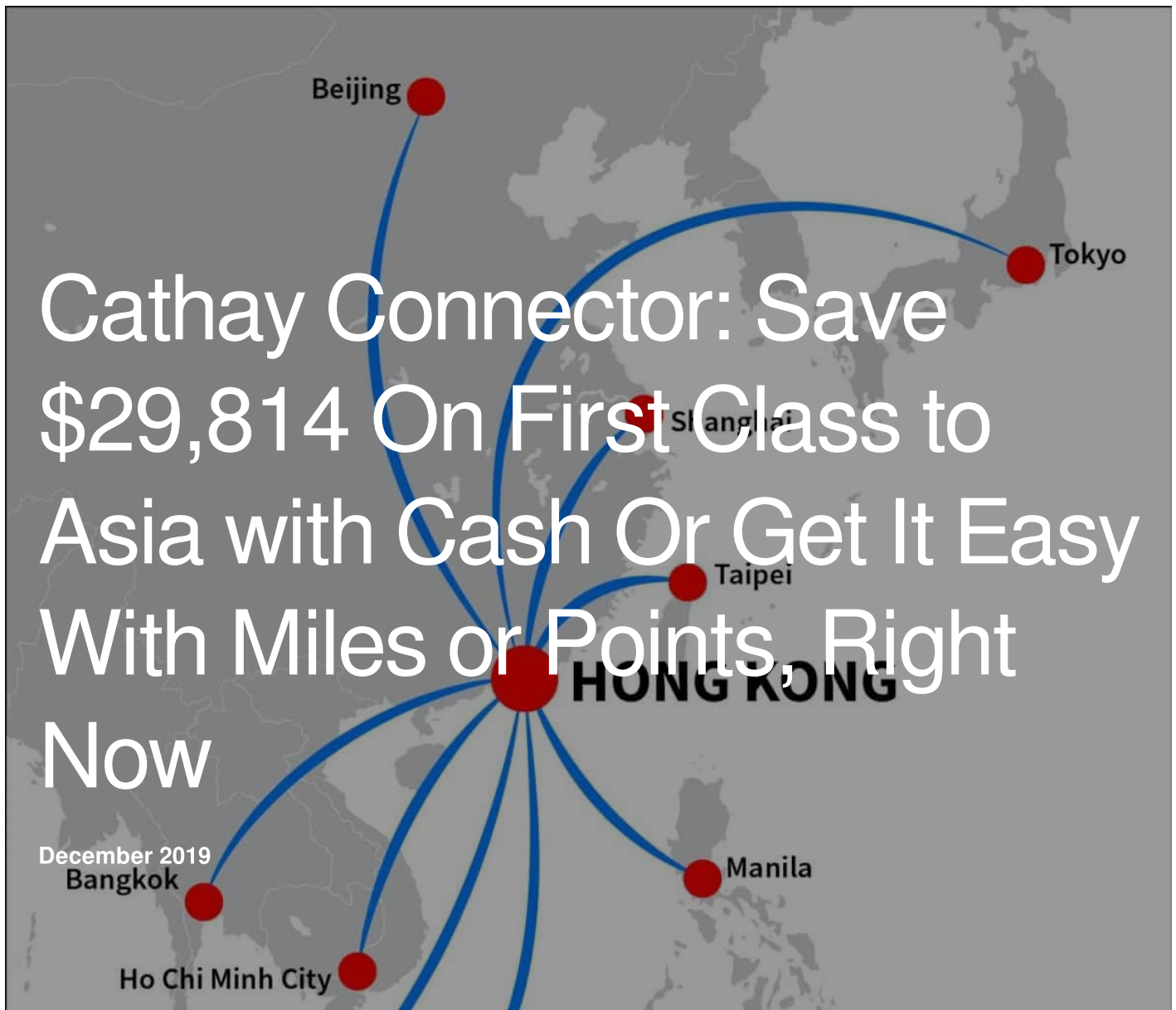




Amex, Capital One, Citi, and Marriott all are Cathay Pacific transfer partners and make it easy.

Regular First Class travelers to Asia will know that mileage award space is often harder to find than a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. Not only are airlines releasing fewer award seats, but also a number of airlines are cutting down on a First Class cabin altogether.

Well, it just so happens we were digging around at the bottom of a rainbow near FCF headquarters and look what we found: a First Class pot of gold in the shape of a Cathay Pacific aircraft, offering very good First Class award space to Asia from all its U.S. gateway cities.

CATHAY PACIFIC – THAT’S HONG KONG’S AIRLINE, RIGHT?

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Instead, this special report is about using Hong Kong as a First Class entry point to Asia, using miles, for up to 87% off. From there, Asia is your oyster.

And you never have to leave the Hong Kong airport, which is without incident we’re told, and the lighter traffic these days makes it easier to navigate than usual.

So how to get there? This month it’s Cathay Pacific all the way. Now, readers who don’t have Cathay Pacific miles might be tempted to do a “harumph” and storm off. Don’t. We’ve got good news. Cathay Pacific is a point transfer partner with four credit card rewards programs (Amex, Capital One, Citi, and Marriott), so you can transfer points to Cathay Pacific miles. Plus, Cathay Pacific is also a oneworld partner, meaning you can redeem American miles (more on this below). Or you can transfer points to other airline mileage programs. So, let’s go to Asia in First Class.

RIGHT NOW: HOW TO WIN IN FIRST CLASS USING MILES WITH CATHAY PACIFIC

FCF found good First Class award availability to Hong Kong from Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco, as these recent FCF Sweet Redeems alerts demonstrate:

[First Class to Asia from Boston, Chicago, and New York](#)

[First Class to Asia from Los Angeles and San Francisco](#)

FIRST CLASS TO ASIA USING CATHAY PACIFIC MILES

, uses a flight distance chart. This means the cost is based on the actual distance flown. For departure from Los Angeles and San Francisco to Hong Kong the cost is 220,000 miles round-trip, and from Boston, Chicago, and New York, it’s 250,000 round-trip miles.

NO MILES? NO PROBLEM? SAVE UP TO 81% BY BUYING MILES

Just buy Amex Rewards points. They cost 2.5¢ each. Given that the baseline First Class fare is often \$34,100 from New York to Hong Kong (crazy, right?) and given that you can buy 250,000 Amex Rewards Points for about \$6,250 and that taxes with the Cathay loyalty program generally cost \$133, you save

Related Reads:

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Mileage Cost: American's mileage program is a zone based program, meaning the cost is based on one zone to another. So any departure in the [48 U.S. states](#) goes for 220,000 American miles round-trip--and to almost anywhere in Asia, including places such as Singapore or Thailand, for example.

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Let's look at using American Airlines miles to connect through to other Asian cities.

DEPART

New York, NY to Denpasar Bali, Indonesia

Wednesday, September 2, 2020

Ⓜ American Airlines flights may be listed first.

<

Mon, Aug 31

37.5K

Tue, Sep 1

37.5K

Wed, Sep 2

37.5K

Thu, Sep 3

37.5K

Fri, Sep 4

37.5K

>

📅

CALENDAR

▼

Sort by:

Relevance

▼

Main Cabin

Business

First

JFK

12:20 AM

→

DPS

3:00 PM

26 h 40m

1 stop

JFK - HKG = CX 843 = Boeing 777

Operated by Cathay Pacific Airways

HKG - DPS = CX 785 = Boeing 777

Operated by Cathay Pacific Airways

One way

37.5K

+ \$20.90

One way

70K

+ \$32.40

One way

110K

+ \$32.40

Bali: 220,000 American miles round-trip.



USING CREDIT CARD POINTS

Japan Airlines has the lowest mileage cost and it uses a flight distance chart, so the cost is based on the distance flown. From San Francisco to Hong Kong, the cost is 165,000 miles, and from Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York to Hong Kong the cost is 190,000 miles.

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Transfer Chase Points to Fly First Class on Cathay Pacific: British Airways is a Chase airline transfer partner, meaning that if you only have Chase points and no other currency, then you might want to transfer points to British Airways. For departure from Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco the cost is 288,500 miles, and from Boston, the cost is 412,000 miles to Hong Kong.

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Domestic First Class Fare Fall, Part 2 (and Upgrading for Free in Some Cases)

December 2019

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Bali: 220,000 American miles round-trip.

JFK to ORD
Flight 1 of 2

ORD to JFK
Flight 2 of 2

New York, NY to Chicago, IL

AA 310 • Boeing 737-800 Passenger • Travel time: 3h 10m

Main Cabin Extra
\$58 - \$64

- Extra legroom (up to 6 inches)
- Preferred boarding with earlier overhead bin access
- Complimentary beer, wine and spirits

United sample screenshot:

Bundle offer 1	Bundle offer 2
Economy Plus®	Economy Plus®
Standard checked bag	Standard checked bag
	Premier Access®
	United Club SM access
+ \$113 per person	+ \$196 per person
Select	Select

USING CREDIT CARD POINTS

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Greece's Sparkling Island Jewels Shine Bright With Special Business Class Fares

December 2019

**Don't Be Set in Your Vacation Ways: Santorini, Greece
(and/or other Greek Islands like Lefkada, Mykonos,
Naxos, Paros, and Skiathos), for the Price of Hawaii**

If you thought Greece peaked early, say around 500BC, you'd be wrong. It's still a fantastic destination, particularly its famed islands. Oh, and you don't have to worry about pesky Persians or Peloponnesians attacking from the sea.

VOLCANIC MATCHUP: HAWAII VS. SANTORINI

This is a story of default thinking and unexpected opportunity. Many Americans default to Hawaii because, well, it's Hawaii. But what if there was a destination so relaxing, and now so cost-comparable, that you could put Hawaii back a while and grab this opportunity while it's there?

Santorini is a stunning volcanic island in the Aegean Sea, and one of the world's most Instagram-friendly places. Some originally thought it was the lost city of Atlantis, the one that sank into the sea. If so, happily it's resurfaced and ready for you to relax on. **That's because Business Class fares are currently low and comparable to Hawaii.**

What's more, hotels of similar quality are often more affordable on Santorini than Hawaii, so the overall cost of your Socratic sojourn in the sun might even be cheaper.

And then there's the impress factor. You're at the water cooler and Joe from accounts says, "So what are you doing for your next vacation?" And you say, "Oh, you know, Hawaii again." And Joe nods politely, "Nice." However, if your answer is "Santorini and Naxos," Joe goes, "Wow!"

Simply put, this is a chance to experience amazing.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE FARES

Let's say New York-Maui Business Class fares with American, Delta, and United range from \$1,697 to \$2,415 in August. Contrast that with fares from New York-Santorini in Business Class with [United starting at \\$2,015](#) (almost half the usual price), or British Airways, starting at just \$2,159 in August (compare that to Lufthansa's fare of \$3,707, a savings of \$1,548 / 42%).

More specifically, traveling August 15 to 24 from New York to Santorini for an eight-day stay, the Business Class fare on British Airways is \$2,159, whereas the fare to Maui is \$2,165 on American—very comparable.

Now, add in the 10% discount for the [British Airways Visa Card](#) (current promo code, CHASEBA10) and the fare drops to \$1,943. With the Chase discount this is *lower* than American's fares to Maui.

✈️ -- Saturday 15 August 2020						Price
18:30 15 Aug	06:30 16 Aug	John F Kennedy (NY) (New York)	Heathrow (London)	BA0112 British Airways	Club World	\$1,942.72 1 passenger Baggage allowance Currency calculator
11:55 16 Aug	18:00 16 Aug	Heathrow (London)	Santorini	BA0652 British Airways	Club Europe	
✈️ -- Monday 24 August 2020						
15:10 24 Aug	17:10 24 Aug	Santorini	Heathrow (London)	BA0653 British Airways	Club Europe	
19:50 24 Aug	22:35 24 Aug	Heathrow (London)	John F Kennedy (NY) (New York)	BA0183 British Airways	Club World	

These types of lower and comparable airfares in Business Class to Santorini are available from many U.S. cities. For example, San Francisco to **Santorini** goes for [\\$2,364](#) on United. See [here](#) for other Greek Island Business Class fare deals, such as Los Angeles to **Mykonos** for \$2,059. Also see fare chart below.



Samples of Special Greek Island Business Class Fares

Route	Fare	Airline
New York - Santorini	\$2,015	United

Route	Fare	Airline
New York - Kalamata	\$2,057	British Airways
New York - Corfu	\$2,059	British Airways
Los Angeles - Mykonos	\$2,060	British Airways
New York - Mykonos	\$2,060	British Airways
Washington, DC - Santorini	\$2,194	United
San Francisco - Santorini	\$2,364	United
Miami - Kos	\$2,414	SWISS
Miami - Santorini	\$2,486	American
Los Angeles - Santorini	\$2,536	American

WANT TO HIT OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION?

Most people fly point-to-point (A-B-A) and back. An [Open-Jaw](#) itinerary, on the other hand, means flying to one city and returning from another (Depart City A, arrive City B, return to City A from City C). Let's look at a few examples of an open-jaw itinerary.

Open-Jaw Athens: A flight to Athens on Olympic Airways only takes 45 minutes (and costs just \$46 to \$56) from Santorini. So you could fly from New York to Santorini with United (the flights are operated as code-share flights with Lufthansa and/or SWISS, meaning you fly Lufthansa and / or SWISS, but buy your ticket through United), and then return from Athens "open-jaw style" (you don't have to return to Santorini). The cost is \$2,031, which is about the same as just flying to Santorini round-trip (\$2,015).

Open-Jaw Istanbul: You could also fly Santorini to Istanbul, as another example, and then return from Istanbul to New York. The cost is a little more, \$2,318, instead of the round-trip fare to Santorini at \$2,015.

Sample Open-Jaw Business Class Fares

Fare	Route	Airline
\$2,031	New York to Santorini return Athens to New York	United
\$2,318	New York to Santorini return Istanbul to New York	United
\$2,434	Los Angeles to Mykonos return Athens to Los Angeles	British Airways
\$2,344	New York to Corfu return Istanbul to New York	British Airways
\$2,187	Washington, DC to Santorini return Rome to Washington, DC	United

Fare	Route	Airline
\$2,237	San Francisco to Santorini return Sofia to San Francisco	United
\$2,042	Miami to Santorini return Bucharest to Miami	American

BA'S STOPOVER LOOPHOLE STRATEGY IN LONDON

In this issue we looked at the [SLS with a British Airways](#) bent. It opens up a whole range of destinations all over the globe, made more desirable by the fact you can throw in a stopover in London for an unbelievably small amount, giving you two European destinations in one. This works for stunning Santorini as well.

Let's say you want to travel from New York to Santorini and the lowest Business Class fare is [\\$2,159](#) round-trip with BA. Now, for just \$41 more, or [\\$2,200](#), you can fly New York to Santorini and stop in London for a few days. So you still get to Santorini, PLUS you get London. Not bad.

STUNNING SANTORINI'S SPECTACULAR SIGHTS

There are lots of reasons to visit Santorini, but the sunsets may be all you need. They're mesmerizing, bathing the whitewashed walls of homes precariously perched on steep hills in a rich orange hue.

Those hills are part of a spectacular caldera, a volcanic crater lagoon, created 3,600 years ago by one of history's largest eruptions.



Santorini is something to experience, but one many Americans never get to do. Now's your chance. It's the bucket-list tick you may not even know you needed.

SANTORINI-MEENY-MINEY-MO SO MANY GLORIOUS ISLANDS TO GO...

The great thing about this part of the world is how many beautiful options are just a hop, skip and souvlaki away. You can spend all your time in Santorini and completely relax, or you can also explore spectacular nearby islands, Lefkada, Mykonos, Naxos, Paros, and Skiathos, to name a few, or even visit Athens or Istanbul.



No Bull in This China Shop: Business Class Upgrades to China Just \$29 Per Flight Hour

December 2019

People's Republic of Low Fares Gets You to the Great Wall, Asia Comfortably and Inexpensively.

It's been almost two years since we
that Beijing and Shanghai should top your consideration list for travel to Asia, given their disproportionately
low Business Class fares.

Or, at a minimum, use the special fares as your gateway to Asia as upgrades from Premium Economy to Business Class can be a mere \$29 per hour or \$452 one-way from the West Coast and just \$37 per hour or \$628 one-way from the East Coast from economy. **Special low fares are available from many U.S. cities.**

TACTICAL, PRACTICAL, CLIMACTICAL

[Tactical fares](#) can cover specific dates, seasons, or holiday times like Christmas or Easter. They can also be origin-specific or destination-specific, like China for example. And speaking of examples...

FARE HIGHLIGHTS

West Coast highlights include [Portland-Beijing starting at \\$2,004](#) on United for 31 hours of flying. To put this deal in perspective, the lowest economy fare starts at \$725, and the lowest Premium Economy fare starts at \$1,100. That is \$452 more each way to upgrade to Business Class from PE, or \$29 per flight hour.

Even from the East Coast, highlights include Florida Business Class fares starting as low as [\\$2,120 to Beijing](#). Take for example, Tampa to Beijing with a connection in Chicago on United, and a total flight time of 37 hours. To put this in perspective, the lowest economy fare starts at \$726. That was \$697 more each way to upgrade to Business Class from economy, or \$37 per flight hour. Or take Boston to Beijing with a connection in Newark on United starting at [\\$2,004](#), and a total flight time of 34 hours. To put this in perspective, the lowest economy fare starts at \$748. That was \$628 more each way to upgrade to Business Class from economy, or \$37 per flight hour.

[Nonstop Business Class fares start at \\$2,901 from New York](#) on United to Beijing for almost 28 hours of flying.

BEIJING FLING: REASONS TO GO

One of the world's most fascinating cities, Beijing offers 3,000 years of history to explore, including the **nearby Great Wall**, the (not so forbidden) Forbidden City, historic hutong alleyways, roast duck, and much more.

TRAVEL BEYOND CHINA TO ALL OVER ASIA

Want to vacation in another Asian city? Why not check out Beijing first, then hop on to other destinations? Taipei and Tokyo are around three hours away, as is Osaka, Japan, for example. And Seoul, South Korea, is only two hours away. Travel is [cheap in economy](#) on short flights and [often in Business Class too](#).



Sample Beijing China Special Business Class Fares

Fare	From	Airline(s)	Link
\$2,004	Boston	United	Expired
\$2,004	Portland	Delta, United	Expired
\$2,027	San Diego	American	Expired
\$2,120	Kansas City	United	Expired
\$2,120	New Orleans	United	Expired
\$2,120	Raleigh	Delta	Expired
\$2,120	Tampa	Delta	Expired
\$2,136	Las Vegas	American, United	Expired

Fare	From	Airline(s)	Link
\$2,136	Las Vegas	American, United	Expired
\$2,355	Seattle	Air Canada	Expired
\$2,521	Phoenix	American, United	Expired
\$2,533	San Francisco	United	Expired
\$2,752	Chicago	United	Expired
\$2,906	Newark	United	Expired



The Winning Team of 10: Are You One of the Types of Travelers Who Score Most with United Upgrades?

December 2019

Who can and should use miles to upgrade on United (a Chase Ultimate Rewards Partner)? Here are 10 United upgrader tryouts: Will you make the team?

Remember that Stevie Wonder song, “I Just Called to Say I Love You”? I’m considering recording a new version titled, “I Just Called to Say I Love Mileage Upgrades on United.” Catchy, huh?

We are huge fans of using miles to upgrade from coach to Business on United, RATHER THAN using miles to get free award seats.

This is because the value of upgrading is often so much better than using miles for free award seats, for a variety of reasons.

So, exactly what kind of traveler should use their hard-earned miles or Chase points to upgrade on United, and who shouldn't?

The Who's Who of Miles Upgraders

#1 Sam the Seat Snarer

One of the biggest reasons to use miles to upgrade rather than for a free award ticket is simply that United makes substantially more seats and days available for upgrades than awards. Free mileage award tickets can be an availability nightmare on United to most parts of the world, rendering your miles useless, but that is often not the case with mileage upgrades. [FCF's daily alerts](#) uncover United upgrade opportunities on a weekly basis.

#2 Cletus the Elitist Completist

In addition to better availability, using miles to upgrade earns miles and elite credit, which free mileage awards don't. And we know how important it is to maintain your elite status, if this is you.

#3 Hector the Connector

Upgrading can often be better for connecting flights. With free mileage award tickets, when you can find the long-haul flight segment available in a premium class of service (perhaps via FCF's multitude of [Sweet Redeems alerts](#)), you often can't get to the long-haul flight segment's departure city, or beyond its destination city, on the same free award ticket. That's a passion killer.

With mileage upgrade awards, however, when you buy an economy class ticket from your departure city to your final destination, you can always find a fare all on one ticket.

Quick example: Say Hector lives in San Francisco and wants to fly to Brussels. He spots an FCF upgrade alert with availability on United from Chicago to Brussels, the long-haul segment (and the one that's critical to get a comfortable seat). With a free mileage award ticket, he'd have to get lucky with upgrade availability on the San Francisco-Chicago segment, or buy a separate ticket.

With a mileage upgrade award, however, because he's simply buying an everyday economy class airfare from San Francisco to Brussels, Hector is much more likely to find upgrade award space on the San Francisco-Chicago segment. Worst-case scenario: He waitlists but is covered on the long-haul segment that he really cares about.

#4 Limited-Miles Neville

If you don't have many miles with United, or points with Chase, upgrades are the way to go because they require fewer miles than an award ticket. In other words, the upgrade doesn't drain your mile bank so drastically. That leaves more miles in the knapsack for your next trip.

Quick example: Say Neville lives in Newark and wants to fly to Shanghai. He spots an FCF upgrade alert with availability on United from Newark to Shanghai, which would require 60,000 miles round-trip (plus \$1,200 co-pay) to upgrade from an economy ticket to Business Class. The lowest saver award requires 140,000 miles round-trip, but can run easily as high as 350,000+ miles—80,000 to 290,000 fewer miles when using miles for an upgrade.

#5 Bucket List Bonnie

Some destinations—maybe even dream destinations (g'day Australia)—very rarely have low-cost free award space. And, the Business Class fares are typically \$6,000 to \$8,000. With mileage upgrades, however, you can buy a much lower-cost economy ticket and use 60,000 miles and pay a \$1,200 co-pay round-trip to upgrade to Business Class.

Quick example: Let's say Bonnie is traveling Los Angeles to Sydney in April. The lowest United upgradeable economy fare is currently \$913, while Business Class is \$6,298. So, even with the round-trip \$1,200 co-pay (plus 60,000 miles), her upgraded economy-to-Business Class ticket only comes to \$2,113 total (plus 60,000 miles). So, Bonnie can save \$4,185 (66%) off the published fare by using miles.

In many cases, mileage upgrades get you where free awards can't. Time to go Down Under and see those koalas.

#6 The Brady Bunch

Finding a bunch of seats available when traveling as a family for free award travel—all for the same flight and date—is harder than settling a sibling dispute over who gets the last cookie. However, getting a deal for the whole family is 100 to 1,000 times easier—based on our research, literally—with mileage upgrades because **United releases many more upgrade seats.**

#7 Last-Minute Loretta

Last-minute Business Class fares can be high, but economy fares for the same route are often still low at the last minute, so an upgrade can offer great savings.

Quick example: Let's say Loretta can **only book a week in advance** and she's traveling from Newark to Rome. The lowest United upgradeable economy fare is currently \$1,183, (7-day advance fare for early

October) while Business Class is \$8,275. Even with the round-trip \$1,100 co-pay (plus 40,000 miles), Loretta is only paying \$2,283 total (plus 40,000 miles) for her upgraded economy-to-Business Class ticket. In other words, she can save \$5,992 (72%) off the published Business Class fare by using miles to upgrade from economy.

#8 One-Way Waylon

Like last-minute tickets, one-way Business Class fares are usually very high, but the economy fare can still be low, so an upgrade in this case can also offer sweet savings.

Quick example: Let's say Waylon needs a one-way ticket New York/Newark to London for some reason, often an expensive Business Class route, even when booked way in advance. The lowest United upgradeable economy fare is currently \$1,304, while Business Class is \$6,704. So, even with the one-way \$475 co-pay (plus 20,000 miles), Waylon is only paying \$1,779 total (plus 20,000 miles), saving \$4,925, or 73% off the published fare by upgrading with miles.

#9 Strictly Business Ben

Business travelers are typically Monday-to-Friday flyers. But often their companies won't pay for Business Class seats, so upgrades are their best option.

Quick example: Let's say Ben is traveling on business to São Paulo from Washington, DC. It's a last-minute trip, staying two nights. As is typical of many companies, Ben's business travel policy only allows economy travel. United's unrestricted economy fare, B class, is \$3,432 round-trip, while Business Class is \$8,994. (No wonder the company won't pay for Business.) How can Ben get around this to fly in comfort to São Paulo? Say it with me: "using miles to upgrade." In this case, 50,000 miles are required to upgrade to Business Class, but he's also earning about 16,000 miles when he upgrades, which he wouldn't with a free award ticket. So, in essence, he's only using a total of 34,000 miles for the upgrade.

#10 Advance-Booker Betty

It also pays to upgrade if you're an advance booker.

Quick example: Betty is traveling from San Francisco to Hong Kong in February 2020 for her twin sister Hetty's wedding. United's lowest economy fare is currently starting at just \$596 round-trip, while Business Class is \$6,039. Even with the \$1,200 co-pay round-trip (and 60,000 miles), Betty can pay just \$1,796 (plus 60,000 miles) to fly in Business Class, saving \$4,243 (or 70%) off the published fare by using miles.

WHEN NOT TO USE MILES FOR AN UPGRADE ON UNITED

This is easy: It's when published Business Class fares are low. For example, let's say you're traveling from Newark to Lisbon one-way. This is a route where Business Class fares are low for one-way travel—only

\$1,411 one-way. The lowest United upgradeable economy fare is currently \$653 one-way. Add the one-way \$550 co-pay (plus 20,000 miles) for a total of \$1,203. That's only a savings of \$203, and you would have to use 20,000 miles. That's not good value nor good use of your miles for an upgrade.

HOW ANYONE CAN PLAY THIS UPGRADE GAME

Don't have any or enough United miles? You *can* get more miles quickly and easily with United by just buying them. The best time to buy is when they are on sale; a recent sale had them at 2.03 cents per mile, and September, as low as 1.88 cents per mile.

For example, let's say you're traveling [Houston to Rio de Janeiro](#) in June 2020. United's lowest upgradeable economy fare is currently starting at \$1,524 round-trip, while Business Class is \$8,388. Even with the \$900 co-pay round-trip, you pay \$2,424 plus 50,000 miles, which you can buy now for \$1,128 to fly in Business Class, saving \$4,836 (or 58%) off the published fare by using miles.

The screenshot shows the United website's flight search results for a round-trip from Houston (IAH) to Rio de Janeiro (GIG) in June 2020. The search results are displayed in a table with columns for Depart, Arrive, Stops, Duration, and Price. The 'Recommended flight' is a nonstop round-trip for \$1,524. To the right of the table, there are two options: 'Economy' for \$1,524 and 'Business (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)' for \$1,524 plus 25k miles and a \$475 co-pay each way, per person. The 'Business' option has a 'Select' button next to it.

Depart	Arrive	Stops	Duration	Price
Tue, Jun 9 10:05 pm IAH	Wed, Jun 10 10:15 am GIG	Nonstop	10h 10m	Roundtrip \$1,524

Roundtrip \$1,524

Business (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)

+25k miles
+\$475 co-pay
each way, per person

If you don't want to buy miles, know that you can transfer Marriott or Chase points to United.

HOW TO BOOK MILEAGE UPGRADES ON UNITED

Get a sense of availability date-clusters online (perhaps using one of FCF's Upgrade alerts; see a list of recent ones below).

Select the "[Advance search](#) (Multi-city and upgrades)" option from on United's home page. Then under the header "Fare preferences" for "Cabin" click on "Economy/Premium Economy" and for "Type of fare" click on "Lowest available fares," and for "Upgrade type" use the drop down and click on "MilagePlus Upgrade Awards (MUA)" and select "Upgrade to Premium Economy or Business." See below:

Fare preferences

Cabin

Economy/
Premium Economy

Business or First

Type of fare ?

Lowest available fares

Flexible fares

Unrestricted fares

Upgrade type

MileagePlus Upgrade Awards (MUA) ▼

Upgrade to Premium Economy or Business

When your search results are displayed, it will not only show fares and flight schedules, it will also show what flights offer an upgrade, and what the cost is for the upgrade (in co-pay and/or miles).

☒ Nonstop \$901
 ☐ With stops \$930
 [Choose connecting airports](#)
 You have filters selected. [Clear all filters](#)
[Show fare type comparison ?](#)

Sort flights by: Best match ▼

Economy

Premium Economy (lowest)

Business (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)

Depart	Arrive	Stops	Duration					
Wed, May 6 10:35 pm	Fri, May 8 7:30 am	Nonstop	15h 55m		Details Seats	Roundtrip \$901 Select	Not available	Roundtrip \$901 +30k miles +\$600 co-pay each way, per person Select

☒ Nonstop \$901
 ☐ With stops \$930
 [Choose connecting airports](#)
 You have filters selected. [Clear all filters](#)
[Show fare type comparison ?](#)

Sort flights by: Best match ▼

Economy

Premium Economy (lowest)

Business (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)

Depart	Arrive	Stops	Duration					
Wed, May 6 10:35 pm	Fri, May 8 7:30 am	Nonstop	15h 55m		Details Seats	Roundtrip \$901 Select	Not available	Roundtrip \$901 +30k miles +\$600 co-pay each way, per person Select

MileagePlus earnings (each way, per person):

Base award miles	1,915	---	---
PQM PQS PQD	7,920 1 3383		

Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX) to Melbourne, VIC, AU (MEL)

UA 98 | Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner

Wi-Fi
 Power outlets

Depart LAX: Wed, May 6
 Arrive MEL: Fri, May 8

Red-eye flight

United Economy (G)

Dinner

United Polaris business (PZ)

(upgrade-eligible Economy fare)

Dinner

Upgrade available

Click on "Details" to find out if the upgrade space is available.

Page 6 of 7

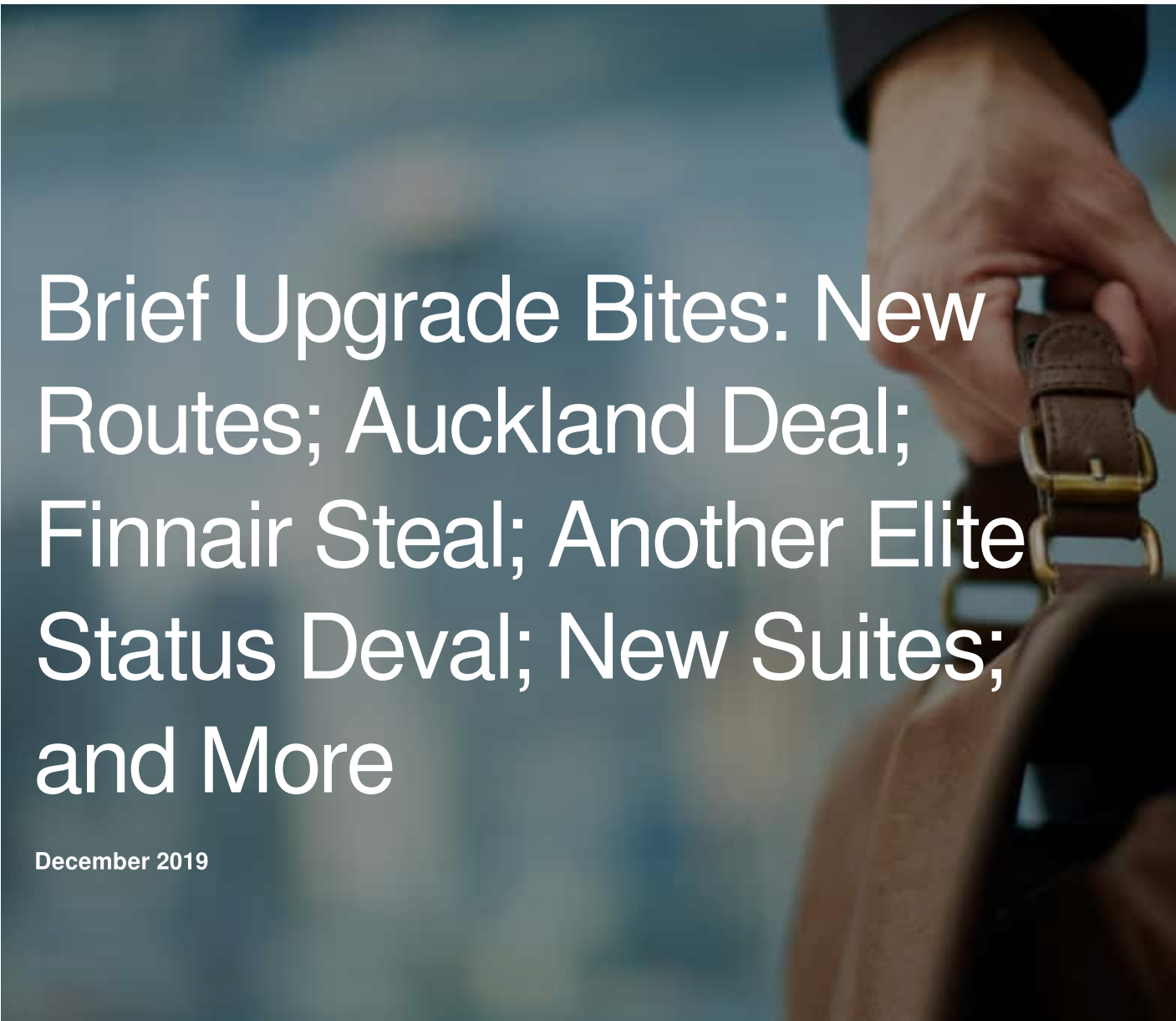
FIVE RECENT FCF SWEET REDEEMS UPGRADE ALERTS TO HELP YOU USE YOUR UNITED MILES FOR AN UPGRADE ON UNITED

[Save Up to 70% on United to Shanghai and Tokyo, 4+ Seats with Chase Points or United Miles](#)

[Great Availability of United Upgrades from the Midwest to Brussels and London \(4+ Seats\)](#)

[United Upgrades Now Available from the Midwest to Brazil, 4+ Seats \(Save 26% to 73%\)](#)

[Easy Melbourne and Sydney Upgrades to Business Class with United Miles or Chase Points, 4+ Seats \(Save 45% to 75%\)](#)



Brief Upgrade Bites: New Routes; Auckland Deal; Finnair Steal; Another Elite Status Deval; New Suites; and More

December 2019

#1 IBERIA: WASHINGTON DULLES FLIGHTS TO MADRID

Iberia will launch nonstop flights between Madrid and Washington, DC as of summer 2020. This represents a service resumption for the airline, canceled in 2010.

The flight will launch on May 1, 2020, and FCF research has found **good seat availability with miles/points** for travel from Washington, DC to Madrid, starting at a cost of 100,000 miles round-trip, or 115,000 American miles. Credit card point transfer partners include Amex Rewards, Chase, and Marriott. For details go [here](#).

#2 [FINNAIR: IT'S BACK:](#) SUPER CHEAP BUSINESS CLASS TO EUROPE

Finnair has a lucrative points sale on now through Dec. 9 with up to 50% more points on offer. You can also now buy more points: 120,000 (which becomes 180,000 with the bonus) whereas you could previously only buy 100,000. Thanks to that bonus deal, a quick crunching of the numbers reveals a Business Class trip to Europe for \$1,516 return. How? In off-season (usually January to March) the economy ticket for New York-Helsinki often costs \$523 round-trip. Upgrading the ticket with miles would cost 100,000 miles round-trip, which you can buy now for €901 (at today's exchange: \$993), giving you a total ticket cost of about \$1,516. That's Finntastic.

#3 THE BRITISH AIRWAYS "NOT-A-CENT-MORE UPGRADE"

[British Airways](#) has introduced its new Club Suite Business Class seat on one U.S.-bound route that, once you know about it, gives you an "in-class" seat upgrade, or in other words, a much nicer trip across the ditch without paying anything more.

The Route: Two Boeing 777 aircraft with Club Suite, the first of which has just been delivered and is flying on the New York (JFK)-London route.

Sample of free in-class upgrade:

B777 – BA175 at 9.30am and BA174 at 6.50pm — with the new enclosed flat-bed suite.

B747 – BA117 at 8.25am and BA112 at 6.30pm — with legacy flat-bed seats.

How to find the Club Suite when booking your flight on a B777:

The new Club Suite comes in a 1x2x1 layout and is offered in rows 5 to 17, whereas the current/legacy Business Class seat on B777 comes in a 2x4x2 and is offered in rows 10 to 14 or 15.

#4 FOLLOW UP TO LAST MONTH: IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO EXCOMMUNICATE YOURSELF FROM 'THE ELITE CLASS'

Don't say we didn't [warn you](#). But in case you needed yet more proof of the decline and fall of Elite Status, Lufthansa has announced revisions to its frequent flyer program. For 2021, points replace status miles, status will only be valid for one year where it was previously two, and Lufthansa Group airline flights will count more towards status than partner flights. Stay tuned (and read [our special report here](#).)

#5 UNITED AWARD CHARTS ARE NO MORE

As of November 15, United Airlines officially no longer has published award charts for United-operated flights. The airline's frequent-flyer program can now charge whatever it wants for award flights, without notice. Delta

SkyMiles led the way among the 3 carriers in the U.S. with dynamic award pricing and no award-charts in 2015.

On the flip side, [partner award charts do remain as well as an upgrade chart for United flights](#). But **using United miles is not always the way to go** anyway for partner flights. For example, All Nippon's First Class flight to Tokyo from Los Angeles is only 150,000 All Nippon miles, and All Nippon is a **transfer point partner with Amex Rewards**. Redeem the award using United miles and you pay 220,000 United miles, 70,000 more. United miles are best used for United upgrades.

#6 RARE AUCKLAND MILEAGE UPGRADES FOUND ON AMERICAN

FCF found rare upgrade award space on American for travel in **December** from Los Angeles to Auckland. Upgrades can be had with any economy fare (H, K, M, L, V, G, Q, N, O, and S) plus [50,000 miles and \\$700 co-pay round-trip](#). To book the upgrade, call American at (800) 433-7300. For more details go [here](#).

#7 ALL NIPPON'S [NEW FIRST](#) (THE SUITE) AND [BUSINESS](#) (CALLED "THE ROOM") CLASS

ANA's New First and Business Class cabins are now bookable as awards on the New York (JFK) to Tokyo (Haneda) route using the B777-300ER aircraft. ANA is now flying the new cabins with [The Suite](#) and [The Room](#) on some, but not all flights.

The easiest way to check whether an upcoming ANA flight has the new products is to go to [ana.co.jp](#) and under the "Award Booking" tab, search for your exact flight and cabin class. If it states "The Suite" or "The Room" for your flight, then your flight currently is scheduled to have the new product. However, keep in mind there can be last minute equipment swaps that might mean you get the older cabin.

Round-trip First class is just 150,000 miles, and Business Class is 85,000 miles. If you need ANA miles you can transfer points from Amex Rewards.





Art of War: Asian Carriers March Against U.S. Carriers in the Battle for Lowest Premium Economy Fares to Asia

December 2019

Fly to Asia in Premium Economy for only \$10 per flight hour more than Economy.

If Premium Economy were a new ice cream, it would be the flavor of the year. Talk about finding a market niche. Well, to be fair, the Europeans came up with the idea 20 years ago; it's just taken many others to catch on.

But it has—with sprinkles on top—and now the price battle is on, not just among U.S. airlines, but also major overseas carriers such as Japan Airlines and Cathay Pacific, for example. In the past those airlines rarely discounted Premium Economy seats, but now they're melting down their prices.

EXAMPLE: DELTA'S PREMIUM ECONOMY FOR ONLY \$10 MORE PER FLIGHT HOUR THAN ECONOMY

While lower fares abound, Delta is the winner in the race to offer the lowest Premium Economy fare route we could find from the U.S. to Asia of any airline: [\\$747](#) from Los Angeles to Shanghai. Again, that's for a Premium Economy seat, not an economy seat. Compare this to flying in economy for \$497.



Delta Premium Select Seat



Delta Economy Seat

One way we like to look at the value of flight costs is from the perspective of **cost-per-flight hour**. For example, the travel time between Los Angeles and Shanghai is about 26 hours round-trip. When the Premium Economy fare is down at those \$747 levels, it equates to about \$29 per-flight hour.

Compare this to flying in economy for \$497, a cost-per-flight hour of \$19, and you'll see PE is only \$10 more per-flight hour.

Delta (SkyTeam) also has a good PE fare option for non-stop service from Seattle to Tokyo starting at \$1,095, Minneapolis to Tokyo starting at \$1,126, Atlanta to Shanghai starting at \$1,347, and Detroit to Beijing starting at \$1,357, to name a few.

WHAT DO YOU GET FOR THAT DELTA DOLLAR IN PE?

Paying the difference for PE nets you:

- More seat recline: up to 75% more than economy
- More legroom: up to 8 inches more than economy
- More seat Width: up to an inch more than economy
- An adjustable footrest and leg rest
- Priority check-in and boarding
- Better meals
- TV screen: 13.2 inches on the A350 and noise-cancelling headphones
- Other perks not offered in economy like dedicated overhead bin space, a Tumi amenity kit, and dedicated in-cabin flight attendant.

For a deeper Delta PE dive, see [here](#).

Other great low-cost PE options we've seen to Asia in a minute—on airlines like All Nippon, American, Cathay Pacific, Japan Airlines, Singapore, and United—but first...

WHEN TO CONSIDER PREMIUM ECONOMY?

If you're a business traveler but don't want to spend \$3,000 to \$7,000 to sit up front, PE is an option for you. Case in point: the Business Class fare for the Los Angeles-Shanghai route above on Delta is high (\$5,307 high, or equivalent to *seven* PE tickets for the price of one in Biz). Even American and United's lowest Business Class fares start at \$3,317 on that route. So, yes, a \$747 PE fare is a good option when Business Class fares might be too high for you.

Other possible reasons business travelers should consider PE:

- When company travel policy or the client's budget forbids Business Class

- When business owners want to give their employees a perk
- When sleep is secondary to working or not important at all

Leisure travelers have reason to consider PE too. And the first reason is the same as for business travelers: If you don't want to spend \$3,000 to \$7,000 to sit up front, PE is an option for you.

Other possible reasons leisure travelers should consider PE:

- When you do not have enough miles for Business Class or First
- When you have miles but award inventory is not available
- Perhaps when flying with many kids (do they really need to fly up front?)

LOYALTY-FREE OPPORTUNITY TRAVELERS GET THE MOST DESSERT

Great news if you're a loyalty-free [Opportunity Traveler](#). It seems to us that every time a plane takes off, an airline program gets devalued (hello, United Airlines, we're [talking about you](#)). When you're not shackled to one program and its ever-dwindling benefits, you're free to shop around for better fares.

Such as Delta's emerging victorious in the skirmish to offer the lowest PE fares to Asia, but that doesn't mean other airlines aren't on the battleground too.

All Nippon (Star Alliance): So far, All Nippon has not joined the race in offering new lower Premium Economy fares. The fares are not bad though, just not as low as some other airlines. They range from \$1,450 from Chicago to Tokyo, \$1,572 from Los Angeles, and \$1,672 from New York.



All Nippon Premium Economy

American (oneworld): Most of American's flights to Asia are from Dallas, and American has pretty good PE fares also. The lowest-fare route we found is from Dallas to Beijing starting at [\\$1,115](#). Los Angeles also has flights to Asia with the lowest fare being offered to Tokyo starting at \$1,256.

Cathay Pacific (oneworld): Historical fares to Hong Kong on Cathay Pacific ranged from \$2,460 to \$2,560 from the West Coast. Recently, however, we've seen fares starting at [\\$1,342 from Los Angeles](#) and [\\$1,402 from San Francisco](#), a drop of up to \$1,218 / 48%. (The airline basically matched American's Premium Economy fare from Los Angeles, which is great.) Or travel beyond Hong Kong to Bangkok, for example, and the fare from LAX starts at \$1,337. Chicago has also seen a drop in fares, which now start at \$1,579, and the same with New York, starting at \$1,739.

Japan Airlines (oneworld): Travel in Premium Economy to Tokyo typically ranges from \$1,800 to \$2,400 from Chicago, but recently we've seen fares starting at \$1,177, a drop of up to \$1,223 (51%). This new fare even undercuts United's Premium Economy fare which starts at \$1,421. For travel to Tokyo from other U.S. gateways we have not seen a drop in PE fares like the Chicago one, with fares ranging from \$2,200 (Los Angeles and San Francisco) to \$2,900 (New York).

Singapore Airlines (Star Alliance): Has offered low PE fares for a while now, starting at [\\$1,181](#) from Newark to Singapore or Seattle starting at [\\$990](#). Many PE fares on the airline start in the [\\$1,100 to \\$1,300](#) range for travel all over Asia.



Singapore Airlines Premium Economy

United (Star Alliance): United's lowest Premium Economy fare found is \$1,236, on the San Francisco-Beijing route. PE flights to Taipei are about the same, starting at \$1,227 from San Francisco. Newark to Shanghai also offers a decent PE fare starting at \$1,447.



United Premium Economy

SAVE YOUR MILES OR POINTS

Miles are great to have, but there's no need to use them for free awards when fares are this low. If you have miles, save them for when ticket prices are high. Take, for example, the American Airlines Dallas-Beijing route where free low-cost mileage award tickets costs 100,000 miles round-trip while the cash cost for the ticket is \$1,115, giving you only about a 1 cent return on your miles. Not good value.



FCF Premium Special Fares Monitor

December 2019

Here's a survey of the best special airfare deals we've published in the last month—on major airlines—that **remain live**. In case you missed them, forgot about them, or are just now ready to pounce, have at 'em...

AFRICA

[Los Angeles, Portland, and San Francisco to Africa Business Class Fares \\$3,073](#)

[Premium Economy to South and West Africa from the West Coast \\$1,228 R/T](#)

[New First Class Fares to Africa from Chicago, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. 39% Off](#)



[Business Class Fares Found to Beijing from Many U.S. from \\$2,004 R/T](#)

[New \\$1,927 R/T Biz Class Fares to Asia from West Coast](#)

[First Class from Chicago, Miami and New York to Hong Kong at 69% Off](#)

EUROPE

[New \\$1,863 R/T Business Class Fares to Europe from the West Coast](#)

[Malta Fares Found from \\$2,053 R/T Biz Class, from All Over the U.S.](#)

[New \\$1,832 R/T Business Class from All Over the U.S. to Larnaca, Cyprus](#)

NORTH AMERICA

[Flash Hawaii Biz Class Fares \\$758 R/T from West Coast on Alaska Airlines](#)

ISRAEL

[New \\$2,377 R/T Business Class Fares Found to Israel from Many U.S. Cities \(Major Airlines\)](#)

SOUTH AMERICA

[BLAZING HOT: \\$1,394 R/T Biz Class Fares to Rio Nonstop + Argentina for \\$1,862 \(American, Delta, United\)](#)

[\\$985 R/T Premium Economy Fares Found to Brazil and Chile](#)





Africa, Asia, Europe, India and The Middle East Via London (and a Very Nice Loophole)

December 2019

Big Ben, Small Fare: British Airways' cheap London layover for Business or First Class travel breaks UP your trip nicely.

Keen readers will know we've been, as the British say, "banging on" about the Stopover Loophole Strategy (SLS) in these pages.

Why the British? Very glad you asked, mate. This month we look at the SLS specifically with a British Airways bent, which opens up a whole range of destinations all over the globe. SLS is a tried-and-true FCF favorite strategy, which is made even more desirable by the fact that you can throw in a stop in lovely London for an

unbelievably small amount of bees and honey (money). As good as these Business Class deals via London are, we'll also show you how to save even more with two other discounts. Plus, we'll give you a taste of how the SLS to London can work for those of you hankering to fly in First Class.

WHAT IS THE STOPOVER LOOPHOLE STRATEGY AGAIN, AND HOW DO I USE IT WITH BRITISH AIRWAYS?

The Stopover Loophole Strategy (SLS) has been popular with FCF readers for a while now. We reported on it [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), and most recently with Etihad [here](#). This month, ladies and gentlemen, we present British Airways.

Here's a recap of the strategy: For a small fee, some airlines allow a stopover in their hub city on published Business Class fares, and British Airways is one of them. Mind you, some airline's hub cities are kind of boring (don't tell anyone we said that). But British Airways just happens to have a world-famous humdinger of a hub: London.

Piccadilly Circus. Westminster Abbey. Big Ben. Harrods. Savile Row. Etc.

This means you can book a "stopover" in London (for days, weeks or months) for a small fee before traveling on to your primary destination.

IS THE SLS WORTH IT?

This strategy for British Airways means you actually get London (which means all of Europe is a hop, skip or jump away) for a small fee as a second destination. You thereby avoid buying a second ticket for Europe and save thousands of dollars, while traveling to Africa, Asia, India, or the Middle East, or even elsewhere in Europe for that matter.

BUSINESS CLASS SLS EXAMPLES BY REGION ON BRITISH AIRWAYS

Africa/Europe: Let's say you want to travel from Los Angeles to Johannesburg and the lowest Biz Class fare is \$3,711 round-trip with BA. Now, for \$3,968, you can fly Los Angeles to Johannesburg and stop in London. So, "loopily," for \$257 more, you still get to Johannesburg, plus you get London.

Asia/Europe: How about this, guv: You live in New York and are desperate for Tom Yum Soup—in Bangkok—and the lowest Business Class fare is \$4,908 with BA. Now, for \$5,142, you can fly New York to Bangkok and stop in London, just \$252 more.

India/Europe: Suppose you're a Texan hankering for some Mumbai curry. Dallas to Mumbai at the lowest Business Class fare is \$3,048 round-trip with BA. Now, for \$3,300, you can fly Dallas to Mumbai and stop in London.

Two European cities: Let's say you want to travel from New York to Athens and the lowest Biz Class fare is \$2,046 round-trip with BA. Now, for \$2,292 (just \$246 more), you can fly New York to Athens and stop in London.

Middle East/Europe: New Yorkers heading to Abu Dhabi discover the lowest Business Class fare is \$4,069 round-trip with BA. Now, for \$4,308, you can fly New York to Abu Dhabi and stop in London.

HOW TO BOOK

You can price the flight itinerary via [google flight's "Multi-city trip"](#) search, but it won't take you to the BA website with flights and dates in place, so you'll have to manually request the flights on the [BA website](#) via the "Multi-city" search option.



Enter your departure and arrival cities, dates, and class of service based on the [google flight search](#) you did, and click on "Get flights." Then select the flights on the next screen with the header "Choose your flights." After selecting your flights, click "continue," and you will see your total fare cost. For example, the Google flight cost for the flight in our first example (Los Angeles to Johannesburg, stopping in London) was \$3,968. On the BA website the total cost is \$3,967.

AARP AND CHASE DISCOUNTS

British Airways' SLS Business Class fares are also eligible for the [AARP discount](#) ([anyone of any age can join for \\$16](#)), whereby members save up to \$200 on fares booked on British Airways. For example, the Los Angeles to Johannesburg fare with a stopover in London is \$3,967 on the BA website, but with the AARP discount the cost drops to \$3,767.

Plus, you can get an additional savings of [10% off with the British Airways Visa card](#), using the promo code CHASEBA10. This brings the cost down to **\$3,390 for a Business Class ticket from Los Angeles to Johannesburg with a stopover in London.** Bloody brilliant, old chap.

FIRST CLASS SLS ON BA EXAMPLE

The stopover in London also works for BA's First Class fares. For example, New York-Singapore's lowest First Class fare is \$7,421 round-trip with BA. Now, for \$7,661, you can fly New York to Singapore and stop in London for \$240 more.