



How to Overcome the Incredible Shrinking First Class Award Opportunities to Asia

March 2019

This report at a glance:

- Why First Class award tickets are disappearing
- When using miles for First Class to Asia works
- When using miles for First Class tickets to Asia is more challenging
- How to win with First Class Award Tickets to Asia

These days, coveted First Class mileage award tickets to Asia seem to disappear faster than the Incredible Shrinking Man. And like that unfortunate soul, the shrinkage seems to be just as unstoppable. There are a few reasons for this.

SHRINKING SUPPLY OF SEATS

It's not just your imagination. First Class seats are actually decreasing. American doesn't even offer a First Class product on many aircraft to Asia and United has phased out First Class.

MORE TRAVELERS NOWADAYS

At the same time, the number of bank hackers (those who get credit cards just for the sign-up bonus only to cancel afterwards) is increasing almost as fast as the number of First Class seats is shrinking. Serious premium travelers now have to compete with college kids and otherwise non-travelers who have newfound means to get First Class seats by hacking bank credit cards.

So what's a traveler to do to snag First Class award tickets to Asia before they shrink into oblivion?

FCF'S SOLUTION: HOW TO WIN IN FIRST CLASS WHEN USING MILES

Actually, there *are* ways to secure First Class seats to Asia when using miles. You just have to know where to look, when to look, and know how to find what you need.

Where to Look: There are still airlines that have mileage award space—even when many others don't. For example, Asiana and Korean often have First Class award availability for travel between the U.S. and Asia.

When to Look: When flash availability surfaces.

How to Do it: Be flexible to get the seats. You may have to be open to alternative dates of travel and be ready to pounce when deals become available.

WHEN USING MILES FOR FIRST CLASS TO ASIA WORKS: ASIANA

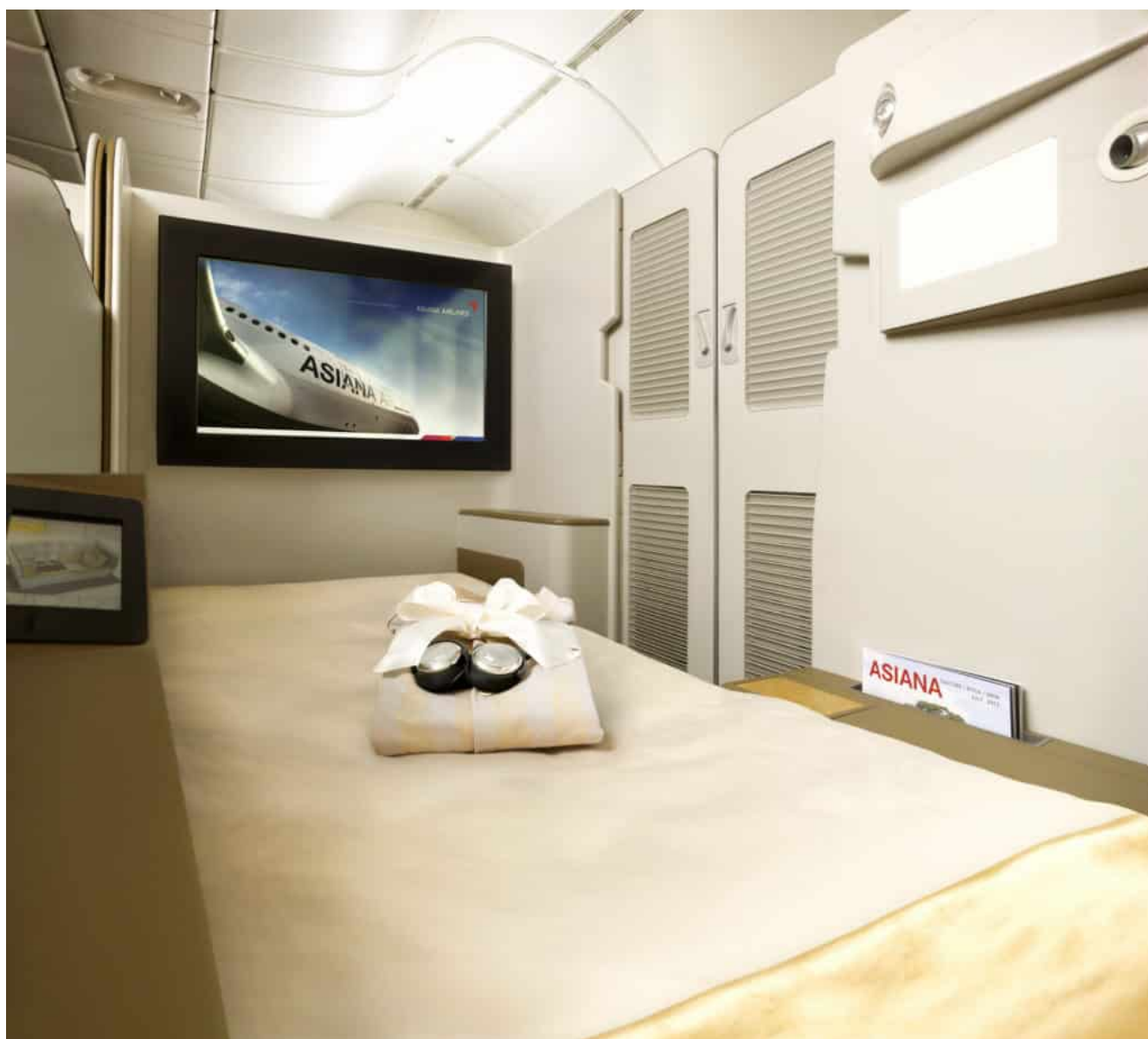
Unlike travel to Europe, where some airlines (British Airways, for instance) charge 200,000 miles for a First Class mileage award seat, many airlines have decent First Class mileage rates for travel to Asia.

Take, for example, the Los Angeles-Seoul route on Asiana. The cost in First Class using Asiana miles is 160,000 miles plus \$346 in taxes.

Don't have Asiana miles? No problem. You can transfer what used to be 130,000 Starwood points (now 390,000 Marriott points).

Don't have Starwood/Marriott points? Still no problem. All Nippon Airways is a partner with the Amex Rewards Points program and a partner airline with Asiana, which means you can use All Nippon miles to travel on Asiana flights. But All Nippon charges 180,000 miles—20,000 more miles than what Asiana charges.

Here is a recent opportunity FCF found for Asiana with [Many Dates With Cheap First Class Flights Available for Up to Four Seats, 10 Months](#)



WHEN USING MILES FOR FIRST CLASS TO ASIA WORKS: ALL NIPPON

All Nippon is another airline that charges low First Class mileage award rates between the U.S. and Asia. Take, for example, the Chicago-Tokyo route. The cost in First Class using All Nippon miles is 150,000 miles plus \$352 in taxes.

Don't have All Nippon miles? No problem. You can transfer what used to be 120,000 Starwood points (now 360,000 Marriott points) or 150,000 Amex points.

Have a ton of United miles? If you want to use United miles (maybe because you have a lot) then the cost is actually more with United, at 220,000 miles.

Buy miles when on sale with LifeMiles: Given the baseline fare is \$20,369, you can buy 180,000 LifeMiles miles for about \$2,700 when they go on sale. Add taxes with the LifeMiles loyalty program, which generally cost \$90 dollars, for a total of \$2,790. We recommend that you only buy miles if you are confident there is availability you can work with or you fly enough that, should availability shift, you can use the miles on a future trip.

Here is a recent [Opportunity for First Class to Asia on All Nippon](#).



WHEN USING MILES FOR FIRST CLASS TO ASIA WORKS: CATHAY PACIFIC AND KOREAN AIR

Two more airlines that charge low First Class mileage award rates between the U.S. and Asia are Cathay Pacific and Korean Air.

Sample opportunities FCF found recently: [Fly West Coast to Asia on Korean Air First Class with Marriott/SPG Points](#) and [Reap First Class On Cathay Pacific in January from Boston, Chicago, and New York](#)



Cathay Pacific First Class

AIRLINES THAT OFFER INFREQUENT OR ONLY LAST-MINUTE FIRST CLASS AVAILABILITY

FCF has found two airlines that seldom have mileage award space in First Class: Japan Airlines (only last-minute award space) and Singapore (infrequently).

So, if you long for First Class using miles with either of these airlines, you have to be very flexible and check FCF's flash deal alerts, which will keep you posted on availability. For example, we reported that [Japan Airlines had space back in February for travel in First Class](#), and [Singapore in First Class on the Los Angeles-Tokyo route](#). Stay tuned—and be ready to pounce when these flash deals arrive.

Armed with such insider knowledge, you can say goodbye to the incredible shrinking First Class award opportunities to Asia and travel **much more** comfortably.



The Secret You Need to Know About Booking Delta Flights With Miles or Points

March 2019

Why Virgin Atlantic miles are 5X to 20X(?) better than Delta miles—even for Delta flights.

It's incredibly difficult to understand airline partnerships—let alone scour the Internet for the most lucrative loopholes to take advantage of. Between countless airline partnerships and credit card rewards programs, things can get confusing quickly.

But today I want to show you a trick to get **five business class tickets for the price of one**—and the magic behind it.

Yes, you read that right.

The fact is, you can save a ton of money on your travel bookings simply by paying with one airline's mileage program over another.

Today I'm going to cover one of those lucrative opportunities within Virgin Atlantic's mileage program—which Amex Rewards points collectors can easily access.

DELTA'S AVAILABILITY PROBLEM

If you're a Delta traveler, then you know how hard it is to use your Delta miles. Their stingy and opaque system ends up turning away many customers and hurts the credibility of their SkyMiles program. However, there is a way to get **cheap pricing** on Delta flights **plus a significantly higher number of travel dates**.

THE HIDDEN SECRET IN DELTA'S AND VIRGIN ATLANTIC'S MILEAGE PARTNERSHIP

One of the biggest issues with using miles on Delta (and other airlines') flights is that the airline only releases a few low-cost mileage award seats. Usually, all you'll see is just full price award options, which can easily run you 300,000 to 600,000 miles depending on the airline and route.

But here's the trick: **using Virgin Atlantic miles for the same Delta flights/routes can open up low-cost award space that Delta doesn't offer.**

WHERE TO FIND THIS OPPORTUNITY

Take a look at this Los Angeles-Tokyo route in the month of August. As you can see, Delta only offers one day at the low-cost rate of 78,000 miles for a one-way ticket.

delta.com screenshot:

* FROM

LAX

* TO

HND

* Earliest Travel Date

Sun, Sep 8

PASSENGERS

1

FLIGHTS

Calendar View

Show Best Fares For

SHOW ONLY

Round Trip

One Way

Flexible Days

5 Weeks

Delta One

Non Stop

All Flights

Show Flights Operated By

☒ Delta Only
 ☐ Delta & Partner Airlines

UPDATE RESULTS

Advanced Search

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
SEP 01	SEP 02	SEP 03	SEP 04	SEP 05	SEP 06	SEP 07
LOWEST FARE 100,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60
SEP 08	SEP 09	SEP 10	SEP 11	SEP 12	SEP 13	SEP 14
200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	150,000 + \$5.60	150,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60
SEP 15	SEP 16	SEP 17	SEP 18	SEP 19	SEP 20	SEP 21
200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60
SEP 22	SEP 23	SEP 24	SEP 25	SEP 26	SEP 27	SEP 28
200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60
SEP 29	SEP 30	OCT 01	OCT 02	OCT 03	OCT 04	OCT 05
200,000 + \$5.60	200,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 200,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 200,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 200,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 200,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 200,000 + \$5.60

In this case, if all you have are Delta SkyMiles, your only choice is to pay the higher cost to travel on the dates you want.

At least that's what most people think. In reality, when you're flying Delta there's another solution that most people never think to check: **booking your Delta flights using Virgin Atlantic miles.**

By doing this, you'll not only get much better award space availability—you'll also get it at a significant discount. In this case, you can choose from 11 different days at the low-cost rate of just 60,000 miles one-way.

That’s 10 more travel options to choose for 18,000 less miles than Delta’s lowest rate.

virginatlantic.com:

Los Angeles (LAX) US → Tokyo Haneda Airport (HND) JP

Refine search ↓

Flexible date search

The prices shown are per passenger. Please select a date from the calendar to view flight results for the selected duration.

Cabin:

Upper Class

Stops:

All flights

Direct only

Pricing:

\$ USD

Miles

 **Limited availability in Upper Class**
Please try selecting a different cabin or alternative dates to find more flights.

< Previous Month JUL / AUG Next Month >

 Your Upper Class selection

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
28 JUL No Upper Class seats available	29 JUL No Upper Class seats available	30 JUL 60,000 miles +\$560	31 JUL No Upper Class seats available	01 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560	02 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560	03 AUG No Upper Class seats available
04 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560	05 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560	06 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560	07 AUG No Upper Class seats available	08 AUG No Upper Class seats available	09 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560	10 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560
11 AUG No Upper Class seats available	12 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560	13 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560	14 AUG No Upper Class seats available	15 AUG No Upper Class seats available	16 AUG No Upper Class seats available	17 AUG No Upper Class seats available
18 AUG No Upper Class seats available	19 AUG No Upper Class seats available	20 AUG No Upper Class seats available	21 AUG No Upper Class seats available	22 AUG No Upper Class seats available	23 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560	24 AUG No Upper Class seats available
25 AUG No Upper Class seats available	26 AUG No Upper Class seats available	27 AUG No Upper Class seats available	28 AUG No Upper Class seats available	29 AUG No Upper Class seats available	30 AUG 60,000 miles +\$560	31 AUG No Upper Class seats available

For travel to Asia, the Virgin Atlantic strategy is helpful too. Delta typically has very few low-cost award options available. Trips typically range from 156,000 to 200,000 miles round-trip depending on the destination, but can go as high as 600,000 miles round-trip!

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On the other hand, booking your Delta flights using Virgin Atlantic miles is significantly cheaper and gives you much more low-cost award options to choose from.

FCF has found similar price differences when you use Virgin Atlantic miles for travel on Delta flights to Asia: **From Atlanta** to Tokyo and Shanghai; **Detroit** to Beijing, Nagoya, Tokyo and Shanghai; **Los Angeles** to Tokyo and Shanghai; **Minneapolis** to Tokyo; **Portland** to Tokyo; **Seattle** to Beijing, Tokyo and Shanghai.

MORE ROUTES TO CAPITALIZE ON

To London: FCF's research has found that both Delta and Virgin Atlantic have award space at low-cost mileage amounts, but that's pretty much where the similarities end with respect to those two airlines. Like we said before, Virgin Atlantic often has more low-cost availability. That's why it's always worth checking out both Delta and Virgin Atlantic before you make your final booking.

For example, take a look at this Minneapolis to London route in the month of March. Delta doesn't even have one seat available at the low-mileage cost with Delta miles. The entire month shows that it would cost 280,000 miles for a one-way trip.

delta.com:

Calendar | MSP ▶ LHR

Show Price In:

\$ USD

Miles

Minneapolis/St Paul, MN to London-Heathrow, United Kingdom

* FROM

MSP

* TO

LHR

* Earliest Travel Date

Wed, Mar 6

PASSENGER:

1

FLIGHTS

Calendar View

Show Best Fares For

SHOW ONLY

Round Trip

One Way

Flexible Days

5 Weeks

Delta One

Non Stop

All Flights

Show Flights Operated By

☒ Delta Only
 ☐ Delta & Partner Airlines

UPDATE RESULTS

Advanced Search

FEB/MAR

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
FEB 24	FEB 25	FEB 26	FEB 27	FEB 28	MAR 01	MAR 02
LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60
MAR 03	MAR 04	MAR 05	MAR 06	MAR 07	MAR 08	MAR 09
LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60
MAR 10	MAR 11	MAR 12	MAR 13	MAR 14	MAR 15	MAR 16
LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60
MAR 17	MAR 18	MAR 19	MAR 20	MAR 21	MAR 22	MAR 23
LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60
MAR 24	MAR 25	MAR 26	MAR 27	MAR 28	MAR 29	MAR 30
LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60

Now, check out what happens if you were to book your Delta flights using Virgin Atlantic miles for the same travel window. As you can see below, there are **20 days available** at the low-cost rate of 47,500 for a one-way ticket. Sounds like Virgin Miles (again, easily had via most credit card points-transfer programs) might be 20X better than Delta miles?!

Not only can you get much better award space availability, but you're getting it at **232,500 miles cheaper than Delta's lowest rate.**

The only drawback with traveling to London on Virgin Atlantic is that they have a high tax rate of \$527 for a one-way trip. Delta’s taxes are only \$5 one-way. Non-London routes have much lower taxes.

virginatlantic.com:

Minneapolis St Paul (MSP) US → London Heathrow (LHR) GB

Refine search ↓

Flexible date search

The prices shown are per passenger. Please select a date from the calendar to view flight results for the selected duration.

Cabin: Upper Class

Stops: All flights Direct only

Pricing: \$ USD Miles

Limited availability in Upper Class
Please try selecting a different cabin or alternative dates to find more flights.

Previous Month FEB / MAR Next Month

Your Upper Class selection

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
24 FEB No Upper Class seats available	25 FEB 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	26 FEB 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	27 FEB 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	28 FEB No Upper Class seats available	01 MAR No Upper Class seats available	02 MAR No Upper Class seats available
03 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	04 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	05 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	06 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	07 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	08 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	09 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰
10 MAR No Upper Class seats available	11 MAR No Upper Class seats available	12 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	13 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	14 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	15 MAR No Upper Class seats available	16 MAR No Upper Class seats available
17 MAR No Upper Class seats available	18 MAR No Upper Class seats available	19 MAR No Upper Class seats available	20 MAR No Upper Class seats available	21 MAR No Upper Class seats available	22 MAR No Upper Class seats available	23 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰
24 MAR No Upper Class seats available	25 MAR No Upper Class seats available	26 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰	27 MAR No Upper Class seats available	28 MAR No Upper Class seats available	29 MAR No Upper Class seats available	30 MAR 47,500 ^{miles} + \$527 ²⁰

ROUTES TO THE REST OF EUROPE

Check out this New York-Amsterdam route in the month of August. As you can see, Delta doesn't even have one seat available at the low-mileage cost using their miles. The entire month it'll cost 280,000 miles for a one-way trip.

delta.com:

Calendar | JFK ▶ AMS

Show Price In:

\$ USD

Miles

New York-Kennedy, NY to Amsterdam, Netherlands

* FROM

JFK

* TO

AMS

* Earliest Travel Date

Thu, Aug 8

PASSENGERS

1

FLIGHTS

Round Trip

One Way

Calendar View

Flexible Days

5 Weeks

Show Best Fares For

Delta One

SHOW ONLY

Non Stop

All Flights

Show Flights Operated By

☒ Delta Only

☐ Delta & Partner Airlines

UPDATE RESULTS

Advanced Search

JUL/AUG

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
JUL 28	JUL 29	JUL 30	JUL 31	AUG 01	AUG 02	AUG 03
LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60
AUG 04	AUG 05	AUG 06	AUG 07	AUG 08	AUG 09	AUG 10
LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60
AUG 11	AUG 12	AUG 13	AUG 14	AUG 15	AUG 16	AUG 17
LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60
AUG 18	AUG 19	AUG 20	AUG 21	AUG 22	AUG 23	AUG 24
LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60
AUG 25	AUG 26	AUG 27	AUG 28	AUG 29	AUG 30	AUG 31
LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60	LOWEST FARE 280,000 + \$5.60

Now look at what happens if you book your Delta flights using Virgin Atlantic miles during the same travel window. Suddenly you have 20 days available at the low-cost rate of just 50,000 miles for one seat. 17 days have two seats available and 11 days have **four seats available**. Once again this is an incredible difference in price of **230,000 miles fewer than what Delta charges!** That’s five tickets for the price of one.

Flexible date search

The prices shown are per passenger. Please select a date from the calendar to view flight results for the selected duration.

Cabin:

Upper Class

Stops:

All flights

Direct only

Pricing:

\$ USD

Miles

< Previous Month JUL / AUG Next Month >

 Your Upper Class selection

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
28 JUL 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	29 JUL No Upper Class seats available	30 JUL 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	31 JUL No Upper Class seats available	01 AUG No Upper Class seats available	02 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	03 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560
04 AUG No Upper Class seats available	05 AUG No Upper Class seats available	06 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	07 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	08 AUG No Upper Class seats available	09 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	10 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560
11 AUG No Upper Class seats available	12 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	13 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	14 AUG No Upper Class seats available	15 AUG No Upper Class seats available	16 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	17 AUG No Upper Class seats available
18 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	19 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	20 AUG No Upper Class seats available	21 AUG No Upper Class seats available	22 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	23 AUG No Upper Class seats available	24 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560
25 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	26 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	27 AUG No Upper Class seats available	28 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	29 AUG No Upper Class seats available	30 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560	31 AUG 50,000 ^{miles} +£560

My lab test booking on virginatlantic.com:

Your flights

Your booking reference is **78456321**

[Baggage allowance →](#)

We have sent your email confirmation to **mr.upgrade@firstclassflyer.com**

New York → Amsterdam
(JFK), US (AMS), NL
Departing Wed 7 Aug 2019 at 19:42 (Direct)

Passengers
Mr Matthew Bennett (Adult)
[Show passenger details](#) ▼

Total
50,000 miles
+\$5.60
Tax: \$5.60

Departure Wed 7 Aug 2019



New York (JFK), US to Amsterdam (AMS), NL

Depart	Arrive	Duration	Flight number	Aircraft	Operated by
19:42	09:15	7h 33m +1 day	DL48	Airbus A330-300	Delta Air Lines

[print confirmation →](#)

Fare	\$0.00
Taxes and charges	\$5.60
Credit card fee	\$0
Total cost	50,000 miles + \$5.60

EVEN FOUR-SEAT AVAILABILITY?

< Previous Month JUL / AUG Next Month >							Your Upper Class selection
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	
28 JUL No Upper Class seats available	29 JUL No Upper Class seats available	30 JUL 50,000 miles +\$5.60	31 JUL No Upper Class seats available	01 AUG No Upper Class seats available	02 AUG No Upper Class seats available	03 AUG No Upper Class seats available	
04 AUG No Upper Class seats available	05 AUG No Upper Class seats available	06 AUG No Upper Class seats available	07 AUG 50,000 miles +\$5.60	08 AUG No Upper Class seats available	09 AUG 50,000 miles +\$5.60	10 AUG 50,000 miles +\$5.60	
11 AUG No Upper Class seats available	12 AUG 50,000 miles +\$5.60	13 AUG No Upper Class seats available	14 AUG No Upper Class seats available	15 AUG No Upper Class seats available	16 AUG No Upper Class seats available	17 AUG No Upper Class seats available	
18 AUG No Upper Class seats available	19 AUG 50,000 miles +\$5.60	20 AUG No Upper Class seats available	21 AUG No Upper Class seats available	22 AUG 50,000 miles +\$5.60	23 AUG No Upper Class seats available	24 AUG 50,000 miles +\$5.60	
25 AUG No Upper Class seats available	26 AUG 50,000 miles +\$5.60	27 AUG No Upper Class seats available	28 AUG No Upper Class seats available	29 AUG No Upper Class seats available	30 AUG 50,000 miles +\$5.60	31 AUG 50,000 miles +\$5.60	

FCF has found similar price differences when you use Virgin Atlantic miles for travel on **Delta flights from New York** to Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Milan. Keep in mind that this trick doesn't work for all of

Delta's routes, but it's always worth double-checking to make sure that you're getting the lowest price possible.

OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN USING VIRGIN ATLANTIC MILES ON DELTA FLIGHTS

Credit Card Partnerships: Virgin Atlantic has more credit card point transfer partners than Delta (Amex Rewards, Chase, Citi, and Starwood/Marriott). Delta only has two (Amex Rewards and Starwood/Marriott).

Transfer Bonuses: Throughout the year, Virgin Atlantic and Amex Membership Rewards offer transfer bonuses. Their most recent bonus was 30%. Meanwhile, Delta's co-branded credit cards never offer transfer bonuses.

First Class Bonus: With Virgin Atlantic, you can fly First Class for up to 50,000 fewer miles than Delta's Business Class. With Delta miles, you can only fly Business Class—even on partner airlines. This is because Delta doesn't have a First Class cabin and their partners have chosen not to share their First Class space with their mileage program.

However, when you use Virgin Atlantic miles, you'll gain access to a number of airline partners who offer a First Class cabin. [One example is All Nippon](#). For travel from the U.S. to Japan, All Nippon typically charges 150,000 to 165,000 miles for round-trip travel. With Virgin Atlantic miles, the round-trip cost is only 110,000 miles (from western U.S.) to 120,000 miles (from eastern U.S.), so you're able to save up to 55,000 miles.

Mileage Award Taxes: Virgin Atlantic charges the same taxes as Delta for flights to Asia and Europe, except to London.

South America: Can work with this strategy. You just have to call Virgin to book.

Usage Limitations: The main downside of Virgin Atlantic miles is that you can only use them for Delta's nonstop routes. All connecting flights would require you to purchase a second mileage ticket, which would ultimately increase your total cost when using Virgin Atlantic miles. In these cases, it would be better to use Delta miles for your travel booking—**or just buy a separate ticket to the gateway with the amazing opportunity.**

It's not perfect: Not all cities can be booked online with Virgin Atlantic, given its weird booking engine (some cities aren't loaded). So, you may need to call Virgin Atlantic (800-365-9500) to check for partner space. A bit annoying, but not a deal-breaker.

For more information, please see FCF's article which outlines ["How You Can \(And Why\) Bust Out of Delta SkyMiles Bondage for Travel to Asia, Europe, and South America."](#)





Okay, it's semi-complicated, but it saves a lot of money.

Sometimes, a horse needs a final stretch to win the race, just a small extension as he approaches the finish line to beat his nearest competitors. And don't we love it when he does.

So, too, you can win (big) when you "stretch" options that let you add additional trips—on different continents—to a single ticket—for no extra cost.

Let's review: Over the last year Delta has dominated FCF's Leg Stretch Strategy with fares starting as low as [\\$2,531 for travel Europe > U.S. > South America > U.S. > Europe](#), which was most convenient for residents in Atlanta, New York, and Washington, DC (permitted stopover cities).

Then just last month FCF showed you how to “stretch” a ticket with American to get Business Class 3-for-1s for travel [Asia > U.S. > South America > U.S. > Asia with fares starting at \\$3,347](#), which permitted stops in Dallas, Los Angeles, and New York.

FCF seldom sees great Leg Stretch Strategy fares on United, but this month we came across some for travel Asia > U.S. > South America > U.S. > Asia with fares starting at **\$3,337, for the four long-haul segments.**

ARGUABLY THE BEST PART:

Not only does United have low fares, but it also offers a rich array of U.S. cities it **works well with, including Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, DC.**

RECAP OF FCF’S LEG STRETCH STRATEGY

It’s a counter-intuitive yet completely legitimate strategy we call FCF’s Leg Stretch Strategy.

It simply involves taking a step back and surveying your travel needs (or wants) over a few months or a year and finding a much better way to package them together.

WHO IT’S FOR

This 2-for-1 Leg Stretch Strategy works best for the person who travels (or would if the price was right) to Asia and South America. So, it’s not for everyone. But if you fall into that category, it’s a winner.

QUICK DEFINITION

The strategy takes advantage of the fact that U.S. airlines offer free stopovers in U.S. hub cities when traveling from Asia to South America and back.

This Leg Stretch Strategy starts in Asia. So clearly, you have to fly to Asia first. We suggest getting a one-way ticket using miles. We’ve made that part easier with [this special report](#). You can also get a ticket with cash.

Our example below uses New York–Seoul–Buenos Aires because it’s particularly cheap, but the same strategy nets similar savings from six other U.S. cities. So, that totals **seven major U.S. hub cities with United.**

STRETCHING YOUR FARE FURTHER

Here are two ways to look at it (i.e. ways to brag to your friends):

Perspective #1: Free Upgrade:

A New York-to-Seoul return ticket in economy ranges from ~\$920 to \$1,822 on United. A New York-to-Buenos Aires return ticket in economy ranges from ~\$1,048 to \$1,948. That's \$1,968 at a minimum to fly economy on United — and often \$3,770 depending on your dates.

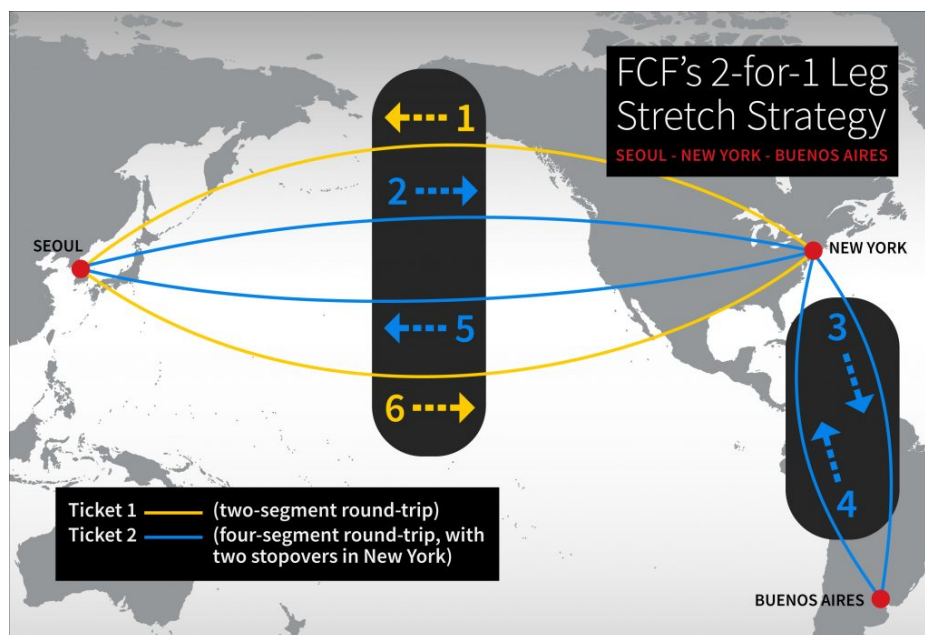
If you use FCF's Leg Stretch Strategy, on the other hand, you can **get those same destinations in Business Class for \$3,337** (on United at the current exchange rate). Now that's what we call winning the race.

Perspective #2: Save \$4,041 in Business Class or a 2-for-1:

If you were to book these destinations separately, you'd pay rack rate. A New York-to-Seoul return ticket in Business Class starts at \$4,364. A New York-to-Buenos Aires return ticket in Business Class starts at \$3,014. That's \$7,378 at a minimum to fly Business Class on United.

If you use the Leg Stretch Strategy, on the other hand, you can get to those same destinations in Business Class for \$3,337 (on United at the current exchange rate)—a 2-for-1.

Another big winner!



Another big winner!

Tue, 2019 Jun 18

16:30	✈	22:04	1 Connection
Seoul, KR (ICN - Incheon)		New York/Newark, NJ, US (EWR - Liberty)	18h 34m total
 ICN to SFO	UA 892	Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner	ⓘ
1h 45m connection			
 SFO to EWR	UA 2239	Boeing 757-200	ⓘ

Thu, 2019 Jul 04

Thu, Jul 4	✈	Fri, Jul 5	Nonstop
21:55		9:50	10h 55m total
New York/Newark, NJ, US (EWR - Liberty)		Buenos Aires, AR (EZE)	
 UA 979	Boeing 767-300		ⓘ

Mon, 2019 Jul 15

Mon, Jul 15	✈	Tue, Jul 16	Nonstop
20:00		6:00	11h total
Buenos Aires, AR (EZE)		New York/Newark, NJ, US (EWR - Liberty)	
 UA 978	Boeing 767-300		ⓘ

Thu, 2019 Nov 21

Thu, Nov 21	✈	Fri, Nov 22	1 Connection
6:00		16:15	20h 15m total
New York/Newark, NJ, US (EWR - Liberty)		Seoul, KR (ICN - Incheon)	
 EWR to SFO	UA 1483	Boeing 757-200	ⓘ
1h 2m connection			
 SFO to ICN	UA 893	Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner	ⓘ

Multi-city (1 traveler)

[Edit search](#)

Tue, 2019 Jun 18

ICN - EWR 16:30 - 22:04

[Revise](#)



Thu, 2019 Jul 04

EWR - EZE 21:55 - 9:50

[Revise](#)

Mon, 2019 Jul 15

EZE - EWR 20:00 - 6:00

[Revise](#)



Fare

₩3,555,000

Taxes and fees

₩161,500

International Surcharge

₩31,600

TOTAL

₩3,748,100

united.com screenshot above (four segment = two round-trips).



google.com currency converter above.

A QUICK HOW-TO:

This itinerary has four discreet legs on one ticket (equivalent to two round-trips): Asia > U.S. > South America > U.S. > Asia, starting at \$3,337 in Business Class on United.

Quick story summation:

1. Fly one-way from New York to Seoul (the lowest LSS fare we found from Asia at the moment); see #1 on the map above (in yellow). Pay with miles or take advantage of a great published fare.
2. Return to New York on the first segment of your LSS ticket with a free stopover (#2 on the map). Stay home for a week or month or five or whatever until your next flight.
3. Later, fly to Buenos Aires as segment #2 of the LSS ticket (#3 on the map).
4. Then fly back to New York (free stopover) as segment #3 of the LSS ticket (#4 on the map). Stay home for a week or month or five or whatever until your next flight.
5. Return to Seoul, which is segment #4 of the LSS ticket (#5 on the map).
6. **Decision Time:** You can return home on another one-way ticket OR start the process again, returning to the U.S. as leg one of your next Leg Stretch Strategy ticket (#6 on the map in yellow).

HOW TO BOOK

You have several options but booking through a travel agent is best because an agent has easy access to inventory information (booking class I). You can also book online with united.com, but it's a complex process. The other option is using Google Flights to plan out the trip by selecting the "Multi-city" option.

google.com/flights multi-city screenshot below:



Five *Example* Opportunities to Reap With First Class Flyer's Leg Stretch Strategy (LSS)

Example Route	U.S. Stop (Perhaps your home airport, or one you can get to non-stop)	Local Asian Currency	Price for Four (4) Long-haul Segments / Converted Fare Into USD	Two Normal Business Class Fares	Leg Stretch Strategy Savings
Seoul-Buenos Aires	Newark	₩3,748,100	\$3,337	\$7,378	\$4,041
Seoul-Buenos Aires	San Francisco	₩3,748,100	\$3,337	\$7,378	\$4,041
Seoul-Buenos Aires	Chicago	₩3,764,100	\$3,353	\$7,378	\$4,025
Seoul-Rio de Janeiro	Houston	₩3,931,400	\$3,503	\$8,683	\$5,180
Seoul-São Paulo	Los Angeles	₩3,738,700	\$3,331	\$8,670	\$5,339

**Fares valid at time of publishing and change all the time.*

New York - Los Angeles R/T \$1,76

Learn How to Take Advantage of Our Stopover Loophole Strategy (SLS) to Score Deals Within North America You Never Knew Existed

March 2019

New York - Los Angeles
Cabo San Lucas - New
\$1,295 - **\$472 LES**

Do This and You Might Get Your Next Adventure or Beach Vacation for Free, or Better...

When you're looking for the best airfare options, it's important to be creative in your approach. Most people just type in a bunch of Google searches for flights to their desired destination and settle for what they find. You'll quickly see why this isn't the best approach.

THE LOOPHOLE YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Ever heard of a “**stopover allowance**”? Most people haven't, but this is a **key rule** to be aware of anytime you're in the process of booking your next trip.

Technically speaking, a stopover is a planned stop of more than 4 hours (domestic) or 24 hours (international) between flight segments on a trip. And here's the catch – **these stopovers are sometimes allowed for free or a very small fee.** Even better than that, **you can have a stopover that lasts a day or even weeks.** That last bit is the key piece of the puzzle.

Because that stopover can essentially be a mini (or full-size) vacation, you could end up being able to visit an awesome destination for a fraction of the price. And on top of that, your flight to **your original destination can be much cheaper as well.**

Here's a quick sample trip for how this could work. Let's say you need to travel from Los Angeles to Miami for a business trip. You could change the duration of your trip to include an adventurous side-trip in places like **Belize, Cabo, Cancun, Guatemala, San Jose (CR), San Juan, and St. Thomas,** to name a few, on the way home. And yes, you'll actually save money by doing that.

WHO THIS STRATEGY IS IDEAL FOR

The SLS strategy is a great option to consider for the following two cases:

1. Leisure travelers who have the flexibility to add on side trips to exciting destinations.
2. Business travelers interested in integrating a side trip into their business plans.

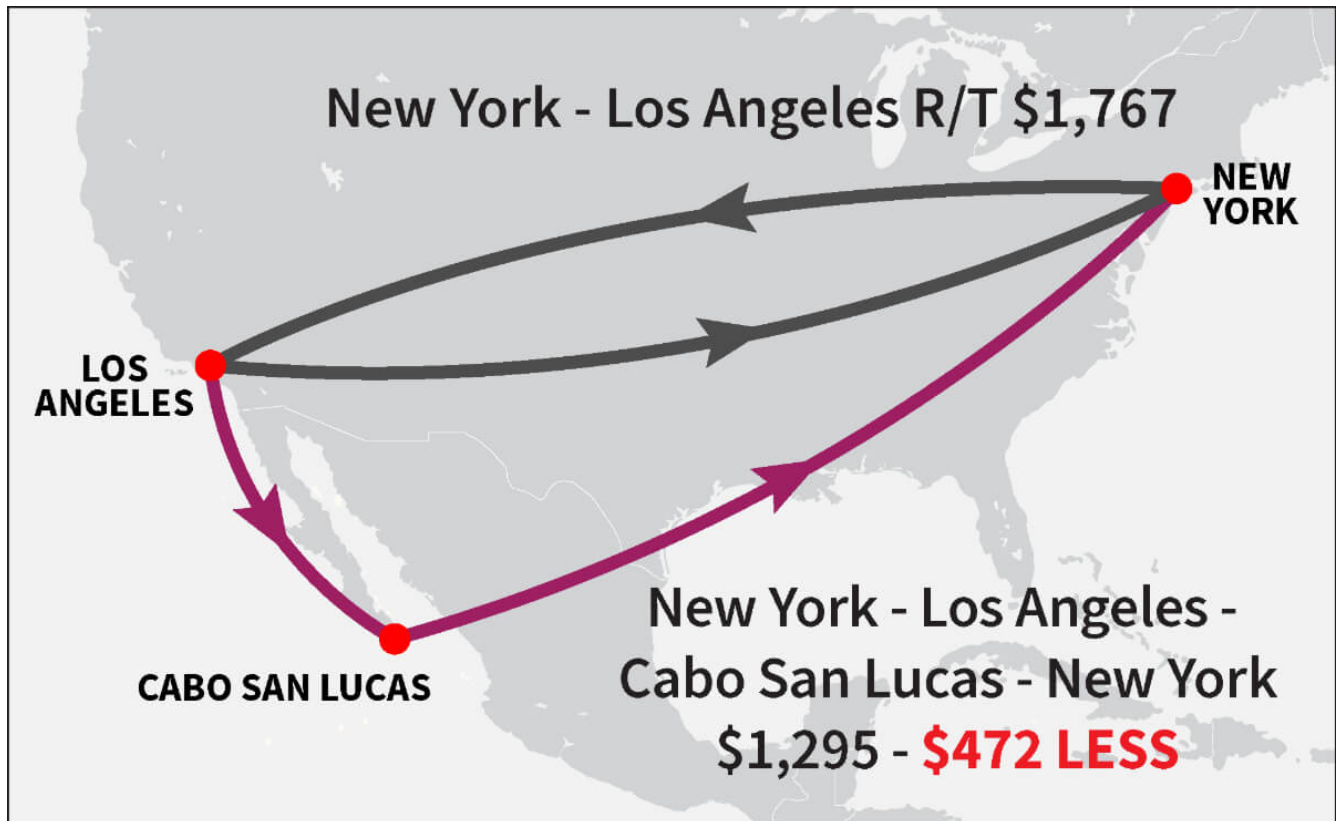
WHEN YOU OPEN YOURSELF UP TO THIS STRATEGY, HERE'S WHAT'S POSSIBLE

When you start using our SLS strategy there are two common outcomes:

1. You'll be able to get your side trip for free
2. You can actually pay less overall (a.k.a. get the side trip for **less than free**)

That's right. Sometimes adding **a side trip can lower your total airfare cost.** So that means you're essentially getting paid to sneak in a great vacation at an awesome location. In either case, adding in the **hidden routes** that include a stopover *can* either keep your airfare cost the same or lower it significantly.

Does that sound too good to be true? Check this out...



REASONS TO ADD A CARIBBEAN, CENTRAL AMERICAN, OR MEXICAN MINI VACATION

Belize

- **Diving and snorkeling.** Hard to top the world's second longest barrier reef.
- **The Great Blue Hole.** This gigantic ocean sinkhole is so big, it can be seen from outer space.
- **Mayan ruins.** As the center of the ancient Mayan world, Belize has more ruins per square mile than any other country.
- **Rich wildlife.** Jaguars and tapirs and pumas and more. Animal lovers will flip for Belize, including the world's only Jaguar preserve.

Cancun

- **Epic ruins:** such as Chichen Itza, Uxmal, and Tulum.
- **Dazzling beaches.** Cancun and the Riviera Maya coastline is jam-packed with them.
- **Diving and snorkeling.** Yes, you can dive and snorkel along the world's second longest barrier reef.

Guatemala

- **Mayan ruins.** Tikal, the tallest Maya temple in the world, rises from deep in the jungle.
- **Colonial towns.** Antigua is a gorgeous historic town with cobblestone streets, centuries-old buildings, and leafy plazas.

- **Dramatic volcanoes.** You're never far from one of the country's 37 volcanoes, some still active. Strap on your hiking boots and give one a go.
- **Gorgeous lake.** Pristine blue waters, vibrant sunrises and sunsets, three soaring volcanoes, and waterside Maya villages make Lake Atitlán amazing.

San Juan, Puerto Rico

- **Stunning beaches.** Spread out a blanket on the soft white sands lapped by turquoise waters that beckon all around.
- **Historic Old San Juan.** Charm oozes from the cobblestone streets, forts and churches, and scenic plazas of this Spanish colonial neighborhood.
- **Tropical rainforest.** Hike through El Yunque, the only tropical rainforest in the U.S., and see native plant species and animals that exist nowhere else on earth.

HOW TO BOOK?

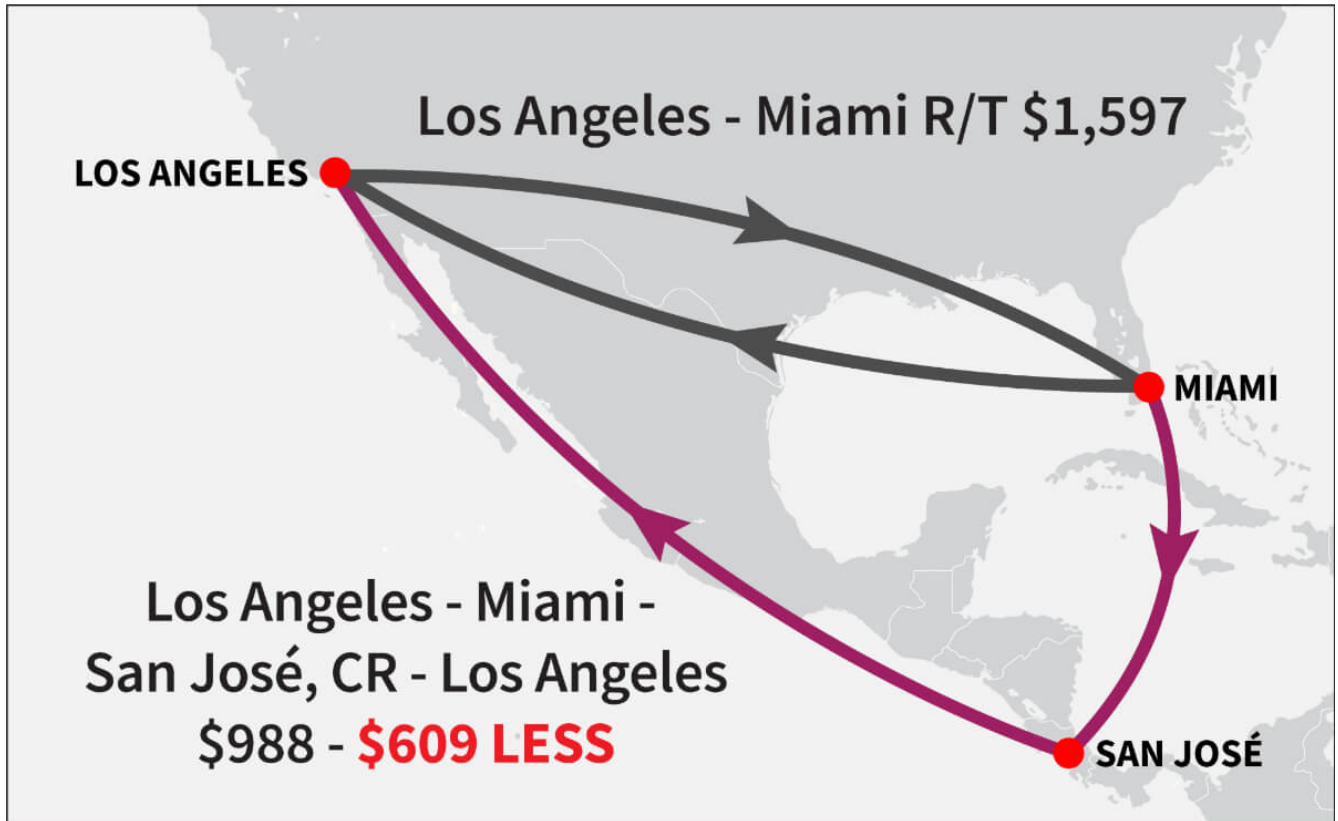
You can find SLS deals like this all over the place. You just need to be aware that they're possible.

[Search for deals using Google Flights like this.](#) Just play with the dates and experiment with the side-trip city.

So be sure to loop yourself in to the Stopover Loophole Strategy and avail yourself of a fun bonus vacation in Mexico, Central America, or elsewhere. You'll be glad you did.

LOS ANGELES – MIAMI SAMPLE FREE SIDE TRIPS

Likewise, check out how this can work on the Los Angeles-Miami route. The Business Class nonstop fare is usually \$1,597. However, you can save hundreds of dollars by adding in a stop.



SAMPLE FREE SIDE-TRIPS + SAVINGS

Normal Trip	Normal Premium Fare R/T	Side Trip City	New Premium Fare w/Side Trip	Free Side-Trip Savings
Los Angeles - Miami	\$1,597	Aruba	\$1,722	\$43
		Belize	\$957	\$640
		Cancun	\$1,065	\$532
		Guatemala City	\$878	\$719
		Havana	\$1,408	\$189
		Nashville	\$1,389	\$208
		Nassau	\$1,534	\$63
		New Orleans	\$1,437	\$160
		Saint Thomas	\$1,483	\$114
		San Jose, CR	\$988	\$609
		San Juan	\$978	\$619
		St. Thomas	\$1,703	\$64

* Fare valid at time of publishing and will vary based on advance purchase and many other factors. Fares displayed are commonly seen when booking a month or so in advance, although the strategy can often work on short-notice.



Stop “Booking Backwards” and Adopt FCF's Upgrade Mindset to Get Incredible Dream Trips Literally Knocking on Your Door, Part 1

March 2019

What’s your process for picking your next destination and finding the most comfortable flights? Today we’re going to show you another way to think about booking that might improve your travel life dramatically.

If you’re like most people, you go through a three-step process similar to this when you want to book a vacation:

1. **Dreaming:** You might get inspired by a TV ad, a movie that takes place in an alluring location, a well-written travel story, or simply by hearing about incredible travel experiences from your friends or family.

2. **Planning:** You've made your decision to go *somewhere* using the aforementioned sources (to a place that's probably as good a choice as a dozen others) and the planning phase begins. For many people this is a very time-consuming process. According to a report by Expedia, most travelers typically visit a whopping 38 websites—yes, 38—to find the perfect hotel(s) to stay at.
3. **Booking:** Now that you have your destination, travel dates, and hotel set, you start thinking about flights.

THIS IS NOT HOW YOU SHOULD BOOK YOUR NEXT TRIP

Listen, it's time to ditch that old-school way of thinking that leaves the airline booking for last. As you've likely seen from previous trips, it's definitely the least fun part of the trip planning process when you do it like everyone else.

Here's the problem with conventional wisdom: By the time you're ready to book the airline ticket, you won't be able to find any deals because **you've already boxed yourself in** by the dates of your hotel, tour, or cruise.

At this point you've spent weeks planning a specific trip around those dates, but you haven't considered your options for premium air travel – which could have the biggest impact on your bank account.

Consider this: Here's what happens when you plan the way most people do and book your airline ticket last. Those **airline ticket prices skyrocket** and you end up being forced to pay them anyway (or fly in a low-quality seat). You're essentially setting yourself up for a lower quality travel experience because – if you're like most travelers – you don't have an unlimited budget.

Why would you settle for lower-quality flight experiences when you don't have to? Doesn't that defeat the purpose of going on a vacation in the first place? Bad flight experiences will make you dislike traveling. And if you don't like to travel, you're going to severely limit yourself in terms of cultural adventures, inspiration, and life experiences that help you grow as a person. Traveling should never feel like a burden.

But here's the thing – you don't want to pay full price for comfortable flights either. After all, the best flights can be very expensive. So when you pay the exorbitant rack rates for premium flights – and you know that the people sitting around you didn't have to – you're going to feel resentful toward the airlines. Another reason that you'll end up wanting to avoid traveling in the future.

IF YOU HAVE A FINITE BUDGET...

Most people don't have an unlimited travel budget, so **when you're able to save thousands of dollars on premium airline tickets you can:**

- Take longer vacations
- Explore more side-trips/stops/adventures
- Treat yourself to more private tours, higher quality transfers, and fine dining experiences

- Book high-end hotels, resorts, spas, and/or suites

STOP BOOKING BACKWARDS AND START USING FCF'S SCREAMING DEALS FIRST

It's time to stop boxing yourself into specific travel dates. This is often a losing mindset that will only set you up for disappointment and resentment.

Instead—embrace FCF's Upgrade Mindset so you can enjoy every step of the travel process. It's always best to start by booking your flight arrangements first. That way, you can secure the absolute best flight deals. Check out [FCF's newsroom for special flash deal alerts](#) to locations close to your desired destinations. It's a completely different way of thinking, but it is so much more effective. We recommend that you consider finding a flight deal to (or near) your top bucket list destinations, book the ticket, and *then* plan the rest of your trip. We'll get into the logistics of that in a minute.

If you're browsing flights and you can't find a premium deal that takes you right to your preferred destination, you can always find a deal to one of **your other bucket-list destinations**. You'll want to have a wish list of destinations in mind to do this effectively. That way, when the opportunity arises to snag a great deal on a premium airline ticket to one of those places, you'll be ready to pounce on it.

CREATE A LIST OF YOUR DREAM DESTINATIONS NOW, BEFORE YOU START PLANNING

Who doesn't have a long list of places they'd love to visit around the world? **Everybody does.** In fact, I don't know anyone who wouldn't get excited about five—if not fifty—different places that they want to visit next. The thing is, not everyone takes the time to think about it. As an FCF reader, I can't stress the importance of your list enough. **You will always be able to find a premium deal to (or close to) one of your dream locations.** Once you have that list in mind, here are a couple of other things you need to consider:

Be Flexible: Try not to lock yourself into super-tight date windows. But if you absolutely have to, then you just need to have more "destination creativity." The more flexible you can be, the more **hot destinations will inevitably be knocking on your door.**

Consider multiple continents and different destinations. For your next trip, try choosing the destination that gives you the best travel opportunity during your time frame. You can also look at a few different places within a region to get a similar experience.

Here's a question to ask yourself: why wouldn't you let the best FCF deal drive your travel destination? For example, here's an incredible deal on Cathay Pacific (normally \$30,000+) that offers [90% off First Class flights](#) to Hong Kong. Now that's one heck of a way to start (and end) a vacation.

The best part is that you can **book it for free** using your Amex Rewards, Chase, CITI, or Marriott/Starwood points. But that isn't the only option... Check out these awesome deals: [First Class deal to Australia on Qantas](#), [First Class deal to Asia on Singapore](#), [First Class to Asia on All Nippon](#) – there are so many others too. For

one passenger, two passengers, and four. How much were you going to spend on your trip? Were you finding any First Class deals like this?

When you open yourself up to multiple **continents** – and multiple **destinations** on those continents – dream trips will start knocking on your door.

Staying flexible allows you to pounce on the truly great opportunities when they come up. You'll start seeing incredible travel options everywhere. There is so much out there for you to discover.

HOW TO THINK AHEAD

There are two kinds of travel research. The **fun kind** that opens your mind to the world and has you learning about the unique cultural experiences you can have and exploring a completely different way of life. Then, there is **the daunting kind** of research. This is where you've got yourself boxed into a specific idea and you're trying to force a trip that simply isn't meant to be. Often, this research will only leave you stressed out and fed up with the process. Then when your trip finally comes around, you can't even enjoy it fully because you spent so much time and money making it happen.

Back to the fun kind of research. I like to arm myself with ideas in advance so I'm always ready to make the best decision possible and jump on the opportunity when it arises. Besides, **it's a lot of fun to research destinations**. You get to learn so much about different cultures, places, history, and ways of life. It's a great way to broaden your perspective and enrich your life.

While I've been to hundreds of the most exotic destinations in the world, the two trips I'm thinking about next are Bhutan-Myanmar-Nepal and Madagascar-Mauritius-Uganda.

I prefer to hit a few spots and stay away longer. While this is NOT a requirement to the mindset I've been discussing today, it can make booking the best flights much easier, for similar reasons. That's because it opens me up to many more opportunities that involve multiple destinations. It's quite **liberating** to plan so freely like this. Will I start in Madagascar or Mauritius? Well, that all depends on which airline offers me the best First Class options.

Think flights first + dream about multiple destinations = more options = more enriched (travel) life.

In Part II of Stop "Booking Backwards" and Adopt the FCF Mindset to Get Incredible Dream Trips Literally Knocking on Your Door, we'll take a closer look at "How to Process a Deal—and How to Determine What Trips Were Meant to Be."

A tropical beach scene with palm trees and turquoise water. The image shows a clear blue sky, several palm trees with green fronds, and a calm turquoise sea reflecting the sky. In the distance, there are some small buildings and a few boats on the water.

First Class Beach Vacation Bout: Hawaii vs. Cancun

March 2019

First Class to Cancun can often be had for about the price of a coach fare, and a one-bedroom suite for less than the price of a standard room.

It's time for a new destination faceoff, this time between two tourist heavyweights. In one corner of the ring, we have tried-and-true Hawaii, a perennial favorite for Americans. In the other, we have Cancun, a worthy contender ready to deliver a knockout punch.

SPECIAL REPORT AT A GLANCE:

- Why you should consider Cancun for a vacation

- Fare comparisons between Hawaii and Cancun
- Cost-on-the-ground comparisons between Hawaii and Cancun

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT?

Let's say you've been to Hawaii, maybe even more than once. Isn't its time to consider another tropical beach getaway, one that's even closer and less pricey? Enter Cancun.

It's not only a beautiful vacation destination, it also offers great value for your travel dollar: **I'm talking Business Class for the price of coach.** And remember, in Business Class your vacation starts long before a coach class one.

I LOVE HAWAII. WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT CANCUN?

Admittedly, Cancun offers many of the same tropical vacation attributes of Hawaii. But it also boasts a number of world-class attractions that are unique to the destination:

- Vibrant Mayan culture and food
- Astonishing natural wonders, such as *cenotes* (natural sinkholes), caverns, underground rivers, and the Western Hemisphere's largest barrier reef
- Day trips to Mayan ruins such as Chichen Itza, Uxmal, and Tulum

It's hard to beat such a rich and diverse destination. Let's give Round 1 to Cancun.

CANCUN IS MUCH CLOSER THAN HAWAII

How far away is Cancun?

New York to Cancun: 1,555 miles, about 4:15 flight time

Los Angeles to Cancun: 2,119 miles, 4:30 flight time

Dallas to Cancun: 1,028 miles, 2:30 flight time

How far away is Hawaii?

New York to Honolulu: 4,957 miles, 9:30 flight time

Los Angeles to Honolulu: 2,555 miles, 5:50 flight time

Dallas to Honolulu: 3,787 miles, 8:10 flight time

With less time spent flying, you'll have more time to spend playing and relaxing. You can even hit the beach on the same day you arrive in Cancun.

Round 2: Cancun.

CANCUN: NOTTA LOTTA

The cost to fly to Hawaii is almost double that to Cancun. For example, fares range from \$1,859 to \$2,581 for New York-Maui in Business Class with American, Delta, or United. (In coach the range is typically \$600 to \$800 most of the time.)

Fares from New York to Cancun in Business Class with American, Delta, or United can range from \$656 to \$950.

With those kinds of savings, we have to give Round 3 to Cancun.

SAVE ON CANCUN HOTELS, TOO

Sure, you can save plenty of money on flights, but Cancun has another benefit: resort prices. You can stay at five-star resorts, such as The Ritz-Carlton Cancun, and pay much less per night than you would for a similar hotel in Hawaii.

The Ritz-Carlton Cancun, for example, starts at \$313 per night, while The Ritz-Carlton Maui can easily run \$500+ per night or more if staying for any length.

Stay at a one-bedroom ocean-view suite at The Ritz-Carlton Cancun for as low as \$539 per/night, while at The Ritz-Carlton Maui a one-bedroom ocean-view suite starts at \$1,078 per night or more.

Cancun can almost give you **two nights for the price of one** in Hawaii — or a **suite for the price of a standard room** — a knockout punch.

Round 4 delivers the match-ending blow.

AND THE WINNER IS ...

The verdict is in. After 4 rounds between Hawaii and Cancun, the clear winner of this vacation smackdown is... Cancun. So next time you're ready for a tropical getaway, rather than sticking with your default destination of Hawaii, consider Cancun — and other low-First-Class-cost destinations — instead.



The Mixed-Cabin Seesaw Strategy: Business Class One Way to Europe, Premium Economy the Other

March 2019

It can be smart for many to use when Business Class fares are very high and you're out of upgrade options.

There's a theory that says that all we really need to know about life we learned in kindergarten. One of those childhood lessons could well be learned on the playground seesaw, where you take turns pushing up off the ground and coming back down again. In the process, you learn that both sides of the fulcrum are needed to make it work.

Let's apply that lesson to travel to Europe. There may be times when you can't—or perhaps shouldn't—fly Business Class both ways because fares are very high or you have no upgrade options. In that case you

should consider flying Business Class one way and Premium Economy the other. We call this the **Mixed-Cabin Seesaw Strategy**.

But how do you know which class is right for each flight? Your decision should be based on how you're going to use your seat each way. Sleep, movies, work, or nap—they will help you decide which cabin to book for each direction.

Take flights to Europe. Since the departure is usually overnight, you'll want to sleep so you can arrive well rested to take full advantage of your trip. That's what Business Class is for: lots of space and comfort to facilitate a good night's sleep. Let's call that one side—in this case, one seat—of the seesaw.

On the return, usually a late-morning or afternoon departure, you want a seat that gives you some of the same amenities, space, entertainment, comfort, food and beverage as Business Class, but not to the same degree. That's what Premium Economy is for. Let's call that the other seat of the seesaw.

Why pay more for a benefit you don't need or might not even use?

USING THE SEESAW STRATEGY TO MILAN AND LONDON

Sample Savings #1: The lowest average Business Class fare on American from New York to Milan is \$3,201 round-trip for travel Oct. 1 to Oct. 15. Compare that to buying a mixed-class ticket at \$2,249; flying to Milan in Business Class while returning in Premium Economy. **Savings: \$952.**

See american.com screenshot...

New York-Milan Business Class on the departure and returning in Premium Economy.

Your trip summary

Business / Premium Economy

Round trip (Non-refundable)

\$2,249 per person

Total \$2,248.63 (all passengers)

[Price and tax information](#)

Includes taxes and carrier imposed fees.

[Bag and optional fees](#)

Depart New York, NY to Milan, Italy

Tuesday, October 1, 2019

4:30 PM → 6:35 AM 8h 5m Nonstop Business

AA 198 = 772-Boeing 777

⚠ Overnight flight or connection

Return Milan, Italy to New York, NY

Tuesday, October 15, 2019

11:15 AM → 2:20 PM 9h 5m Nonstop Premium Economy

AA 199 = 772-Boeing 777

Sample Savings #2: You get the same dividend from San Francisco to London. The lowest average Business Class fare on United is \$3,729 round-trip for travel Sept. 25 to Oct. 9, whereas a mixed-class ticket costs \$2,115. The SFO flight departs at 12:25 p.m., so you'll want that Business Class bed, and arrives in London at 6:55 a.m. The return flight departs London at 10:25 a.m. and arrives in SFO at 1:40 p.m. A nap may be on your flight plan but not a night's sleep. (Actually, you don't want to sleep too long on the flight or you'll be up all night at home.) **The fare difference: \$1,614.**

See united.com screenshot...

San Francisco-London Business Class on the departure and returning in Premium Economy.

Review trip itinerary

Wed, Sep 25, 2019

Wed, Sep 25 12:25 pm ✈️ San Francisco, CA, US (SFO)	Thu, Sep 26 6:55 am London, GB (LHR - Heathrow)	Nonstop 10h 30m total
UA 901 Boeing 777-300ER		

Wed, Oct 09, 2019

10:25 am ✈️ London, GB (LHR - Heathrow)	1:40 pm San Francisco, CA, US (SFO)	Nonstop 11h 15m total
UA 900 Boeing 777-300ER		

Wed, Sep 25, 2019 [Revise](#)

SFO - LHR 12:25 pm - 6:55 am

Wed, Oct 09, 2019 [Revise](#)

LHR - SFO 10:25 am - 1:40 pm

Fare	\$1,768.00
Taxes and fees	\$347.63
TOTAL	\$2,115.63

HOW TO SEARCH AND BOOK

Any travel agent or airline reservationist can price this for you. However, only some airline sites offer this search option, among them American, Air France, British Airways, United, and SWISS. Or you could use Kayak.com, as it lets you search different classes on one round-trip ticket by using the multi-city search option. That way you can select a different class of service as needed.

By using the Mixed-Cabin Seesaw Strategy you end up with **big savings** while maximizing the individual value of two different seats. That's a win-win.

A conceptual image showing a laptop screen displaying several gold bars. A transparent, metallic safe is superimposed over the right side of the laptop, with its door open, revealing the gold bars inside. The safe has a combination dial and a handle. The laptop is silver and open, with a black keyboard and a trackpad.

How to Lock in Amazing Premium Flash Fares to Use Later

March 2019

“Buying time” to decide if you want to confirm a great deal can significantly reduce airfare anxiety.

Locking up valuables in a safe place just makes sense. It’s important to protect them for use at another time. But do you apply the same principle to “locking up” great airfare deals when you see them? Do you protect them for use later on?

You definitely should. Spectacular low fares come and go all the time. It’s just a matter of locking them into a “safe box” for access when you’re ready to act on them.

And even better—it's easy to do.

For as little as *nothing*, and not a lot more on many airlines, you can hold a great fleeting fare long enough to get yourself organized.

Long enough, at least, to see if the kid's school vacation syncs up with the opportunities. Long enough to shift that business meeting to a better time (or add it to the trip). Long enough to see if those relatives on the Riviera will let you stay in their gorgeous beach house.

So why not lock in a few different airline tickets—say for different time windows or multiple destinations—and choose among them later?

EXAMPLES OF HOW GOOD FLEETING FARES CAN BE

Recently, FCF found [\\$2,258 R/T Business Class Airfares to Europe from Florida; American, Delta, Singapore Air, and United Premium Economy Fares to Asia From \\$823](#); and [\\$2,313 Business Class Airfares to Europe from Texas](#).

HOW IT'S DONE

At FCF, we call it “Look, Lock, Book.” Find the fare, use a lock option (**a fare hold can cost as little as \$6.99 per reservation—American's is even free and United offers the hold for up to seven days**, and then book (or not) based on further research or confirmation with your travel companions and calendar or whatever else determines your travel plans.

You still have to have a quick trigger finger to lock those fares in your vault when you see them. And you have to know the airlines and their rules for “Lock Options,” which give you *time to decide* on whether to purchase the ticket or pass.

FOCUS ON THE AIRLINES THAT ALLOW YOU TO LOCK IN AMAZING FLASH FARES

Look at the “lock” cost as insurance, just as you would for any other valuable item to protect. For example, hold three tickets on British Airways for 72 hours and it will set you back \$30—let's say, one departing the first week of the month, one the second week, and one the following month. On United, the lock costs as little as \$6.99 per reservation for three days. American's is free for up to 24 hours. British Airways and Lufthansa even refund the fee if you buy the ticket. Some airlines allow you one week to decide.

Most people don't realize this. They see an amazing FCF fare and think to themselves, “I'm not ready yet, I won't know my dates for a few more days,” and let the fare just pass on by.

LOCK-OPTION-FRIENDLY AIRLINES, EVEN ON THE LOWEST FLASH FARES

There are 16 major airline websites that will lock a reservation and guarantee the fare; the hold period generally depends on route and airline. The “lock option” goes by different names, depending on the airline, but they all come up during the booking process on eligible flights. Below is a rundown.

Air France: The “Time to Think” option (see the website screenshot below) comes up after you select your flights under “trip details” if it is offered on your itinerary. Cost: \$20 per ticket. It guarantees the price for up to three days. The option also applies to First Class.

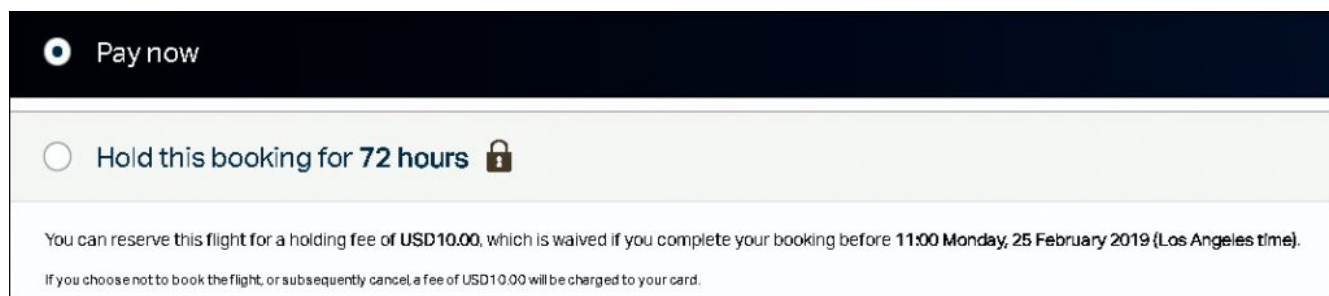
Air New Zealand: The “Fare Hold” option costs \$45 per international U.S. reservation (not per ticket). It guarantees the price for three days. If your itinerary is eligible, the “Hold this fare” button will appear at the bottom of the “Select your flights” screen.

All Nippon: The “Keep My Fare” option is good for up to 72 hours and costs \$10 and is not available with code-share partners). The option comes up in the payment screen after selecting your flight and fare. Valid for both Business and First Class.

American: The “Hold Your Reservation” option comes up on the review and pay page when offered and only if you book seven or more days prior to departure. It is free for up to 24 hours. The option also applies to First Class, on some routes; American also offers an “[Extended hold option](#)” on AA flights for a fee (cost varies by route and is non-refundable).

British Airways: The “Hold Your Flight Price” option comes up after the price summary, when offered. The cost is \$10 per ticket for a 72-hour hold. If you buy the ticket, you get a refund. The option also applies to partner flights on Iberia and in First Class on BA.

Cathay Pacific: The “Hold Your Fare” option is good for 72 hours. The fare is confirmed, however, taxes, fees, and carrier surcharges are subject to change. Valid for both Business and First Class. The fee varies by flights and on FCF’s last test booking it was \$10.



☒ Pay now

☐ Hold this booking for 72 hours 

You can reserve this flight for a holding fee of USD10.00, which is waived if you complete your booking before 11:00 Monday, 25 February 2019 (Los Angeles time).
If you choose not to book the flight, or subsequently cancel, a fee of USD10.00 will be charged to your card.

Finnair: The “Hold my Booking” option is good for 72 hours. You can hold the reservation for intercontinental flights for a fee of \$30. The fee only applies if you do not buy the ticket.

Hawaiian: The “Fare-Hold” option is good for a three-day or seven-day hold, the cost varies, based on a test booking (Los Angeles-Honolulu) the fee was \$6.99 for a three-day hold and \$8.99 for a seven-day hold. Discount on the fee is offered to elite members.

Iberia: The “Need more time to decide” option comes up after the trip summary and passenger information. You can hold the reservation for a fee of \$10 per ticket for a 72-hour hold. The fee only applies if you do not buy the ticket.

KLM: The “Time to Think” option (€10 and €15 per ticket) comes up after you select your flights; when offered, the hold time varies (up to three days) and will depend when the booking is made, destination and fare conditions for the selected flights. When FCF did a test booking the cost was \$20 per ticket.

Time to Think

When booking online, you can take an option on your selected flight, for a period of 3 days maximum. During the Time to Think period, your selected seat on the flight will be reserved for you at fixed price and fare conditions.

LATAM: The option is good for 24 hours and is free, if the reservation is made one week (or more) prior to departure.

Lufthansa: The “Reservation with price guarantee” option, when offered, is for 48 hours. Cost: €30 per reservation. The fee only applies if you do not buy the ticket. Not offered on partner/code-share flights.

Qatar: The “Hold my Booking” option, when offered, is for up to 72 hours. Cost: varies by timeframe selected. No refund on the fee paid.

SWISS: When making a booking, the “Hold the booking” option comes up after you select the flights and it is offered for up to 72 hours. Cost: \$27 per reservation. It is also offered in First Class and valid on code-share flights (on United, for example) with the prefix LX.

Tap Air Portugal: The “Time to Think” option, when offered, is for 48 hours. Cost: \$13 per ticket. No refund on the fee paid.

United: The “FareLock” option (non-refundable) comes up after the trip summary, if offered, cost varies by route and is available for a three-day or a seven-day hold. Available on First Class bookings and mileage-award reservations. FareLock is not offered on partner/code-share flights.

GENERAL CANCELLATION POLICY FOR PAID TICKETS

Most airlines allow you to cancel without penalty and receive a full refund within 24 hours after you purchase your ticket, by [law](#). (The Department of Transportation mandates that “U.S. and foreign air carriers allow a

reservation to be cancelled within 24 hours without penalty.”) Some airlines do, however, have advance reservation requirements (such as Alitalia, which requires at least a week prior to scheduled flight departure), so check with your airline for any restrictions on the 24-hour rule.

View the Lock Options as protecting one of your most valuable assets: a great airfare deal. Then, when you're ready, unlock the deal from your airfare safe and never miss out on a great deal again.