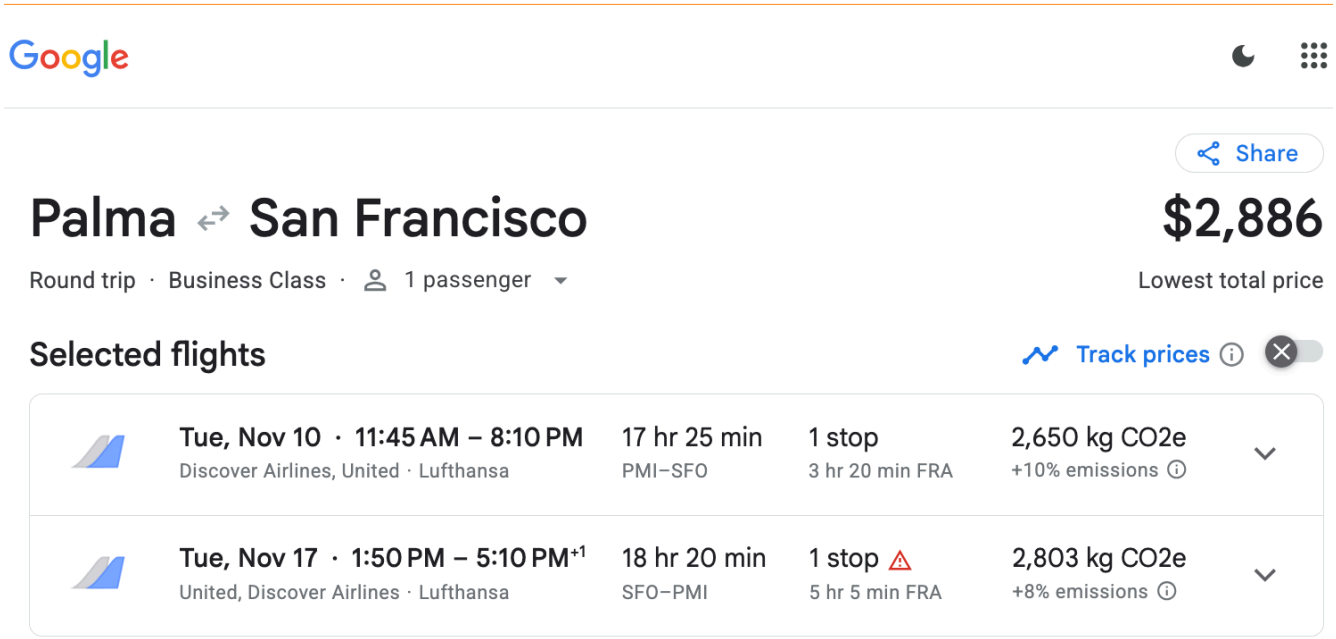
The Transatlantic Treasure Map: 88 Europe-originating Business Class fares priced from a third off to better than half – and the Upgrade Intelligence to claim them

Two tickets. One airplane.

United sells San Francisco to Mallorca in Business Class – departing November 10, returning November 17 – for $6,095.



Flip the ticket and start in Mallorca, on the identical flights, on the identical two dates, and the price drops to $2,886.



That is $3,209 back in your pocket for knowing which side of the Atlantic your ticket should begin. It is not a glitch. It is a pattern – and patterns are where Upgrade Intelligence pays.

Make sense? Then let's go treasure hunting.

STEP 1: THE BASELINE THAT BEATS THE BOOKING ENGINE

The Upgrade Process begins with Baseline – seeing reality as it is, not as the airline's website frames it. **Your baseline is where you are**, and you are either informed or uninformed about it.

So goes your baseline, so goes your life.

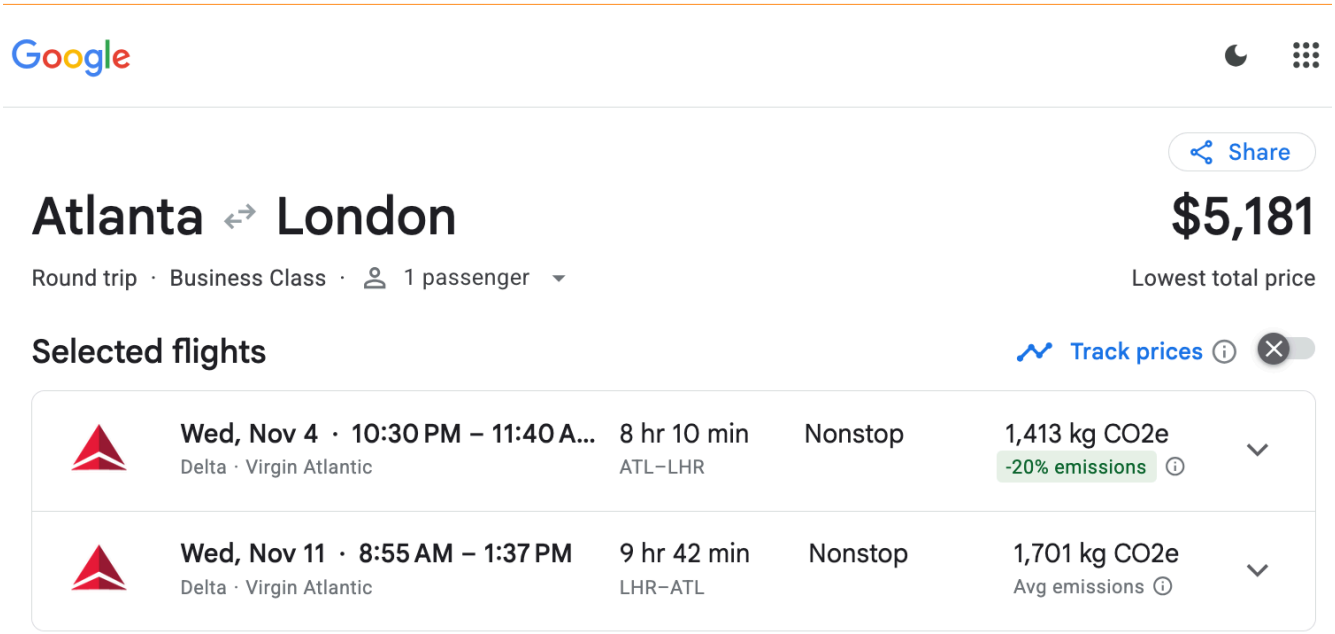
And so goes your fare.

My team mapped the top 88 low-cost Business Class routes from Europe to nine major American gateways, from Boston to Los Angeles. Fifty-seven of them – nearly two out of three – price under $3,000 round-trip.

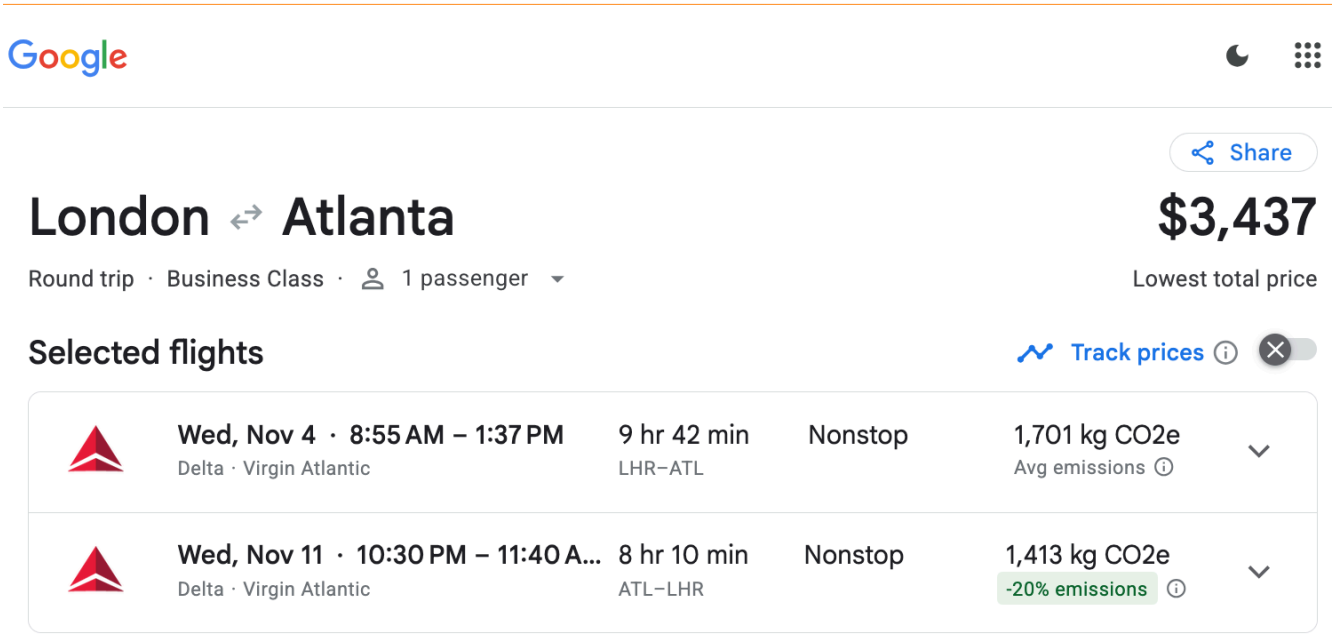
Those same tickets, bought with a U.S. starting point, routinely run $5,000, $6,000, even $8,000.

And this is not one airline's accounting quirk. Watch all three U.S. majors play the same pricing game:

Delta sells Atlanta to London in Business Class – departing November 4, returning November 11 – for $5,181.

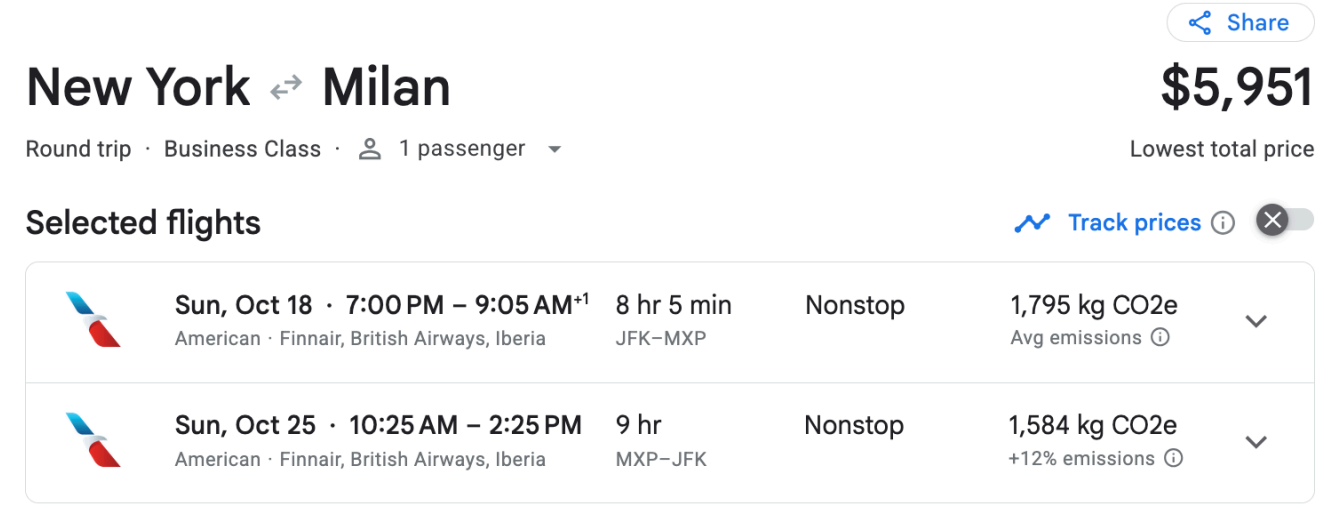


Flip the ticket and start in London, on the identical two nonstops, on the identical two dates, and the price drops to $3,437.

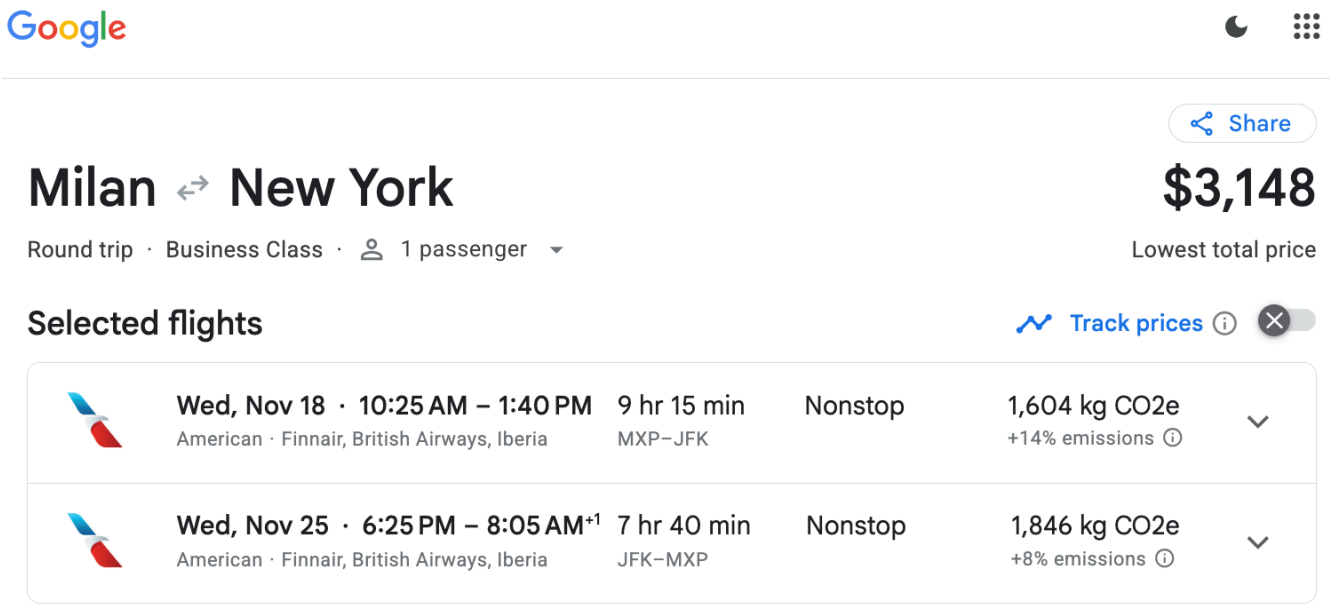


Same seat. Same service. Same metal crossing the same ocean.

American: New York to Milan, $5,951.



Milan to New York, $3,148.



That is **47% off** for starting your story in Italy.

A 54% saving – better than half.

Delta: the same proof as above, 34% off.

The fantasy says fares are fixed. The Baseline says fares depend on where the map reads “start here.”

THE TREASURE MAP: WHERE THE GOLD IS BURIED

So where is the gold buried deepest?

Dublin and Madrid are the two cheapest launch pads on the entire map. Dublin to Boston runs $2,542 round-trip in Business Class. Madrid to Boston, $2,695.

Barcelona lands under $2,800 to Dallas, Houston, and Los Angeles. Mallorca – yes, a Mediterranean island – beats most of mainland Europe to nearly every gateway.

Sample round-trip Business Class fares found o mmajor airlines...

Origin	Destination	Price
Dublin	Boston	$2,542

Madrid	Boston	$2,695
Barcelona	Boston	$2,749
Mallorca	Boston	$2,882
Amsterdam	Boston	$2,885
Copenhagen	Boston	$2,891
Paris	Boston	$3,348
London	Boston	$3,473
Frankfurt	Boston	$3,581
Dublin	Chicago	$2,709
Barcelona	Chicago	$2,764
Madrid	Chicago	$2,765
Mallorca	Chicago	$2,947
Valencia	Chicago	$2,973
Vienna	Chicago	$3,008
Zurich	Chicago	$3,125
Rome	Chicago	$3,132
Venice	Chicago	$3,527
Paris	Chicago	$3,658
Barcelona	Dallas	$2,743
Madrid	Dallas	$2,744
Mallorca	Dallas	$2,825
Dublin	Dallas	$2,889
Cork	Dallas	$2,931
Ibiza	Dallas	$3,073

Barcelona	Houston	$2,743
Madrid	Houston	$2,744
Mallorca	Houston	$2,790
Dublin	Houston	$2,890
Cork	Houston	$2,920
Lisbon	Houston	$3,041
Ibiza	Houston	$3,082
Barcelona	Los Angeles	$2,758
Madrid	Los Angeles	$2,759
Dublin	Los Angeles	$2,930
Malaga	Los Angeles	$2,980
Lisbon	Los Angeles	$3,140
Ibiza	Los Angeles	$3,225
Copenhagen	Los Angeles	$3,512
Milan	Los Angeles	$3,630
Zurich	Los Angeles	$3,655
Paris	Los Angeles	$3,660
Amsterdam	Los Angeles	$3,820
Barcelona	Miami	$2,743
Madrid	Miami	$2,750
Stockholm	Miami	$2,763
Malaga	Miami	$2,792
Ibiza	Miami	$2,999
Milan	Miami	$3,005

Rome	Miami	$3,257
Bologna	Miami	$3,270
Naples	Miami	$3,272
Dublin	New York	$2,502
Madrid	New York	$2,529
Malaga	New York	$2,549
Ibiza	New York	$2,555
Seville	New York	$2,556
Valencia	New York	$2,559
Barcelona	New York	$2,743
Stockholm	New York	$2,789
Lisbon	New York	$2,833
Mallorca	New York	$2,843
Rome	New York	$2,990
Naples	New York	$2,994
Milan	New York	$3,004
Venice	New York	$3,006
London	New York	$3,268
Paris	New York	$3,348
Barcelona	San Francisco	$2,743
Madrid	San Francisco	$2,744
Mallorca	San Francisco	$2,825
Valencia	San Francisco	$2,864
Ibiza	San Francisco	$2,868

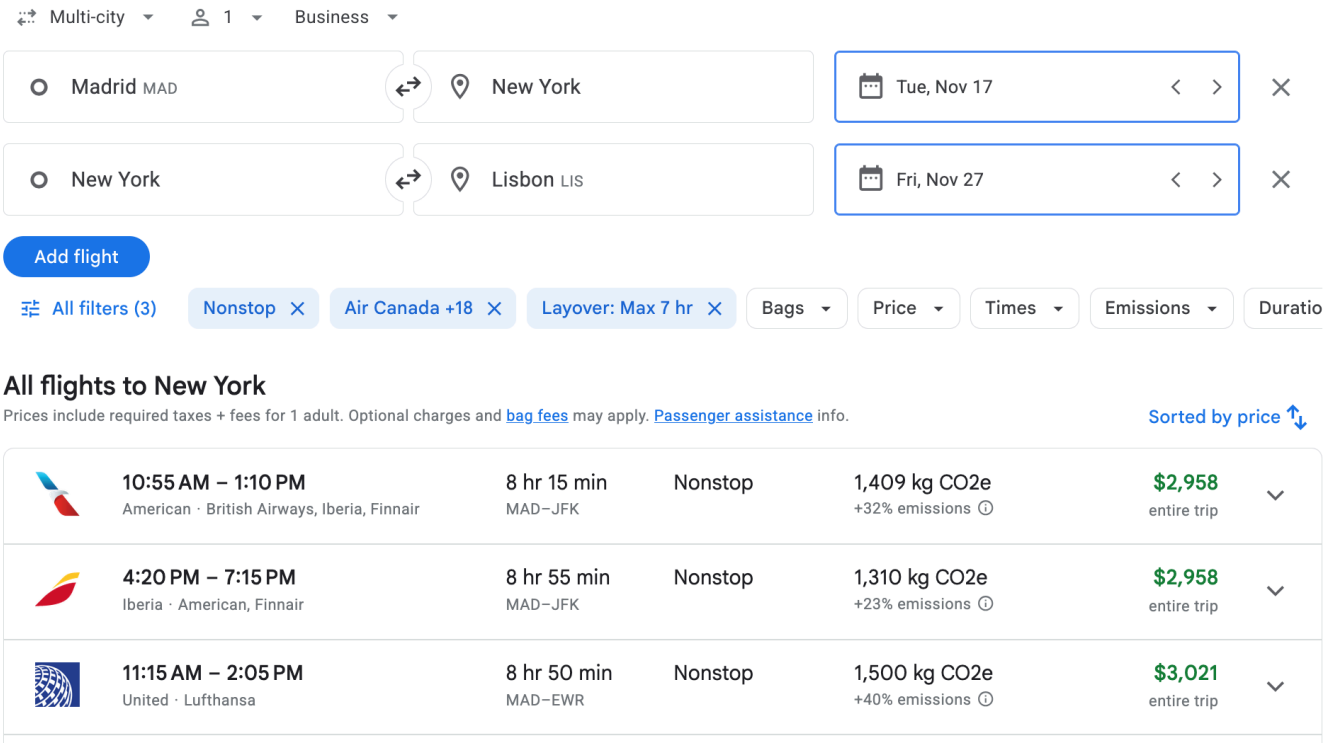
Lisbon	San Francisco	$2,947
Rome	San Francisco	$3,265
London	San Francisco	$3,386
Dublin	Washington	$2,601
Barcelona	Washington	$2,743
Madrid	Washington	$2,744
Mallorca	Washington	$2,825
Lisbon	Washington	$2,831
Malaga	Washington	$2,858
Ibiza	Washington	$2,860
Valencia	Washington	$2,864
Copenhagen	Washington	$2,889
Milan	Washington	$3,121
Stockholm	Washington	$3,283
London	Washington	$3,485

THE OPEN JAW: WHY ROUND TRIPS ARE FOR ROOKIES

Unless you're a road warrior visiting the same office every quarter, or a parent making pilgrimages to the same college kid, are you really flying in and out of the same European city every trip? Of course not. Barcelona in the fall, Dublin in the spring – that's the whole point of Europe.

Here's the part the crowd never checks: The fare structure barely punishes you for it. Book the "round-trip" as an "open jaw" – fly European City A to the U.S., return from the U.S. to European City B – and the price barely moves. Sometimes it drops.

Madrid to New York, returning to Lisbon: $2,958 non-stop –$972 *less* than the straight Madrid round-trip.



This strategy works especially well on routes where you have to make a connection anyway.

An open jaw isn't a compromise; it's a bonus move – the travel equivalent of castling in chess when two pieces are improved in a single turn.

In Upgrade Intelligence terms, this is Leverage Recognition – spotting the single decision (where the ticket starts and ends) that multiplies value across an entire year of travel.

STEP 2: DESIRES DECIDE – RANK THEM AND WEIGH THEM

Here is where a travel deal becomes a micro course in The Upgrade Formula.

Step 2 of the Upgrade Process is Desires – naming what you truly want, then ranking the priority and weight of each want. The cheapest crossing? A flat seat? Or simply to stop overpaying for the very same seat?

Because economist Thomas Sowell was right: **There are no perfect solutions, only trade-offs.**

You can't have everything, so **make your trade-offs at the desire level, not the decision level**.

Get that ranking right and **something remarkable happens**. Your decisions get better, easier, faster – they practically make themselves.

And when you find yourself stuck?

Indecision is not a decision problem.

It is a lack of commitment to a number one desire.

Here, the trade is simple: a little planning – beginning your ticket in Europe – for savings that can top $3,000 per passenger.

STEP 3: LOAD YOUR OPTIONS LIKE A PRO

A GPS needs two locations – where you are and where you're going. So does the Upgrade Process.

Step 3 is Options, and here it looks delightfully low-tech: time on Google Flights, playing with different dates and different city pairs, watching the prices move as the map moves.

Collect 5 candidate routes. Shortlist three that fit your calendar. Book one.

Desperate people don't lack options.

They lack the intelligence to see them – and deliberate option loading is how deliberate travelers beat desperate travelers every single time.

THE PERSPECTIVE PLAY

Perspective is a core competency of Upgrade Intelligence, so run the numbers in the other direction.

Many transatlantic round-trips in coach class run $2,000+ in high season these days. Upgrade to Business Class the ordinary way – buying a U.S.-originating fare – and the jump costs roughly $2,000 to $6,000+.

Plan ahead and start in Europe, and that same life-changing leap costs as little as ~$500 more.

Framed that way, the “expensive” cabin becomes the bargain buy with this process and strategy.

STEP 4: YOU DON'T HAVE TO DECIDE TODAY

Here is the pressure release: You don't need to decide today. You just need to know your options, because **every option you see makes your baseline richer**. And in life, everything revolves around your baseline.

Decisions emerge from your greatest desire. Once your number one is named, the choosing takes care of itself.

STEP 5: IMPLEMENTATION – THREE RULES TO REMEMBER

One: The fare must originate in Europe. Buy it as its own round-trip – Europe to America and back to Europe.

Two: Position with purpose. Use a cheap one-way, a mileage award, or a trip you already planned to get yourself to Dublin, Madrid, or Barcelona before the ticket starts.

Three: Move with measured speed. These fares are snapshots; they will change or vanish without notice. When your shortlisted fare surfaces, book it. Or hold it.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The same ocean. The same airplane. The same Champagne.

One passenger paid $6,095 because the fantasy told him fares are fixed. Another paid $2,886 because the Treasure Map told her that where a ticket originates decides what a ticket is worth.

That gap isn't luck. It's Upgrade Intelligence – **Baseline** seen, **Desires** ranked, **Options** loaded, **Decisions** pre-made, **Implementation** executed.

The treasure is on the map.

All you have to do is read it.

Asia Is Back, London Runs Deep, Australia Won’t Wait: The United Upgrade Treasure Map

August 2026

While award prices blow past 300,000 miles a trip, one overlooked United play cuts Business Class roughly in half – and delivers miles and elite credit to boot.

Last time we walked United’s mileage upgrade availability map, the Pacific was a graveyard. Goose eggs from Tokyo to Manila.

Sad.

This month? Our metal detector started screaming the second we hit Asia.

The map moved. And that, my friends, is the whole miles game in one sentence: Nothing stays put.

The winners aren't the flyers with the fattest pile of points – they're the ones holding this month's treasure map.

So my research team checked 100+ United long-haul routes, seat by seat, month by month. The gold concentrates in 31 route pairs across three continents.

See FCF's treasure map below, where you can find the opportunities in the blink of an eye.

THE FANTASY DIED. THE OPPORTUNITY DIDN'T.

The reality of 2026: 300,000 to 500,000 miles for one Business Class round-trip. A decade of loyalty, vaporized in a single search result.

You can't spend fantasy miles on a real seat.

Here's the mindset shift that changes everything. The airline's inventory is a sovereign choice – you don't control it, you never did, and pounding the search button won't open a seat that isn't there. I call this the Control Delusion, and it's the number one reason smart flyers stay stuck in seat 34E.

You can't control the wind. But you can adjust your sails.

That's the first lesson of Upgrade Intelligence: Reality Navigation. Low Upgrade IQ mourns the old map and keeps forcing doors that won't open. High Upgrade IQ reads the new map and walks through the doors that will.

Fantasy versus reality.

THE HALF-PRICE PLAY THAT STILL PAYS

The move is simple. Buy a paid coach or premium economy fare, add miles plus roughly a $500 co-pay each way, and land in Business Class.

Net effect: 25% to 60% off round-trips that retail for $4,000 to $8,000+.

And here's the kicker most miss: It's a PAID ticket. Your redeemable miles and elite credit keep flowing – **the exact opposite of an award ticket's big fat zero.**

Who's this built for? Flyers already sitting on **United** miles, **Chase** cardholders whose Ultimate Rewards transfer straight into United, and anyone willing to **simply buy miles** when the math works.

This is Leverage Intelligence in a single transaction: one small input, applied at the point of maximum impact – the long-haul leg. Easier, faster, cheaper, better. The whole Upgrade Formula in miniature.

HOW TO READ THE TREASURE MAP

We dug all the holes so you check one cheat sheet. Three party sizes – one, two, and four seats – each mapped across 11 months.

The pleasant surprise? The map barely shrinks for couples. Newark to London shows most available this month at every party size, and even foursomes fare fine: San Francisco to Tokyo shows half the time for four seats.

This is great for spontaneous travelers or anyone traveling this month who wants to upgrade the ticket they purchased three or six months ago. United upgrades are strongest right now close in and should be top of mind for the iterative upgrade traveler.

The solo-only stash: for returns from Tahiti, Seoul, and Athens, plus the Tokyo–Houston return, there's a seat for one but not two. Pairs, steer around those. Singles, that's your private prize.

One truth to tattoo on your trip planning: Returns run denser than outbounds. Paris to Newark: available half the time homebound, only a few dates outbound. Plan backward from the return, then flex your way through the skinnier outbound with flexible routings.

ASIA: THE COMEBACK CONTINENT

Tokyo is the headline. Flat beds from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, and Denver – four gateways, roughly a third to half the time in August. Osaka and Manila show half the time each way; Seoul boasts a third of the time outbound.

One survey ago, this region was rubble. The players who quit when Asia went dark never saw it come back.

Impatience is the number one killer of upgrades. Breakthroughs belong to the flyers who stay engaged in the tension – and staying engaged just paid for a trip to Tokyo.

EUROPE: THE DEEP SEAM

London is the crown jewel. Newark runs wide open; Chicago runs almost the same. And **London is the only corridor with real space months out** – November, December, even February 2027.

Paris, Rome, Naples, Barcelona, Frankfurt, Brussels, Lisbon, Athens, and Amsterdam all carry August gold. Brussels quietly joins the long game; Dublin's a goose egg today but pops in February.

Good chance the close-in trend will continue next month as well; keep that in mind, September travelers. October travelers, too.

AUSTRALIA: NOW OR NEVER

Melbourne and Sydney from the West Coast, plus Tahiti from San Francisco, are available in August-only. No next month. No "let me think about it."

Perfect for a **last-minute upgrade** on a ticket you've already bought – or a **spontaneous** "why not?" trip in a flat bed.

Spontaneity is a luxury of the prepared. The map is what makes you prepared.

Wildcard worth watching: São Paulo from Washington shows August space plus scattered days deep into spring 2027.

THREE WAYS TO WORK THE MAP

1. Check your own flight first. Your booked flight may already be sitting on upgradeable space. Australia flyers, that means tonight.

2. Flex to the gold. Shift the outbound or return by a day or two, or reroute. Rigid dates pay retail; flexible dates fly flat.

3. The $8,000 Switcheroo. Already holding a $5,000-to-$8,000 Business Class ticket? Book one of these half-price deals, then take the refund or credit on the pricey one.

Same seat, thousands back in your pocket.

For the ambitious: fly the Bridge Route – stop searching your dream city and fly the long-haul where space actually exists, connecting onward from the gateway. Nobody goes to Frankfurt. That's exactly why you can.

Adding on segments in economy to the same original purchased fare is often very easy.

Hunt each direction separately – round-trip searches can hide lopsided availability. And if the website won't build it, call United reservations. The phone can outsmart the search box sometimes.

THE 70% RULE (OR: WHY WAITING IS THE WORST SEAT IN THE HOUSE)

Here's where most flyers fumble the treasure. They find the space, then wait – for certainty, for confirmation, for the perfect plan. And while they wait for clarity that will never come, a decisive flyer takes the seat.

I run the 70% Certainty Rule: when the map says the space is real and the math says the deal is good, book. You can't think your way to clarity – you have to act your way there.

FCF's options intelligence will change your perspective.

THE FINE PRINT

Availability is a moving target. Asia's resurrection proves it cuts both ways, so verify before you commit to a big trip. Co-pays and fare rules vary by route; confirm refund and credit terms before playing the Switcheroo.

THE MIND GAME BEHIND THE MILES

The miles game didn't die. It stopped rewarding autopilot.

Asia went dark, then lit back up – and the only flyers who caught it were the ones still reading the map. The best things in life – the flat bed, the good champagne, the arrival without the wreckage – go to people who think and act a little differently.

That's Upgrade Intelligence. Not more points. Not more hustle. Better navigation.

Control your inputs – your miles, your flexibility, your willingness to move at 70% – and let the airline keep its illusions of scarcity.

The anxious engineer forces outcomes; the peaceful navigator works the process.

The fantasy died. The opportunity didn't.

Don't lose heart – the game might just be different.

FCF' UNITED UPGRADE TREASURE MAP

Route	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days per	9 to 12 Days per	13+ Days per	4 to 8 Days per	9 to 12 Days per	13+ Days per

	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month
Newark - Paris	Aug.					Aug.
Newark - Rome	Aug.			Aug.		
Houston - London	Aug.				Aug.	
Chicago - London			Aug.			Aug.
Chicago - Frankfurt	Aug.			Sept.		Aug.
Washington - Frankfurt			Aug.	Sept.	Aug.	
Washington - Sao Paulo	Aug.			Aug., Nov.		
San Francisco - Melbourne	Aug.			Aug.		
San Francisco - Tahiti	Aug.			Aug.		
San Francisco - Manila		Sept.	Aug.	Oct.	Sept.	Aug.
San Francisco - Barcelona	Aug.			Aug.		
Houston - Bogota	Nov., Jan., March	Feb.		Dec., Jan.	Feb.	
Los Angeles - Tokyo			Aug.	Aug.	Aug.	
Los Angeles - Sydney	Aug.			Aug.		
Newark - London	Nov., Feb.		Aug.	Sept., Jan., Feb.	Nov., Feb.	Aug., Dec.
Houston - Tokyo		Aug.		Aug.		
Denver - Tokyo		Aug.		Aug.		
San Francisco - Osaka			Aug.		Aug.	Aug.
Washington - Barcelona		Aug.				Aug.
Newark - Naples		Aug.				Aug.
Washington - Paris			Aug.			Aug.

Washington - Rome			Aug.	Sept.		Aug.
Washington - Amsterdam	Aug.				Aug.	
San Francisco - London	Aug.			Aug.		
Chicago - Dublin	Feb.			Feb.		
Washington - Lisbon	Aug.			Aug.		
San Francisco - Seoul		Aug.		Aug.		
San Francisco - Tokyo			Aug.		Aug.	Aug.
Washington - Athens	Aug.			Aug.		
Chicago - Paris	Aug.				Aug.	
Washington - Brussels	Aug., Nov., Feb.			Feb.	Feb., Sept.	Aug., Sept., Nov.
Denver - London		Aug.		Sept.	Aug.	

Months in black have at least one seat available; in blue, at least two seats; in green, at least four seats. Remember to use the data as a guide since availability can be volatile.

The Four Seasons Suite That Costs Less Than the Regular Room

August 2026

The ABA rate is alive and well in 2026 at 11 Four Seasons hotels and the suite upgrade can cost less than nothing

This October, two travelers will sleep on the same floor of the Four Seasons Westlake Village outside Los Angeles.

One will pay $672 a night for a Deluxe King room. The other will pay $562 a night – for a suite.

No points.

No status.

No begging.

The difference between them is a $195 annual membership, a rate code, and one habit of mind.

Let's build that habit.

STILL STANDING: THE DEAL DELIVERS IN 2026

Last year we handed you a key that opens Four Seasons doors at up to half off. Rate codes are living things, so this summer our research team went back and jiggled every handle.

Verdict: The key still turns.

Some doors swung wider. Last year we promised "up to half off"; this year St. Louis is serving suites at 67% off, and one hotel now prices its suite below its own regular room.

That's Upgrade Intelligence. Lesson one: reality moves.

Last year's rate is not this year's rate, so you re-verify before you rely.

THE $195 BAR NOBODY HAS TO PASS

Here's the mechanism for new readers and note-takers.

Anyone can join the American Bar Association. No law degree, no bar exam, no shouting "I object!"

The "affiliated professionals" tier to join costs $195 a year. You're not joining a legal organization – you're renting leverage.

Book on FourSeasons.com, select the American Bar Association rate, and carry proof of membership at check-in. One night's savings repays that $195 many times over.

The cheapest thing at the Four Seasons is the membership that gets you in.

THE COMPARISON TRAP THAT COSTS TRAVELERS THOUSANDS

Now the mind game – because this is where the money actually lives.

Most travelers compare the ABA room rate to the regular room rate and smile at the discount. Nice.

Wrong numbers.

The Upgrade Formula compares the ABA *suite* rate to the *regular room* rate.

One substitution can turn a discount into a free upgrade.

The suite was always for sale. You were simply standing at the wrong counter – the one that sells hope instead of beds.

Elite-status upgrades are a slot machine.

This is chess: You see the winning move before you commit a dollar.

Confirmed at booking.

No begging, no uncertainty, no disappointment at the desk.

That's what the Upgrade Process calls owning your variables. The Upgrade Formula doesn't create new options; it reveals the ones already there.

DOOR ONE: ROOMS, RADICALLY REDUCED

Even if you never book a suite, the membership pays for itself on regular rooms. Behold the baseline.

Hotel	Room Type	Regular / Night	ABA / Night	Savings / Night	Savings %
Four Seasons Baltimore	Balcony Room	$781	$423	$358	46%
Four Seasons Westlake Village*	Deluxe King Room	$672	$391	$281	42%
Four Seasons Seattle*	Seattle View King	$666	$435	$231	35%
Four Seasons St. Louis	City-View Room	$514	$344	$170	33%

Four Seasons New York Downtown	Manhattan Room	$1,662	$1,105	$557	33%
Four Seasons Boston One Dalton	Deluxe Room	$1,150	$774	$376	33%
Four Seasons Houston	Deluxe Room	$613	$453	$160	26%
Four Seasons Philadelphia	Premier Landmark Room	$1,570	$1,164	$406	26%
Four Seasons Silicon Valley Palo Alto*	Premier Room	$912	$708	$204	22%
Four Seasons Fort Lauderdale*	Lauderdale-View Room	$906	$732	$174	19%
Four Seasons Chicago	City-View Room	$696	$578	$118	17%

**ABA rate not shown online – call the hotel directly to request it. All prices per night, based on two-night stays, taxes included.*

That's the appetizer. Now the entrée.

DOOR TWO: SUITES, SERIOUSLY SLASHED

Here's where the ABA rate stops being a room discount and starts delivering suite savings, too.

Hotel	Suite Type	Regular / Night	ABA / Night	Savings / Night	Savings %
Four Seasons St. Louis	Arch One-Bedroom Suite	$1,946	$637	$1,309	67%
Four Seasons Westlake Village*	Suite	$1,511	$562	$949	63%
Four Seasons Fort Lauderdale*	Corner Ocean & City Suite	$1,668	$1,014	$654	39%
Four Seasons Houston	Executive Suite	$978	$668	$310	32%
Four Seasons Baltimore	Executive Suite, Fountain View	$1,029	$787	$242	24%

Four Seasons Philadelphia	Premier Landmark Suite	$2,452	$1,962	$490	20%
Four Seasons Seattle*	Corner Elliott Bay Suite	$2,114	$1,740	$374	18%
Four Seasons Boston One Dalton	Executive Suite	$1,804	$1,534	$270	15%
Four Seasons Silicon Valley Palo Alto*	Superior One-Bedroom Suite	$1,817	$1,544	$273	15%

A $1,309-a-night haircut in St. Louis. Sustained.

THE FREE UPGRADE EQUATION

Now run the comparison that's most interesting: what everyone else pays per night for a regular room versus what you pay per night for the suite.

Same hotel, same dates.

Hotel	Regular Room / Night (No ABA)	Suite / Night (With ABA)	True Upgrade Cost / Night	Verdict
Westlake Village*	$672	$562	–$110	Cheaper than free
Baltimore	$781	$787	$6	The $6-a-night suite
Houston	$613	$668	$55	Less than lunch
Fort Lauderdale*	$906	$1,014	$108	Ocean corner, cheap date
St. Louis	$514	$637	$123	Arch view, pocket change
Boston One Dalton	$1,150	$1,534	$384	Judgment call
Philadelphia	$1,570	$1,962	$392	Judgment call

Read that Westlake line again. The suite costs $110 a night less than the room.

When the difference runs negative, the upgrade is better than free.

But here's the caveat: The equation doesn't go your way everywhere.

In Seattle and Palo Alto, take Door One and bank the room savings.

High Upgrade IQ isn't believing a trick always works. It's running the equation every time.

Reality is your friend; fantasy is your foe.

THE FINE PRINT (READ IT LIKE A LAWYER – YOU ARE ONE NOW, SORT OF)

Our research team priced these stays for October and November travel: two guests, two nights, taxes included, shown here per night. Your dates will produce your numbers.

A few properties (marked with asterisks) don't display the ABA rate online. Pick your room and dates, call the hotel, and ask whether the ABA rate is available for your stay.

Two minutes of phone work; the tables show what it buys.

Also: ABA rates shift, availability moves, and not every property plays every day. Some show the rate almost daily, others about half the time, so play with dates.

THE WHOLE POINT

This was never really about hotels.

It's about a way of moving through the world – the conviction that upgrades are possible, usually cheaper than advertised, and hiding in plain sight for anyone willing to think a little differently.

The Upgrade Formula doesn't change the hotel.

It changes the traveler.

August's Top 118 Mileage Awards & Special Fares Greatest Hits (Still Available)

August 2026

August 2026 Deals

There are lots of oohs and ahhs this month that can save you a load of miles, points, and dollars. As we always say, however, don’t delay, because some will be out-of-date fast!

Sweet Redeems

ASIA

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Japan Airlines> Business Class > San Diego to Tokyo

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Japan Airlines > Business Class > Los Angeles to Tokyo

Cathay Pacific Discount Business Class > 2+ Seats> San Francisco to Hong Kong > 2027 Travel

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Japan Airlines > Business Class > San Francisco to Tokyo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from San Francisco to Tokyo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Two-Seat Opportunities > from Los Angeles to Tokyo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Los Angeles to Tokyo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Los Angeles to Tokyo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Single Seat > from San Francisco to Seoul

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from San Francisco to Manila

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Los Angeles to Tokyo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Houston to Tokyo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from San Francisco to Osaka

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from San Francisco to Manila

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Denver to Tokyo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from San Francisco to Tokyo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Los Angeles to Tokyo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from San Francisco to Taipei

EUROPE

Miles and Points > Emirates Business Class from Newark to Athens > 2+ Seats > 2027 Travel

Miles and Points > Emirates Business Class from New York to Milan > 2+ Seats > 2027 Travel

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Denver to London

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Newark to Naples

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Washington to Paris

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Two Seat Opportunities > from San Francisco to London

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Washington to Lisbon

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Washington to Rome

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Washington to Barcelona

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Chicago to Paris

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Single Seat > from Washington to Athens

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Washington to Brussels

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Two Seat Opportunities > from Chicago to Dublin

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Washington to Amsterdam

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Newark to Paris

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Newark to London

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from San Francisco to Barcelona

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Newark to Rome

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Houston to London

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Chicago to Frankfurt

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Washington DC to Frankfurt

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Chicago to London

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > SWISS > Business Class > Boston to Zurich

Austrian Airlines Business Class with Miles/Points > New York to Vienna > 2+ Seats > 2027 Travel

Austrian Airlines Business Class with Miles/Points > Washington to Vienna > 4+ Seats > 2027 Travel

British Airways > Business Class With Miles > from Boston to London > 4+ Seats

LOT Business Class with Miles/Points Easy from New York to Warsaw > 4+ Seats

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > SWISS > Business Class > New York to Geneva

British Airways > Business Class With Miles > from Chicago to London > 4+ Seats

Austrian Airlines Business Class with Miles/Points > Montreal to Vienna > 2+ Seats > 2027 Travel

LOT Business Class with Miles/Points from Chicago to Krakow> 2+ Seats

British Airways > Business Class With Miles > from New York to London > 4+ Seats

LOT Business Class with Miles/Points from Chicago to Warsaw > 4+ Seats

LOT Business Class with Miles/Points from Miami to Warsaw > 2+ Seats

124,500 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 2+ Seats > Iberia > Orlando to Madrid

101,000 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 2+ Seats > Iberia > Dallas to Madrid

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Lufthansa > Business Class > Houston to Frankfurt

81,000 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 2+ Seats > Iberia > Washington to Madrid

101,000 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 2+ Seats > Iberia > Miami to Madrid

81,000 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 2+ Seats > Iberia > New York to Madrid

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Lufthansa > Business Class > Detroit to Frankfurt

81,000 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 2+ Seats > Iberia > Chicago to Madrid

81,000 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 2+ Seats > Iberia > Boston to Madrid

Business Class > Lufthansa > Houston to Nice > 2+ Seats > 1-stop

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Lufthansa > Business Class > Washington to Frankfurt

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Washington DC to Frankfurt

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Lufthansa > Business Class > Charlotte to Munich

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Chicago to Frankfurt

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Lufthansa > Business Class > Denver to Munich

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Lufthansa > Business Class > Chicago to Frankfurt

SOUTH AMERICA

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > 4+ Seats > from Washington to Sao Paulo

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > 2+ Seats > from Houston to Bogota

Miles > Cheap LATAM Business Class from Miami to Buenos Aires > 4+ Seats

Miles > Cheap LATAM Business Class from New York to Santiago > 4+ Seats

Miles > Cheap LATAM Business Class from Atlanta to Lima > 4+ Seats

AFRICA

Miles / Points > Single Seat > Royal Air Maroc > Business Class > New York to Casablanca

SOUTH PACIFIC

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > American Airlines > Los Angele to Sydney > 4+ Seats > Nonstop

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Single Seat > from San Francisco to Tahiti

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Los Angeles to Melbourne > Jun 2026 Travel

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Two Seat Opportunities > from Los Angeles to Sydney > 2026 Travel

Special Published Fares

AFRICA

Money > Nairobi > Biz Class > All Year > $3,659 to $4,118 R/T

Money > Canada/USA to Morocco > All Year > Business with Royal Air Maroc > $1,811 to $3,454 USD R/T

Money > Cairo > Summer/Fall > Biz Class > $2,879 to $3,184 R/T

ASIA

Money > Male > Biz Class > Summer/Fall > $3,409 to $4,150 R/T

Money > Japan > Summer/Fall > Biz Class > $3,070 to $4,316 R/T

Money > Colombo > Biz Class > All Year > $3,549 to $4,210 R/T

CARIBBEAN

Money > Nassau > All Year > Biz Class > $638 to $904 R/T

Money > St. Maarten > All Year > Biz Class > $937 to $1,285 R/T

Money > St. Thomas > All Year > Biz Class > $770 to $1,261 R/T

Money > Grand Cayman > All Year > Biz Class > $716 to $1,301 R/T

Money > George Town, The Bahamas > All Year > Biz Class > $662 to $905 R/T

Money > Santo Domingo > All Year > Biz Class > $705 to $906 R/T

Money > San Juan > Summer/Fall > Biz Class > $567 to $907 R/T

CENTRAL AMERICA

Money > San Jose, Costa Rica > All Year > Biz Class > $873 to $1,010 R/T

NORTH AMERICA

Money > Europe to U.S. > All Year > Biz Class > $2,521 to $2,949 R/T

Money > Europe to U.S. > All Year > Biz Class with JetBlue > $2,543 to $3,014 R/T

Money > Domestic Transcon > All Year > Business Class > $988 to $1,357 R/T

Money > from Europe to New York with La Compagnie > All Year > Biz Class > $2,368 to $3,222 R/T

EUROPE

Money > Italy > All Year > First Class > $4,407 to $5,605 R/T

Money > Spain > All Year > First Class > $4,642 to $5,762 R/T

Money > Europe > Summer/Fall > Biz Class with JetBlue > $2,985 to $3,470 R/T

Money > Vienna > Summer/Winter > First Class > $4,926 to $5,728 R/T

Money > Germany > All Year > First Class > $4,827 to $5,840 R/T

Money > Europe > All Year > Biz Class with TAP Portugal > $2,708 to $3,369 R/T

Money > Greece > Summer/Fall > First Class > $4,409 to $5,761 R/T

Money > Scotland > All Year > First Class > $4,959 to $5,786 R/T

Money > Spain > Summer/Fall > Biz Class > $2,985 to $3,450 R/T

Money > Amsterdam > All Year > First Class > $4,818 to $5,171 R/T

Money > Dublin > Summer/Fall > Biz Class > $3,092 to $3,098 R/T

HAWAII

Money > Kona > Summer/Fall > Biz Class > $1,266 to $1,668 R/T

Money > Honolulu > All Year > Biz Class > $1,222 to $1,647 R/T

Money > Kauai > All Year > Biz Class > $1,026 to $1,588 R/T

Money > Maui > Summer/Fall > Biz Class > $1,306 to $1,489 R/T

INDIA

Money > Chennai > Summer/Fall > Biz Class > $3,350 to $3,984 R/T

Money > Bengaluru > Spring/Fall > Biz Class > $2,753 to $4,017 R/T

Money > Mumbai > All Year > Biz Class > $2,942 to $3,216 R/T

MEXICO

Money > Puerto Vallarta > All Year > Biz Class > $754 to $1,043 R/T

Money > Cabo San Lucas > All Year > Biz Class > $788 to $1,025 R/T

Money > Cancun > All Year > Biz Class > $697 to $1,041 R/T

SOUTH PACIFIC

Money > Australia and New Zeland > All Year > Biz Class > from $4,189 to $6,961 R/T