

A photograph of two young women with long brown hair. The woman on the left is wearing a denim jacket and has her hand near her mouth as if she is part of a secret conversation. The woman on the right is also wearing a denim jacket and has a surprised or excited expression on her face. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting with greenery.

107 Secret Routes to Europe That Offer Two or Three Business Class Tickets for the Price of One with American Miles

March 2024

How Perfection Blindness is Robbing You of Great Award Deals – From the East Coast to the West – For the Whole Family

I believe that perfectionism and travel don't mix.

Yes, there are exceptions. The planets occasionally align and you can get an amazing deal for the price you want, on the day you want, on a nonstop flight, at the right time of day (and it's sunny), on the airline you want, in the seat you want, with the brand of champagne you want, sitting next to Margot Robbie (or whoever you may want to sit next to).

But ask any mathematician how often you'll get all those details to work out for you if you want to use miles.

About as often as Ken outshines Barbie.

This special report is about the notion that [travel perfectionism is likely holding you back](#) and that your miles, in particular, are taking a big hit. We have solid proof with a range of examples, focusing on one of the world's biggest carriers: American Airlines. And we have a strategy for it that is surely going to change the way many of you approach your next trip.



Imperfection can still taste great. It's cheaper too.

Let's start with what most travelers would naturally want when heading to Europe: a nonstop flight in Business Class with low-cost-award seat availability.

Simple, right?

Then you crunch the numbers with American Airlines, as our team has. We looked at **50 nonstop routes** to Europe for low-cost (under 100,000 miles one-way) free award seats. For days with available award seats through mid-January, 2025, these are the prices we found, one-way:

PERCENTAGE OF TIME ONE-WAY AWARDS ARE AVAILABLE NON-STOP BY PRICE RANGE: THE SUMMARY

Days Available with Awards Under 100,000 Miles	Days Available with Awards 101,000 - 200,000 Miles	Days Available with Awards 201,000 - 300,000 Miles	Days Available with Awards 301,000 - 400,000+ Miles
5.9%	24.4%	30.8%	38.5%

PRICING BY ROUTE

From	To	Under 100,000 Miles	101,000 - 200,000 Miles	201,000 - 300,000 Miles	301,000 - 400,000+ Miles
Charlotte	Dublin	3%	21%	45%	31%
	Frankfurt	16%	26%	33%	25%
	London	6%	50%	30%	15%
	Madrid	6%	23%	29%	41%
	Munich	12%	18%	34%	36%
	Paris	2%	11%	52%	35%
	Rome	1%	5%	28%	66%
Chicago	Athens	0%	2%	21%	77%
	Barcelona	1%	24%	51%	24%
	Dublin	1%	36%	50%	12%
	London	29%	65%	4%	2%
	Paris	4%	21%	40%	34%
	Rome	0%	24%	33%	42%
	Venice	4%	1%	35%	61%
Dallas	Amsterdam	0%	2%	46%	52%
	Barcelona	2%	6%	38%	53%
	Dublin	1%	9%	52%	38%
	Frankfurt	5%	19%	45%	31%
	London	19%	58%	20%	3%
	Madrid	4%	8%	45%	43%
	Paris	0%	24%	31%	45%

From	To	Under 100,000 Miles	101,000 - 200,000 Miles	201,000 - 300,000 Miles	301,000 - 400,000+ Miles
	Rome	2%	13%	30%	56%
Los Angeles	London	12%	63%	19%	6%
Miami	Barcelona	1%	13%	26%	60%
	London	2%	22%	55%	21%
	Madrid	2%	31%	25%	42%
	Paris	0%	40%	27%	32%
New York	Athens	3%	4%	30%	63%
	Barcelona	11%	37%	37%	15%
	London	34%	63%	2%	1%
	Madrid	11%	50%	32%	7%
	Milan	6%	18%	34%	42%
	Paris	4%	33%	38%	24%
	Rome	8%	60%	32%	0%
Philadelphia	Amsterdam	2%	4%	19%	76%
	Athens	0%	3%	25%	72%
	Barcelona	2%	19%	22%	57%
	Copenhagen	2%	1%	48%	49%
	Dublin	1%	19%	33%	47%
	Lisbon	1%	11%	28%	59%
	London	3%	40%	34%	23%
	Madrid	13%	33%	24%	30%
	Naples	2%	3%	15%	80%
	Nice	3%	5%	19%	72%
	Paris	3%	6%	22%	69%
	Rome	4%	7%	23%	65%
	Venice	1%	8%	29%	62%
	Zurich	1%	2%	15%	82%

From	To	Under 100,000 Miles	101,000 - 200,000 Miles	201,000 - 300,000 Miles	301,000 - 400,000+ Miles
Phoenix	London	1%	8%	47%	45%
Raleigh	London	4%	47%	23%	26%

Many travelers with a perfectionist mindset will stop right there and say, “I’m done. Darn airlines — there’s never anything for me to use my &^%\$ miles on at a reasonable price.”

But they’re missing a golden opportunity that will quench their thirst.

ARC: PERFECTING THE ART OF BEING IMPERFECT

We call it the **ARC** Strategy, for **All the Right Connections**. The idea is to use two very effective but yet little-used tools in your travel toolkit: connecting flights and partner airlines. As you’ll discover, they are bottle openers for mile meisters. Hear that sound? Schweppervescence? In this case, it’s Milervescence! Drink it in.

HOW MICHAEL ARCED UP AND MILKED MAXIMUM MILEAGE

Dallas native Michael is flying to London.

His perfectionist default mindset (like most of us) has him looking at nonstops on either American Airlines or British Airways using his American miles. His choices are not the best.

- 1. He could fly on AA50 for 104,500 miles + \$6 in taxes, one-way: ouch!
- 2. He could fly on BA192 for 57,500 miles + \$733 in taxes, one-way: ouch!

Yes, that's a big mileage hit on American Airlines. And yes, a huge IRS-style tax hit on British Airways. Surely there’s a better way. Hello, ARC strategy!

DALLAS TO LONDON NONSTOP ON AMERICAN USING AMERICAN MILES

Business

One way (per person)

104,500 miles

+ \$5.60

Total (all passengers)
104,500 miles + \$5.60

DEPART

Dallas/Fort Worth, TX to London, United Kingdom

Monday, March 25, 2024

5:15 PM → 7:20 AM⁺¹ 9h 5m Nonstop Business

AA50 77W-Boeing 777

📶 🧴 🛖 🛂 🧳

DALLAS TO LONDON NONSTOP ON BRITISH AIRWAYS USING AMERICAN MILES

Business One way (per person) 57,500 miles + \$732.30 Total (all passengers) 57,500 miles + \$732.30	DEPART Dallas/Fort Worth, TX to London, United Kingdom Monday, March 25, 2024 7:50 PM → 9:45 AM ⁺¹ 8h 55m Nonstop Business BA192 388-Airbus A380 Operated by British Airways
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Michael's brother Max decides to join him. Max lives in Rapid City.

Max finds that he can fly from Rapid City to Dallas, connect with Michael's flight to London on American for 89,500 (15,000 less miles than Michael's 104,500), or on British Airways for the same 57,500 miles and pay \$737 in taxes.

RAPID CITY > DALLAS > LONDON ON AMERICAN USING AMERICAN MILES

Business One way (per person) 89,500 miles + \$5.60 Total (all passengers) 89,500 miles + \$5.60	DEPART Rapid City, SD to London, United Kingdom Monday, March 25, 2024 12:27 PM → 7:20 AM ⁺¹ 12h 53m 1 stop Business RAP - DFW AA3649 E75-Embraer 175 Operated by Envoy Air as American Eagle DFW - LHR AA50 77W-Boeing 777
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RAPID CITY > DALLAS > LONDON ON AMERICAN AND BRITISH AIRWAYS

Business One way (per person) 57,500 miles + \$736.80 Total (all passengers) 57,500 miles + \$736.80	DEPART Rapid City, SD to London, United Kingdom Monday, March 25, 2024 12:27 PM → 9:45 AM ⁺¹ 15h 18m 1 stop Business RAP - DFW AA3649 E75-Embraer 175 Operated by Envoy Air as American Eagle DFW - LHR BA192 388-Airbus A380 Operated by British Airways
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Max is thinking that's a lot of miles. For that many miles, Max suggests traveling to Milan instead of London. Michael's up for it.

Now, over in Europe, it gets interesting — and even better.

Michael can now fly from Dallas to London and then to Milan. If he flies through London on American connecting with British Airways, he will pay 57,500 miles and \$23 in taxes. That’s 47,000 miles less than Michael’s original nonstop Dallas-London itinerary on American or the same number of miles (57,500) and \$750 in taxes if he flies on BA through London. That’s a no-brainer decision.

DALLAS > LONDON > MILAN ON AMERICAN AND BRITISH AIRWAYS USING AMERICAN MILES

Business
One way (per person)
57,500 miles
+ \$22.90
Total (all passengers)
57,500 miles + \$22.90

DEPART
Dallas/Fort Worth, TX to Milan, Italy
Monday, March 25, 2024

5:15 PM → 12:20 PM⁺¹ 13h 5m 1 stop Business
DFW - LHR = AA50 = 77W-Boeing 777
LHR - MXP = BA576 = 32A-Airbus A320
Operated by British Airways

DALLAS > LONDON > MILAN ON BRITISH AIRWAYS USING AMERICAN MILES

Business
One way (per person)
57,500 miles
+ \$749.60
Total (all passengers)
57,500 miles + \$749.60

DEPART
Dallas/Fort Worth, TX to Milan, Italy
Monday, March 25, 2024

7:50 PM → 2:40 PM⁺¹ 12h 50m 1 stop Business
DFW - LHR = BA192 = 388-Airbus A380
LHR - MXP = BA590 = 32A-Airbus A320
Operated by British Airways

Now it’s Max’s turn. He is excited to see that he can fly all the way from Rapid City to Milan for the same 57,500 miles and \$23 in taxes, and on the same flights as Michael. That’s 32,000 miles less than Max’s original Rapid City-Dallas-London itinerary on American.

RAPID CITY > DALLAS > LONDON > MILAN ON AMERICAN USING AMERICAN MILES

Business
One way (per person)
57,500 miles
+ \$22.90
Total (all passengers)
57,500 miles + \$22.90

DEPART
Rapid City, SD to Milan, Italy
Monday, March 25, 2024
12:27 PM → 12:20 PM⁺ 16h 53m 2 stops Business
RAP - DFW = AA3649 = E75-Embraer 175
DFW - LHR = AA50 = 77W-Boeing 777
LHR - MXP = BA576 = 32A-Airbus A320
Operated by British Airways

What a deal! The brothers collectively saved 158,000 miles.

That's like a two-for-one to Europe.

Or like getting a free Upgrade to Business for the price of Premium Economy.

No matter how you look at it, you win. Bingo!

Big picture, the ARC strategy acknowledges that the airlines are rewarding you for flying farther, which is very carrier-counterintuitive. Also, rather than a somewhat limiting direct flight, connections make it possible to divide and conquer the journey for better value.

Here's all that in a table.

Connection	Route	Airline	Cost	Flight Number	Taxes
None/Non-Stop	Dallas-London	AA*	104,500	AA50	\$6
		BA	57,500	BA192	\$732
U.S. Connection	Rapid City-Dallas-London	AA/AA*	89,500	AA3649 / AA50	\$6
		AA*/BA	57,500	AA3649 / BA192	\$737
Europe Connection	Dallas-London-Milan	AA*/BA		AA50 / BA576	\$23
		BA/BA		BA192 / BA590	\$750
U.S. Connection and Europe Connection	Rapid City-Dallas-London-Milan	AA/AA*/BA		AA3649 / AA50 / BA576	\$23
		AA/BA/BA		AA3649 / BA192 / BA590	\$754

*AA over the water.

More Ways ARC Lands Big Value

Don't want to connect with BA through London?

CHARLOTTE > MUNICH > HELSINKI AMERICAN AND FINNAIR USING AMERICAN MILES

Now, you may not live in Charlotte, or maybe you weren't planning to include Helsinki. But the ARC strategy gives you low-cost, low-tax options to consider. It could be a cheap connection from your home to Charlotte. At the other end, you can add Helsinki, the beautiful "Pearl of the Baltic," to your ever-expanding bucket list. Or you can typically add on a connecting flight, when available, for no additional cost to any Oneworld city.

Business
One way (per person)
57,500 miles
+ \$24.70
Total (all passengers)
57,500 miles + \$24.70
Includes taxes and carrier-imposed fees
[Price and tax information](#)

DEPART
Charlotte, NC to Helsinki, Finland
Tuesday, August 6, 2024
4:30 PM → 3:35 PM^{*1} 16h 5m 1 stop Business
CLT - MUC = AA716 = 772-Boeing 777
MUC - HEL = AY1402 = 359-Airbus A350
Operated by Finnair

AA'S ONE-STOP LOW-COST LOW-TAX FREE AWARD SEAT AVAILABILITY

We checked 396 one-stop low-cost, low-tax routes departing from seven American hub cities.

Here are the highlights:

- There are **107 one-stop low-cost, low-tax free award seat routes available**. That's **88% more** low-cost award space when compared to AA's nonstop routes.
- Departing from or connecting through New York and Chicago had the most routes available.
- Good news from the West Coast with 15 available routes from AA's Los Angeles hub.
- A decent number of routes are available from AA's Charlotte, Dallas, and Raleigh hubs.
- Flights from AA's Philadelphia hub were scarce with only two routes available.
- We did not find any connecting flights from AA's Miami or Phoenix hubs.

ONE-STOP LOW-COST LOW-TAX FREE AWARD SEAT AVAILABILITY TRENDS FROM CHARLOTTE

To	Outbound		Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Amsterdam	March	March	April	March	March
Athens	March	March			
Basel	March	March		March	March
Bilbao	March			March	
Copenhagen	March		April	March	March
Lisbon	March		March		
Milan	March	March	April	March	March
Nice	March		April	March	March
Oslo	March	March	April	March	
Prague	March		March	March	
Sofia	March		March, April		
Stuttgart	March	March	April	March	
Vienna	March	March	April	April	March
Zagreb	March		March, April		
Zurich	March	March	April	March	March

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

ONE-STOP LOW-COST LOW-TAX FREE AWARD SEAT AVAILABILITY TRENDS FROM CHICAGO

To	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Amsterdam	March, April, July, Aug., Oct., Nov., Jan.	March, Nov., Dec.	Dec.	May, Aug., Dec.	April	March

To	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Athens	March, April, Nov., Dec., Jan.			March, April, Dec.		
Basel	March, April, Aug., Nov. to Jan.	March, April, Nov.		Dec., Jan.	March	
Bilbao	March, Nov. to Jan.	Nov.		March, Dec.		
Copenhagen	March, April, Aug., Oct., Nov. to Jan.	March, April, Nov.				March, April
Florence	July, Aug.			Aug.		
Ibiza	April			April		
Lisbon	March, Aug., Nov. to Dec.	Nov.		March, Dec.		
Marseille	Aug., Nov., Dec., Jan.	April		April, Dec.	April	
Milan	March, April, Aug., Oct., Nov. to Jan.	March, April, Nov., Dec.		May, Dec.	March, April	April
Nice	March, April, Aug., Nov., Jan.	April, Nov.		March, April	March	April
Oslo	March, April, Aug., Nov., Dec.	April, Nov., Dec., Jan.		March, May, Aug., Dec., Jan.	March, April	April
Prague	April, Aug., Nov., Dec., Jan.	April, Nov.		March, April, Dec., Jan.	March	
Rome	April, Aug., Oct., Nov. to Jan.	Nov.		March, May, Dec.		
Santorini	April			April	April	
Sofia	April, Aug., Nov., Jan.	Nov., Dec.		April, Dec.		
Stuttgart	Nov. to Jan.	Nov.		March, April, Aug., Dec.		
Venice	April, Aug., Oct., Nov. to Jan.	Nov.		April, Dec.	April	
Vienna	March, April, Nov. to Jan.	April, Aug., Nov.	April	May, Aug.	March	April
Zagreb	March, April, Nov., Jan.			March, April		

To	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Zurich	March, April, July, Aug., Oct., Nov., Dec.	April, Nov.		May, Aug., Dec.	March, April	March, April

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

ONE-STOP LOW-COST LOW-TAX FREE AWARD SEAT AVAILABILITY TRENDS FROM DALLAS

To	Outbound		Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Amsterdam	March	March	April, Aug.	April	March
Basel	March		April, Jan.	March	March
Copenhagen	March				March, April
Frankfurt	March		April	March	March
Nice	March				March
Oslo	March		Jan.	March, April	March, April
Paris	March		April	April	March
Prague	March		April	March	March
Sofia	March		March, April		
Stuttgart	March		April		March
Vienna	March	March			March, April
Zagreb	March		April	March	March
Zurich	March		Aug.	April	March

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ONE-STOP LOW-COST LOW-TAX FREE AWARD SEAT AVAILABILITY TRENDS FROM LOS ANGELES

To	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Amsterdam	March	March		March	April, March	March
Athens	March			April	March	March
Basel	March	March			March	March
Bilbao	March			March	March	
Copenhagen	March	March	March		April	March, April
Frankfurt	March	March	March	April	April	March
Nice	March			April		March
Oslo	March	March	March	March, April	April	March
Paris	March			March		
Prague	March	March		April	March	March
Sofia	March			March, April		
Stuttgart	March	March		April	March	March
Venice	March			March, April	March	
Vienna	March	March		Feb.	April	March
Zagreb	March	March			March	March

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

ONE-STOP LOW-COST LOW-TAX FREE AWARD SEAT AVAILABILITY TRENDS FROM NEW YORK

To	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Amsterdam	April, July, Nov., Dec., Jan.	March, April, July, Aug.	March, Aug.			March
Athens	March, April, Aug., Nov.	April, Aug.		April, May, June, July, Aug., Nov., Dec., Jan.		March
Basel	April, July, Aug., Nov., Jan.	March, Aug., Jan.	March, Aug.	April, May, June, Oct., Dec., Jan.	March, Nov.	March
Bilbao	March, Nov., Jan.			March, April, May, Nov., Dec.		
Copenhagen	April, July, Nov., Dec., Jan.	March, April, July, Aug.	March, April, Aug.	July, Oct., Dec.	May, June, Sept., Oct., Nov.	March, April, May to July, Aug.
Corfu	Aug.	Aug.		April, May, June, July	May	
Florence	April, July, Aug.	Aug.		June, July, Aug.		
Frankfurt	March, April, Aug., Jan.	March, Aug.		April to June, Aug., Oct., Nov., Dec.	April, May, Sept.	March, May, Sept.
Krakow	March, Jan.			March	Nov.	
Lisbon	March, Aug., Nov., Dec.	Aug.	Aug.	April, May to Aug.	March, May, June, July, Dec.	June, July, Nov.
Marseille	April,	April		May, July, Aug., Oct., Dec.	March, April, May, June, Sept., Oct., Dec.	April., May, Nov.
Milan	April, Aug., Nov., Dec., Jan.	March, April	March	May, June, Oct., Jan.	Dec.	March, April, Nov.
Naples	April	Aug.	Aug.	Nov., Dec.		
Nice	Nov.				March	March, May
Oslo	March, April, Aug.			April to June, Aug., Oct., Dec.	March, April, May, Sept., Dec.	Nov.
Palermo	April			April		
Paris	April, July, Aug., Nov., Jan.	March, Aug.		Sept., Oct., Dec.	April to June, Sept.	March, Nov.

To	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Pisa	April, Nov.	April		March, May, Nov., Dec., Jan.		
Prague	March, April, July, Nov., Dec., Jan.		Aug.	March, April, Sept., Dec.	March, Nov.	Nov.
Rome	April, Aug., Nov., Jan.		Aug.	April, June, July, Aug., Sept.	March, May, July, Dec.	May, Nov.
Santorini	April			April		
Sofia		April, Aug.	March, April, Aug., Nov., Dec., Jan.	March to June, July, Oct., Nov., Dec.	March, April, May, June, Nov., Dec.	May, Nov.
Stuttgart	March, April, July, Aug., Nov.	March, April, July, Aug.		April, May, June, July, Aug., Oct., Dec., Jan.	March, April, May, Aug., Sept., Nov.	March, Sept., Oct., Nov.
Venice	April, July, Aug., Nov., Jan.	April		March, April, May, Dec., Jan.	March, April, Dec.	Nov.
Vienna	March, July, Aug., Jan.	March, April, July, Jan.	April, Aug.	June, July, Oct., Dec.	May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct.	March, April, May, June, Aug., Nov.
Zagreb	March, April, Nov., Jan.	April		April, May, Oct. to Jan.	March, Nov.	March
Zurich	April, July, Nov., Jan.	March, April, July, Aug.	March, April, Aug.	July, Oct.	May, June, Sept., Oct., Dec.	March, April, May, Aug., Sept., Nov.

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

ONE-STOP LOW-COST LOW-TAX FREE AWARD SEAT AVAILABILITY TRENDS FROM PHILADELPHIA

To	Outbound	Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Amsterdam	April	March, April, Nov., Dec.	April	
Copenhagen	April	March	April	April

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

One-Stop Low-Cost Low-Tax Free Award Seat Availability Trends from Raleigh-Durham

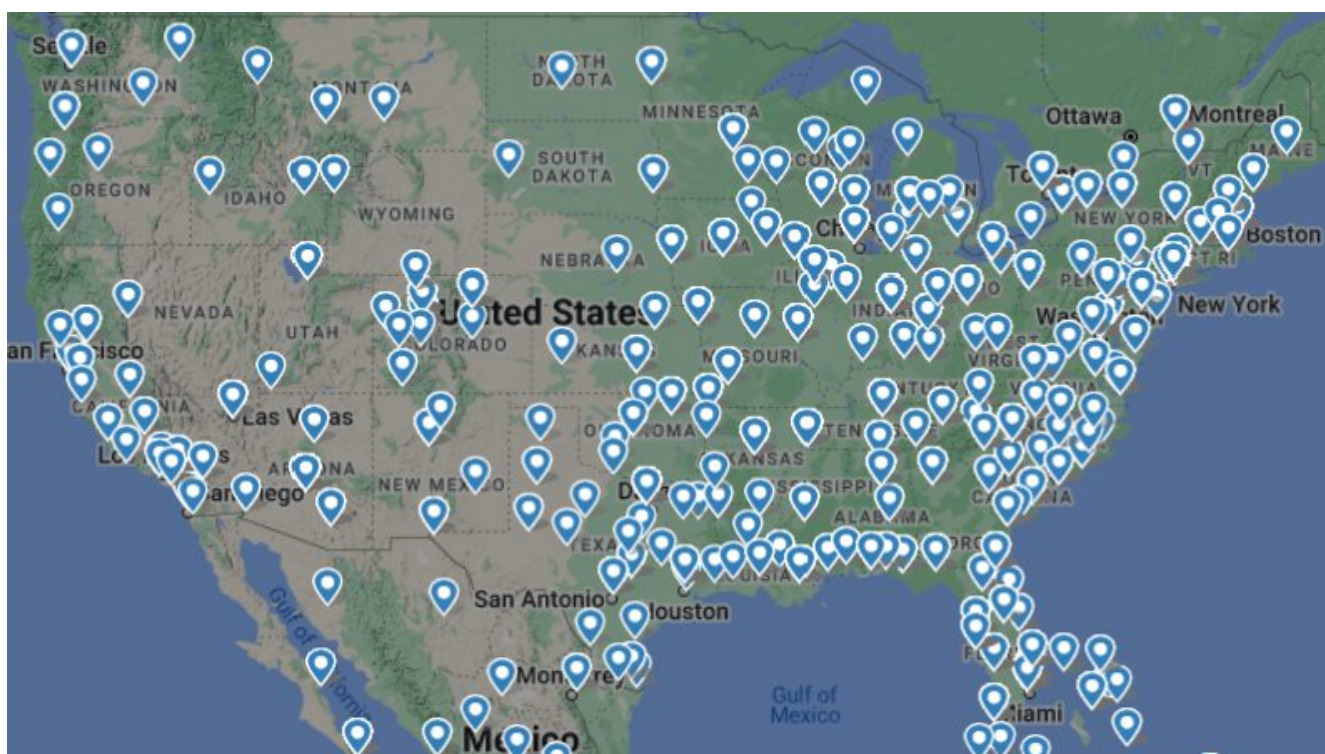
To	Outbound	Return	
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month
Athens	Jan.	March, Jan.	
Copenhagen	March, Jan.	March, May, Jan.	March, April
Frankfurt	March, Jan.	March, April to June	March, Jan.
Lisbon	Jan.	March, June, Jan.	
Marseille	Jan.	March, April, June, Jan.	
Milan	March, Jan.	March, April, Jan.	March, Jan.
Nice	Jan.	March, May, Jan.	
Oslo	Jan.	March, April	April, Jan.
Paris	March, Jan.	March, April, May, Jan.	
Prague	Jan.	March, April, Jan.	
Rome	Jan.	March, Jan.	
Stuttgart	Jan.	March, April, May, Jan.	
Venice	Jan.	March	Jan.
Vienna	Jan.	March, April to June, Jan.	

To	Outbound	Return	
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month
Zurich	March, Jan.	March, April, May, June, Jan.	March

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

You can typically add on a U.S. connecting flight for no additional cost, when available from any of Oneworld's U.S. departure cities, such as:

AA U.S. ROUTE MAP



Our research found a lot of routes with free awards for 57,500 miles each way and low taxes. In any case, FCF always recommends grabbing your ticket when you come across a good deal or [something you can live with](#) — and if it's not perfect, [upgrade later](#). And of course don't [book backwards](#).

Oh, it's such a perfect day

I'm glad I spent it with you

It's just a perfect day

You just keep me hanging on

You just keep me hanging on

~ "Perfect Day," Lou Reed



Upgrade Economics and Premium Fare Volatility

March 2024

Why Premium Economy flyers should avoid cabin blindness

Last month, we noticed some markets where the margin between [low Business Class fares](#) and Premium Economy was very tight.

But that was last month.

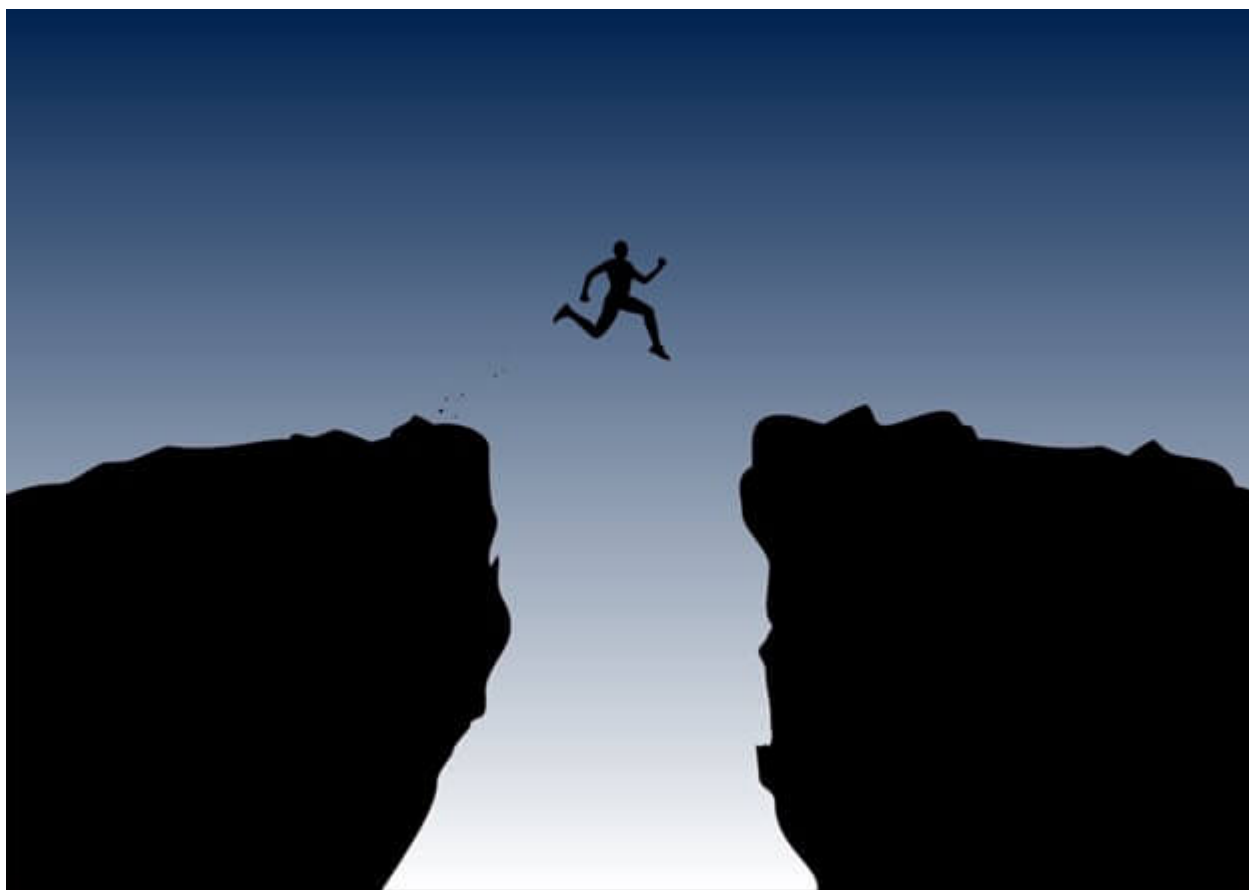
Then, bang, the gap widened. In one particular example we'll show below, the fare gap went from \$200 to \$2,342. That's an extraordinary difference in the span of about 30 days.

Therein lies a cautionary message for FCF readers.

Throw your net wider than just one cabin when looking at fares. This especially applies to you Premium Economists. If you only shop within the Premium Economy cabin, you might miss a crazy-great Business Class fare that's way closer to Premium Economy prices than you'd ever imagine.

GOOGLE FLIGHTERS, SKYSCANNERS AND KAYAKERS BEWARE

Google Flights, Skyscanner, and Kayak are all great websites, and we encourage you to use them, but there's one thing to be wary of. They all look at one cabin on a page at a time, generally speaking. The airline websites, on the other hand, allow you to cross-check *between* cabins on a page. It's a big deal because you could easily miss some great opportunities, like recently, when the fare gaps were often very close between cabins. Most Premium "Economists" simply don't bother checking Business Class fares because they've been burned so many times before. But this kind of awareness can [stretch your budget up to a better cabin](#).



Make the leap and get gap savvy

UNITED: IF YOU UPGRADED WHEN FARES WERE LOW IN FEBRUARY

**Upgrade from Premium Economy to Business Class
for \$200 / \$12-per-flight hour**

Last month, United's Newark to Barcelona in Premium Economy cost \$2,059 round-trip, while that exact same trip in Business Class went for just \$200 more. Imagine getting off that flight and discovering you could have been up in Business Class for a couple of Ben Franklins! Screenshots here:



UNITED

DEPART ON: April 3

Premium Economy

RECOMMENDED FLIGHT ? NONSTOP
Arrives Apr 4
7:25 PM 9:00 AM
EWR 7H, 35M BCN
UA 120 (Boeing 777-200)
Details Seats 437 kg CO₂ ?

RETURN ON: April 10

Premium Economy

NONSTOP
12:00 PM 2:40 PM
BCN 8H, 40M EWR
UA 121 (Boeing 777-200)
Details Seats 411 kg CO₂ ?

Fare	\$1,965.00
Taxes and fees	\$94.40
Total due	\$2,059.40

United Newark to Barcelona in Business Class for \$2,259 round-trip.



UNITED

DEPART ON: April 3

Business

NONSTOP
Arrives Apr 4
7:25 PM 9:00 AM
EWR 7H, 35M BCN
UA 120 (Boeing 777-200)
Details Seats 437 kg CO₂ ?

RETURN ON: April 10

Business

NONSTOP
12:00 PM 2:40 PM
BCN 8H, 40M EWR
UA 121 (Boeing 777-200)
Details Seats 411 kg CO₂ ?

Fare	\$2,165.00
Taxes and fees	\$94.40
Total due	\$2,259.40

UNITED: UPGRADE PRICE IN MARCH

Upgrade from Premium Economy to Business Class for \$2,342 / \$142-per-flight hour

Now look at what happened in March for that same flight. Premium Economy went from \$2,059 to \$3,246 (+\$1,187), and Business Class went from \$2,259 to \$5,588 (+\$3,329). Everything increased -- including the price gap between the cabins. So everyone's a loser in March. Screenshots follow.



DEPART ON: April 3

Premium Economy

NONSTOP

7:25 PM

Arrives Apr 4

9:00 AM

EWR

7H, 35M

BCN

UA 120 (Boeing 777-200)

Details

Seats

437 kg CO₂

RETURN ON: April 10

Premium Economy

NONSTOP

12:00 PM

2:40 PM

BCN

8H, 40M

EWR

UA 121 (Boeing 777-200)

Details

Seats

411 kg CO₂

Fare

\$3,152.00

Taxes and fees

\$94.70

Total due

\$3,246.70

United Newark to Barcelona in Business Class for \$5,588 round-trip.



DEPART ON: April 3

Business

NONSTOP

7:25 PM

Arrives Apr 4

9:00 AM

EWR

7H, 35M

BCN

UA 120 (Boeing 777-200)

Details

Seats

437 kg CO₂

RETURN ON: April 10

Business

NONSTOP

12:00 PM

2:40 PM

BCN

8H, 40M

EWR

UA 121 (Boeing 777-200)

Details

Seats

411 kg CO₂

Fare

\$5,494.00

Taxes and fees

\$94.70

Total due

\$5,588.70

AA/BA: IF YOU UPGRADED WHEN FARES WERE LOW IN FEBRUARY

Upgrade from Premium Economy to Business Class for \$512 / \$15-per-flight hour

Here's another example. American/British Airways' New York-Dubrovnik route, round-trip, in Premium Economy, cost \$2,397, while in Business Class, the cost was \$2,909. That's a cabin upgrade for \$512, or \$15 per hour. That's a beautifully low-cost upgrade. Screenshot below, followed by what happened in March.

Premium Economy Round trip (non-refundable) \$2,397 per person Total \$2,396.80 (all passengers) Bag and optional fees	DEPART New York, NY to Dubrovnik, Croatia Tuesday, July 16, 2024 11:15 PM → 7:55 PM ⁺¹ 14h 40m 1 stop Premium Economy JFK - LHR = AA6941 = 773-Boeing 777 Operated by British Airways LHR - DBV = AA7057 = 320-Airbus A320			
	RETURN Dubrovnik, Croatia to New York, NY Tuesday, July 23, 2024 6:40 PM → 12:30 PM ⁺¹ 23h 50m 1 stop Premium Economy DBV - LHR = AA7058 = 320-Airbus A320 Operated by British Airways LHR - JFK = AA6936 = 773-Boeing 777 Operated by British Airways			

American/British Airways New York to Dubrovnik in Business Class for \$2,909 round-trip.

Business Round trip (non-refundable) \$2,909 per person Total \$2,908.80 (all passengers) Bag and optional fees	DEPART New York, NY to Dubrovnik, Croatia Tuesday, July 16, 2024 11:15 PM → 7:55 PM ⁺¹ 14h 40m 1 stop Business JFK - LHR = AA6941 = 773-Boeing 777 Operated by British Airways LHR - DBV = AA7057 = 320-Airbus A320 Operated by British Airways			
	RETURN Dubrovnik, Croatia to New York, NY Tuesday, July 23, 2024 6:40 PM → 12:30 PM ⁺¹ 23h 50m 1 stop Business DBV - LHR = AA7058 = 320-Airbus A320 Operated by British Airways LHR - JFK = AA6936 = 773-Boeing 777 Operated by British Airways			

AA/BA: UPGRADE PRICE IN MARCH

Upgrade from Premium Economy to Business Class for \$2,892 / \$83-per-flight hour

Again, we fast-forward just 30 days with this AA/BA New York-Dubrovnik flight to discover that the Premium Economy fare remains unchanged (well, \$1 higher), while the Business Class fare has increased by a whopping \$2,381, a \$68-per-hour increase to upgrade. No thanks.

Premium Economy

Round trip (non-refundable)

\$2,398 per person

Total \$2,397.40 (all passengers)

DEPART

New York, NY to Dubrovnik, Croatia

Tuesday, July 16, 2024

11:15 PM → 7:55 PM⁺¹ 14h 40m 1 stop Premium Economy

JFK - LHR = AA6941 = 773-Boeing 777
 Operated by British Airways

LHR - DBV = AA7057 = 320-Airbus A320
 Operated by British Airways

RETURN

Dubrovnik, Croatia to New York, NY

Tuesday, July 23, 2024

8:50 PM → 12:40 PM⁺¹ 21h 50m 1 stop Premium Economy

DBV - LHR = AA7058 = 320-Airbus A320
 Operated by British Airways

LHR - JFK = AA6936 = 773-Boeing 777
 Operated by British Airways

Business

Round trip (non-refundable)

\$5,290 per person

Total \$5,289.40 (all passengers)

DEPART

New York, NY to Dubrovnik, Croatia

Tuesday, July 16, 2024

11:15 PM → 7:55 PM⁺¹ 14h 40m 1 stop Business

JFK - LHR = AA6941 = 773-Boeing 777
 Operated by British Airways

LHR - DBV = AA7057 = 320-Airbus A320
 Operated by British Airways

RETURN

Dubrovnik, Croatia to New York, NY

Tuesday, July 23, 2024

8:50 PM → 11:05 AM⁺¹ 20h 15m 1 stop Business

DBV - LHR = AA7058 = 320-Airbus A320
 Operated by British Airways

LHR - JFK = AA6930 = 777-Boeing 777
 Operated by British Airways

American/British Airways New York to Dubrovnik in Business Class for \$5,290 round-trip.

DELTA: IF YOU UPGRADED WHEN FARES WERE LOW IN FEBRUARY

Let's look at Delta. In February, New York to Madrid in Premium Economy went for \$1,508 round-trip, while in Business Class the cost was \$2,723, a cabin price gap of \$1,215. Screenshots below.

DELTA JFK - MAD Round Trip Mar 27-Apr 3 1 Passenger					
Outbound	DL126	JFK • MAD	Wed, Mar 27	THU, MAR 28 6:30pm - 7:00am	Nonstop, 7h 30m Premium Select
Return	DL127	MAD • JFK	Wed, Apr 3	WED, APR 3 10:00am - 12:30pm	Nonstop, 8h 30m Premium Select
Trip Total					Currency Calculator
1 Passenger					
Flights					\$1,410.00
Taxes, Fees & Charges					\$98.60
Amount Due					\$1,508.60 USD

DELTA JFK - MAD Round Trip Mar 27-Apr 3 1 Passenger					
Outbound	DL126	JFK • MAD	Wed, Mar 27	THU, MAR 28 6:30pm - 7:00am	Nonstop, 7h 30m Delta One®
Return	DL127	MAD • JFK	Wed, Apr 3	WED, APR 3 10:00am - 12:30pm	Nonstop, 8h 30m Delta One®
Trip Total					Currency Calculator
1 Passenger					
Flights					\$2,625.00
Taxes, Fees & Charges					\$98.60
Amount Due					\$2,723.60 USD

Delta New York to Madrid in Business Class for \$2,723 round-trip.

DELTA: UPGRADE PRICE IN MARCH

Here's what happened in March for that flight. The Premium Economy fare rose to \$1,968 (+\$460) round-trip, while in Business Class it went up to \$3,846 (+\$1,123). As a result, the cabin price gap went from \$1,215 to \$1,878, a \$663 cabin price gap increase.

DELTA JFK - MAD Round Trip Mar 27-Apr 3 1 Passenger					
Outbound	DL126	JFK • MAD	Wed, Mar 27	THU, MAR 28 6:30pm - 7:00am	Nonstop, 7h 30m Premium Select
Return	DL127	MAD • JFK	Wed, Apr 3	WED, APR 3 10:00am - 12:30pm	Nonstop, 8h 30m Premium Select
Trip Total					Currency Calculator
1 Passenger					
Flights					\$1,870.00
Taxes, Fees & Charges					\$98.90
Amount Due					\$1,968.90 USD

Delta New York to Madrid in Business Class for \$3,846 round-trip.

DELTA JFK - MAD Round Trip Mar 27-Apr 3 1 Passenger					
Outbound	DL126	JFK • MAD	Wed, Mar 27	THU, MAR 28 6:30pm - 7:00am	Nonstop, 7h 30m Delta One®
Return	DL127	MAD • JFK	Wed, Apr 3	WED, APR 3 10:00am - 12:30pm	Nonstop, 8h 30m Delta One®
Trip Total					Currency Calculator
1 Passenger					
Flights					\$3,748.00
Taxes, Fees & Charges					\$98.90
Amount Due					\$3,846.90 USD

DO YOUR SHOPPING AT GAP

There's plenty of proof above that even in the space of a short time, prices rise and fall like a Coney Island roller coaster. It's hard to follow the fluctuations (FCF is certainly a good tool to use), but you can also use airline websites, which show the different cabin prices on one page -- something you can't do at a glance on

Google Flights, Skyscanner, or Kayak. For advanced upgrade maneuvering, make this your “gap” year, and I’ll see you up front.



March's Top 67 Mileage Awards & Special Fares Greatest Hits (Still Available)

March 2024

MARCH'S FARE AND MILE MADNESS

March has brought a mad rush of great fare and miles deals courtesy of our slam dunking FCF research team. Just pick a destination...and roll with it! I just might be the guy right next to you up front.

Special Published Fares

AFRICA

[Money > Johannesburg and Cape Town > Fall > Biz Class > \\$3,283 to \\$4,044 R/T](#)

[Money > Nairobi > All Year > Biz Class > \\$3,483 to \\$4,056 R/T](#)

[Money > Casablanca, Marrakesh, and Rabat > Spring/Summer > Biz Class > from Montreal from \\$2,244 to \\$2,309 USD R/T](#)

[Money > Nairobi > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > from Canada from \\$1,924 to \\$3,695 USD R/T](#)

ASIA

[Money > Singapore > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > from Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal from \\$3,381 to \\$3,766 USD R/T](#)

[Money > Hong Kong > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > from Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto from \\$3,281 to \\$4,149 USD R/T](#)

[Money > Bangkok > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > from Los Angeles, Seattle, and San Francisco from \\$3,565 to \\$3,873 R/T](#)

[Money > Seoul > All Year > Biz Class > from Canada from \\$3,399 to \\$4,043 USD R/T](#)

CARIBBEAN

[Money > British Virgin Islands > Summer > Biz Class > \\$928 to \\$1,178 R/T](#)

[Money > Sint Maarten > All Year > Biz Class > \\$802 to \\$1,045 R/T](#)

[Money > Anguilla > All Year > Biz Class > \\$881 to \\$1,146 R/T](#)

[Money > Puerto Rico > All Year > Biz Class > \\$663 to \\$791 R/T](#)

[Money > Cancun > All Year > Biz Class > \\$649 to \\$872 R/T](#)

[Money > Barbados > All Year > Biz Class > \\$935 to \\$1,170 R/T](#)

[Money > St. Thomas > All Year > Biz Class > \\$793 to \\$1,156 R/T](#)

[Money > Saint Kitts > Fall > Biz Class > \\$899 to \\$1,160 R/T](#)

[Money > Aruba > All Year > Biz Class > \\$742 to \\$1,152 R/T](#)

[Money > Grand Cayman > All Year > Biz Class > \\$767 to \\$1,112 R/T](#)

EUROPE

[Money > Europe > All Year > Biz Class with TAP > \\$2,001 to \\$2,731 R/](#)

[Money > Barcelona > Spring > Biz Class > from New York, Seattle, and Orlando from \\$2,409 to \\$3,082 R/T](#)

[Money > Madrid > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,428 to \\$2,931 R/T](#)

[Money > Greece > Fall > Biz Class > from New York from \\$2,762 to \\$2,907 R/T](#)

[Money > Rome > Summer/Fall > Biz Class > from New York and Orlando from \\$2,553 to \\$3,087 R/T](#)

[Money > Seville > Spring > Biz Class > from New York and Orlando from \\$2,659 to \\$3,065 R/T](#)

[Money > Milan > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,541 to \\$3,089 R/T](#)

[Money > Valencia > All Year > First Class > \\$3,978 to \\$5,479 R/T](#)

[Money > Stockholm > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,431 to \\$3,120 R/T](#)

[Money > Switzerland > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,591 to \\$3,046 R/T](#)

[Money > Milan > All Year > First Class > \\$3,796 to \\$5,648 R/T](#)

[Money > Amsterdam > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,210 to \\$3,105 R/T](#)

[Money > Berlin > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,795 to \\$2,930 R/T](#)

[Money > Barcelona > All Year > First Class > \\$3,786 to \\$5,357 R/T](#)

[Money > Paris > All Year > First Class > \\$4,206 to \\$5,594 R/T](#)

[Money > Malaga > Spring > Biz Class > from New York, Orlando, and Phoenix from \\$2,580 to \\$3,099 R/T](#)

[Money > Istanbul > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,896 to \\$3,286 R/T](#)

[Money > Dublin > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,101 to \\$3,207 R/T](#)

[Money > Rome > All Year > First Class > \\$3,740 to \\$5,378 R/T](#)

[Money > Paris > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,244 to \\$3,140 R/T](#)

[Money > Geneva > Spring > Biz Class > \\$2,744 to \\$3,008 R/T](#)

[Money > Madrid > All Year > First Class > \\$3,787 to \\$5,508 R/T](#)

[Money > Valencia > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > from New York, Orlando, and Phoenix from \\$2,579 to \\$3,098 R/T](#)

[Money > London > All Year > First Class > \\$4,020 to \\$5,609 R/T](#)

[Money > Greece > All Year > First Class > from New York, Seattle, and Atlanta from \\$4,003 to \\$5,673 R/T](#)

[Money > Europe to U.S. > Fall/Winter > Premium Economy > \\$749 to \\$898 USD R/T](#)

[Money > Prague > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,756 to \\$3,064 R/T](#)

[Money > Italy > Spring > Biz Class from Canada > \\$2,158 to \\$2,364 USD R/T](#)

HAWAII

[Money > Honolulu > Spring > Biz Class > \\$1,052 to \\$1,517 R/T](#)

INDIA

[Money > New Delhi > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$3,124 to \\$3,902 R/T](#)

MEXICO

[Money > Cabo San Lucas > All Year > Biz Class > \\$668 to \\$922 R/T](#)

[Money > Acapulco > All Year > Biz Class > \\$762 to \\$903 R/T](#)

NORTH AMERICA

[Money > Transcon > All Year > Biz Class > \\$766 to \\$1,199 R/T](#)

SOUTH AMERICA

[Money > Sao Paulo > Spring/Summer > Biz Class > from Miami, Orlando, and Los Angeles from \\$2,433 to \\$3,148 R/T](#)

[Money > Buenos Aires > All Year > Biz Class > from Miami, New York, and Orlando from \\$2,548 to \\$3,174 R/T](#)

[Money > Sao Paulo > All Year > Biz Class > from Canada from \\$2,584 to \\$2,871 USD R/T](#)

[Money > Santiago > All Year > Biz Class > \\$1,897 to \\$3,112 R/T](#)

SOUTH PACIFIC

[Money > Tahiti > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > from Los Angeles and Las Vegas from \\$3,193 to \\$4,260 R/T](#)

Sweet Redeems

ASIA

[Miles > All Nippon Airways > Single Seat > Biz Opportunities from San Francisco & Vancouver to Tokyo](#)

[Cash OR Miles > *First Class* > Cathay Pacific > New York and Many Other Cities to Hong Kong & Beyond > 2+ Travelers](#)

[Miles > All Nippon Airways > All Year > Premium Economy Opportunities from the West Coast to Tokyo > 2 seats](#)

[Miles > All Nippon Airways > All Year > Premium Economy Opportunities from the East Coast to Tokyo > 2 seats](#)

EUROPE

[All Year: Lots of Lufthansa First Class Availability from Boston & Many Other Cities to Munich and Beyond with Miles or \\$](#)

[All Year: Lots of Lufthansa First Class Availability from New York & Washington, DC & Many Other Cities to Frankfurt and Beyond with Miles or \\$](#)

[From 68,000 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 4+ Travelers > Iberia > New York to Spain](#)

[Miles / Points > First Class > Single Seat > Emirates > East Coast to Milan](#)

MIDDLE EAST

[Miles / Points > First Class > Close In > 2+ Travelers > Etihad > Washington, DC and Many Other Cities to Abu Dhabi](#)

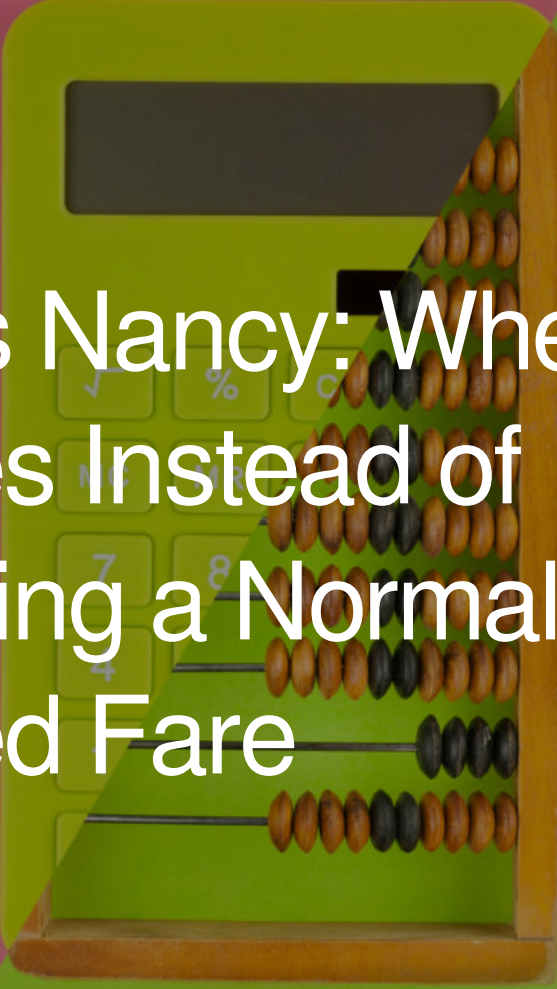
Upgrades

ASIA

[Miles & Cash > Handful of Close In > United Upgrade Opportunities from San Francisco to Beijing & Osaka > 2+ seats](#)

EUROPE

[Miles & Cash > Handful of Close In > United Upgrade Opportunities from Washington, DC to London > 4+ seats](#)



No Miles Nancy: When to Buy Miles Instead of Purchasing a Normal Published Fare

March 2024

(This special report is exclusively for No Miles Nancy. We respectfully ask other FCF members not to read it.)

Dear FCF,

You talk about miles a lot. I mean, look at [FCF's Upgrade Advisor](#) – it's full of miles deals, miles strategies, and even how to calculate the value of a mile! MILES, MILES, MILES! Well, let me tell you straight: Stop it! Because I don't have any miles. Hear me? I DON'T HAVE ANY MILES!

You're killin' me here!

Yours truly, No Miles Nancy

Dear No Miles Nancy,

We hear you. And we've written this special report just for you. Let those mile-meisters go count their miles or points. This is for you—someone whose mileage numbers are as low as the membership of the Tahiti Snowboarders Club.

NANCY, YOU CAN BUY MILES – AND IT'S A REALLY SMART IDEA – ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU BUY THEM AT THE RIGHT TIME

Nancy, [buying miles can save you thousands of dollars](#)—in some cases on one trip—if not tens of thousands of dollars. Most people pay cash or transfer their points for a ticket. Buying miles (and even points) for a trip is the overlooked option.

The Simple Key: Do it when it's cheaper than paying a published fare and the airline has mileage award space. That's all.

Before we get into this, we want you to keep this one fact in mind, Nancy: The retail price for most airline miles is 3¢ to 3.8¢ per mile (including taxes). That's your benchmark.

Buying miles when on sale can give you even bigger savings.

SO, WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY MILES INSTEAD OF A NORMAL AIRFARE? FCF'S RULE OF THUMB: WHEN PREMIUM FARES ARE \$4K / \$6K

WHEN SHOULD I BUY MILES?

In short: [When published premium fares are high](#). Maybe \$2,500+ for domestic tickets and say \$3,500+ for Business and \$4,500+ for First Class international tickets.

Let's break that down a little more.

WHEN FARES ARE HIGH FOR A SPECIFIC TRIP

The [airline is great](#), the [flight schedule is great](#), but the fare is sky high: What do I do? You have two options.

OPTION 1: BUY MILES WHEN THEY'RE ON SALE

For example, from Los Angeles to Tokyo, non-stop in First Class on Japan Airlines starts at \$22,600 round-trip. Japan Airlines is a partner of Alaska, so you can book Japan Airlines flights using Alaska miles. Alaska recently put miles on sale for as low as 1.8¢. So, if you bought 160,000 miles with Alaska the cost to get the

miles for that [Tokyo ticket would have been about \\$3,221](#) (including approx. award tax)—a savings of \$19,379 (86%). Sound good, Nancy?

EXAMPLES OF WHEN TO BUY MILES INSTEAD OF A PUBLISHED FIRST CLASS FARE

Route	Operating Airline	Lowest Normal First Class Fare	Buy Miles from When on Sale	Mileage Cost	Cost per Mile When on Sale as Low as*	Cost**
Los Angeles - Sydney	American	\$20,900	American	168,000	2.4¢	\$4,032
			Alaska	220,000	1.8¢	\$3,960
			Cathay Pacific / Amex	240,000	2.5¢	\$6,000
Chicago - Tokyo	All Nippon	\$21,273	Air Canada	220,000	1.3¢	\$2,860
			All Nippon / Amex	150,000	2.5¢	\$3,750
			LifeMiles	180,000	1.4¢	\$2,520
			Lufthansa	222,000	1.2¢	\$2,627
			United	220,000	1.8¢	\$3,960
			Virgin Atlantic / Amex	170,000	2.5¢	\$4,250
Houston - Dubai	Emirates	\$22,700	Emirates / Amex	372,000	2.5¢	\$9,300
Los Angeles - Hong Kong	Cathay Pacific	\$16,391	American	220,000	2.4¢	\$5,280
			Alaska	140,000	1.8¢	\$2,520
			Cathay Pacific / Amex	250,000	2.5¢	\$6,250
Washington, DC - Abu Dhabi	Etihad	\$10,900	All Nippon / Amex	195,000	2.5¢	\$4,875
			American	230,000	2.4¢	\$5,520
			Air Canada	260,000	1.3¢	\$3,380
New York - Frankfurt	Singapore	\$10,027	Singapore / Amex	194,000	2.5¢	\$4,850
New York - Munich	Lufthansa	\$8,292	Air Canada	200,000	1.3¢	\$2,600
			Lufthansa	230,000	1.2¢	\$2,722
			United	242,000	1.8¢	\$4,356

*Including 7.5% sales tax. **Including approx. award taxes.

WHEN TO BUY MILES INSTEAD OF A PUBLISHED BUSINESS CLASS FARE

Route	Operating Airline	Lowest Normal Business Class Fare	Buy Miles from When on Sale	Mileage Cost	Cost per Mile When on Sale as Low as*	Cost**
New York - Hong Kong	Cathay Pacific	\$8,119	American	140,000	2.4¢	\$3,360
			Alaska	100,000	1.8¢	\$1,800
			Cathay Pacific / Amex	170,000	2.5¢	\$4,250
Miami - São Paulo	American	\$8,862	American	110,000	2.4¢	\$2,640
			Alaska	115,000	1.8¢	\$2,070
			Cathay Pacific / Amex	122,000	2.5¢	\$3,050
Los Angeles - Sydney	United	\$8,664	Air Canada	150,000	1.3¢	\$1,950
			All Nippon / Amex	120,000	2.5¢	\$3,000
			LifeMiles	160,000	1.4¢	\$2,240
			Lufthansa	142,000	1.2¢	\$1,680
			United	200,000	1.8¢	\$3,600
Newark - Geneva	United	\$3,705	Air Canada	120,000	1.3¢	\$1,560
			All Nippon / Amex	88,000	2.5¢	\$2,200
			LifeMiles	126,000	1.4¢	\$1,764
			Lufthansa	112,000	1.2¢	\$1,325

*Including 7.5% sales tax. **Including approx. award taxes.

When miles are not on sale with Alaska the cost to buy them is 3¢, so the savings on the Los Angeles to Tokyo ticket would be less.

GETTING AROUND THE AIRLINE'S MAXIMUM BUY LIMITS

Now, the airlines aren't stupid, so they don't let you buy as many miles as you want, kind of. But getting around that barrier is easy – and legal. (We don't want to get you into trouble, Nancy.) [We wrote a piece on it right here.](#)

OPTION 2: BUY POINTS WITH A CREDIT CARD AND TRANSFERRING THEM TO AN AIRLINE

With Amex Rewards for example, you can buy [up to 500,000 points at a cost of 2.5¢](#) if you don't have enough points for a reward. (With some airlines the transfer time is almost instant from points to miles, but it can take up to 3 days).

Using this approach, buying 206,000 Amex Rewards points and then transferring them to [British Airways](#) [brings the ticket cost down to \\$5,659](#) (including approx. award tax)—a savings of \$13,889 (72%).

NANCY, BEFORE YOU BUY MILES OR POINTS...

Make sure there's availability: American and United are among the airlines that are less risky because you can hold award space while the miles-purchase transaction transpires, for more details go [here](#).

But we find award availability every day! Just keep an eye on your inbox for our [Sweet Redeems Alerts](#).

WHEN TO FORGET ABOUT BUYING MILES OR POINTS

When fares are low: Of course, we specialize in [finding low premium fares](#), so if they're out there, Nancy, you'll know.

Now of course, these deals aren't always available. But [if you're a little flexible](#), you can get great published fares [without the buy loyalty](#) Strategy.

For example, [New York to London on American](#) non-stop in First Class starts at \$5,676 round-trip. If you buy 158,000 miles with American at the normal everyday cost of 3.8¢, the ticket will cost \$4,794. No savings, no point.

Or Boston to Lisbon in Business Class on TAP. The fare starts at \$3,136 round-trip. If you buy 176,000 miles at the normal everyday cost of 3.8¢ with United the ticket would cost \$6,622, so again, no point.

One more thing. Free award tickets don't earn miles or elite credit, so the savings must be good to make this strategy worth your while. So...

Remember the Aforementioned Rule of Thumb: [Think about buying miles or points](#) when you're Business Class fare is otherwise \$3,500+ or your First Class fare is over \$4,500.

Simple.

P.S.

Thanks for reading Nancy. From now on nobody will ever call you “No Miles Nancy.” Just so you know, this is the strategy Mr. Upgrade uses more than any other, because he likes First Class (particularly on airlines whose First Class cabins go for \$18,000+). Which is why he holds all kinds of mileage and points accounts, so he can be ready to strike when the opportunity exists.

Oh, all you other readers can come back now.

For more about mileage sales, check out our regular “[Sweet Redeems](#)” alerts—and use that information directly with the operating airline, or through a partner program.

[Check Our Mileage Deals](#)



Under the Radar: A Fresh Look at Smaller Airlines with Fares Up to 41% Less to Europe

March 2024

Low-Cost Carrier Tactical Fares

With year-round Business Class fares to Europe ranging from \$3,595 to \$5,602 from the West Coast and \$3,012 to \$4,493 from the East Coast on most major airlines (depending on the advance-purchase requirement and on mileage awards not always being available when you want them), lesser-known airlines are worth considering if you want to save money.

Airlines such as Aer Lingus, Austrian, Finnair, JetBlue, LOT, SAS, TAP, and Turkish all typically have lower fares than the major airlines when flying to or through their hubs.

There are five Star Alliance airlines, two Oneworld airlines, Aer Lingus with no alliance affiliation, and SkyTeam with no low-cost carriers with many routes to Europe — sorry, members, you lose again.



Some airlines (and great deals) fly under the radar

ARE YOU PAYING FOR AIRLINE SNOBBERY?

Are you an airline snob? [Travel perfectionism could be holding you back](#). Why not consider an alternative airline to the same destination that flies a little below the radar?

The difference in flight experience between British Airways and TAP Portugal is negligible. No, really. Generally speaking, TAP is just not as well known to American travelers. For example, from Washington, DC to Frankfurt in Business Class with one-stop via TAP is \$2,001. For one stop on British Airways, it starts at \$3,205. That's a snobbery tax of \$1,204! Screenshot below.

Round trip		1	Business			
Washington, D.C.		Frankfurt FRA		Tue, Mar 19 < > Wed, Mar 27 < >		
	6:30 PM – 12:30 PM [†] Tap Air Portugal	13 hr IAD – FRA	1 stop 2 hr 40 min LIS	1,063 kg CO ₂ e -44% emissions ⓘ	\$2,001 round trip	▼
	7:20 PM – 10:25 AM [†] British Airways - American, Iberia, Finnair	10 hr 5 min IAD – FRA	1 stop 1 hr 15 min LHR	2,340 kg CO ₂ e +22% emissions ⓘ	\$3,205 round trip	▼

Low-cost carriers typically offer fewer restrictions, meaning the fare does not jump sky high for travel close in, and they typically have less-restrictive minimum stay requirements, as you'll see below.

LOW-COST CARRIER NO ADVANCE-PURCHASE TACTICAL FARES

TAP's Chicago-Frankfurt round-trip fare goes for \$2,646, compared to United's \$7,999 round-trip with little or no advance purchase. Even United's 30-day advance purchase fare of \$4,989 is still almost double that of TAP's fare.

Round trip 1 Business					
Chicago ORD		Frankfurt		Wed, Mar 13 < > Thu, Mar 21 < >	
	8:15 PM – 4:55 PM ⁺¹ Tap Air Portugal	14 hr 40 min ORD–FRA	1 stop 3 hr 45 min LIS	2,337 kg CO ₂ e +11% emissions ⓘ	\$2,646 round trip
	3:30 PM – 5:45 AM ⁺¹ United	8 hr 15 min ORD–FRA	Nonstop	2,142 kg CO ₂ e Avg emissions ⓘ	\$7,999 round trip

LOW-COST CARRIER NO MINIMUM-STAY TACTICAL FARES

TAP's Washington, DC-Zurich round-trip fare goes for \$3,104 for a six-day turnaround compared to British Airways' \$5,855 round-trip.

Round trip 1 Business					
Washington IAD		Zürich ZRH		Thu, Aug 15 < > Wed, Aug 21 < >	
	5:20 PM – 12:25 PM ⁺¹ Tap Air Portugal	13 hr 5 min IAD–ZRH	1 stop 2 hr 50 min LIS	975 kg CO ₂ e -48% emissions ⓘ	\$3,104 round trip
	5:55 PM – 12:10 PM ⁺¹ British Airways	12 hr 15 min IAD–ZRH	1 stop 3 hr 5 min LHR	2,398 kg CO ₂ e +27% emissions ⓘ	\$5,855 round trip

LOW-COST CARRIER ADVANCE PLANNER TACTICAL FARES

Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) round-trip fare from Los Angeles to London starts around \$3,006 for travel in December 2024 compared to American and British Airways at \$4,989.

Round trip 1 Business					
Los Angeles LAX		London		Sun, Dec 15 < > Sun, Dec 22 < >	
	5:20 PM – 4:00 PM ⁺¹ Scandinavian Airlines · Operated by Sas Connect	14 hr 40 min LAX–LHR	1 stop 1 hr 30 min CPH	3,831 kg CO ₂ e +49% emissions ⓘ	\$3,006 round trip
	3:25 PM – 9:50 AM ⁺¹ British Airways · American	10 hr 25 min LAX–LHR	Nonstop	2,516 kg CO ₂ e Avg emissions ⓘ	\$4,989 round trip
	5:10 PM – 11:40 AM ⁺¹ American	10 hr 30 min LAX–LHR	Nonstop	3,437 kg CO ₂ e +34% emissions ⓘ	\$4,989 round trip

LOW-COST CARRIER TACTICAL FARES WHEN CONNECTING FROM SMALLER U.S. AIRPORTS

SAS fares from Nashville to Copenhagen start at around \$2,616 compared to United's at \$4,419.

Round trip 1 Business				
Nashville BNA		Copenhagen CPH		Tue, Aug 6 < > Tue, Aug 13 < >
	1:10 PM – 7:15 AM ⁺¹ United, Scandinavian Airlines	11 hr 5 min BNA–CPH	1 stop 1 hr 17 min IAD	2,475 kg CO2e +12% emissions ⓘ \$2,616 round trip
	2:28 PM – 2:05 PM ⁺¹ United, Lufthansa	16 hr 37 min BNA–CPH	2 stops EWR, FRA	1,805 kg CO2e -19% emissions ⓘ \$4,419 round trip

COMFORT

The low-cost carriers’ seat comfort isn’t always the best in the air, but it’s not bad and often about the same.

Airline	Width (inches)	Pitch (inches)	Recline (degrees)
Aer Lingus	22	58	180
Austrian	21	60	180
Finnair	21	78-81	180
JetBlue	20.5-22	58-60	180
LOT	23	78-80	180
SAS	22	78	180
TAP	22.3	42	180
Turkish	20-23	44	180

LOW-COST CARRIER FARE TRENDS UNDER \$3,000

Aer Lingus

Boston to Dublin and Shannon

New York to Dublin and Shannon

Washington, DC to Dublin

Austrian

Boston to Amsterdam

Chicago to Geneva and Paris

New York to Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Bologna, Rome, Zakynthos, and Zurich

Finnair

New York to Amsterdam, Berlin, Geneva, and Zurich

JetBlue

Boston to Amsterdam, Dublin, London, and Paris

Charlotte to Amsterdam and London

Chicago to Amsterdam, Dublin, London, and Paris

Denver to Amsterdam and London

Miami to Dublin and London

New York to Amsterdam, Dublin, London, and Paris

Orlando to Amsterdam, Dublin, and London

Philadelphia to Amsterdam, Dublin, and London

Raleigh to Amsterdam, Dublin, and London

LOT

New York to Frankfurt

SAS

Atlanta to Amsterdam, Bergen, Copenhagen, Dublin, Edinburgh, Gdansk, Gothenburg, Helsinki, London, Malaga, Nice, Oslo, Palma, Stockholm, Vilnius, and Zurich

Boston to Alicante, Amsterdam, Bergen, Bologna, Copenhagen, Dublin, Gdansk, Geneva, Gothenburg, Helsinki, London, Malaga, Nice, Oslo, Palma, Stavanger, Stockholm, Vilnius, Warsaw, and Zurich

Charlotte to Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm

Chicago to Amsterdam, Dublin, Gdansk, Geneva, Gothenburg, London, Malaga, Milan, Nice, Oslo, Palma, Paris, Vilnius, Warsaw, and Zurich

New York to Amsterdam, Athens, Bergen, Copenhagen, Dublin, Edinburgh, Gdansk, Geneva, Gothenburg, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Malaga, Nice, Oslo, Palermo, Palma, Paris, Rome, Split, Stockholm, Thessaloniki, Venice, Vilnius, Warsaw, and Zurich

Orlando to Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm

Philadelphia to Copenhagen

Raleigh to Oslo and Stockholm

San Francisco to Amsterdam, Bologna, Brussels, Dublin, Edinburgh, Gdansk, London, Nice, and Zurich

Washington, DC to Amsterdam, Bari, Bergen, Bologna, Copenhagen, Dublin, Gdansk, Gothenburg, Helsinki, London, Malaga, Nice, Oslo, Palma, Pisa, Stavanger, Stockholm, Vilnius, Warsaw, and Zurich

TAP

Boston to Amsterdam, Bologna, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Faro, Lisbon, London, Madeira, Manchester, Marseille, Nice, and Porto

Chicago to Amsterdam, Frankfurt, and Paris

New York to Amsterdam, Barcelona, Frankfurt, Lisbon, Madrid, Oslo, Paris, Stockholm, and Valencia

Washington, DC, to Amsterdam, Berlin, Dublin, Frankfurt, London, Munich, and Paris

Turkish

Boston to Amsterdam, Berlin, Bilbao, Bordeaux, Brussels, Budapest, Geneva, Krakow, Hamburg, Helsinki, Malaga, Marseille, Munich, Oslo, Palermo, and Paris

Chicago to Amsterdam, Berlin, Bilbao, Copenhagen, Geneva, Gothenburg, Krakow, Hamburg, Helsinki, Lisbon, Madrid, Milan, Munich, Naples, Nice, Oslo, Palermo, Paris, Porto, Riga, Sofia, Stockholm, Venice, Vilnius, and Warsaw

Dallas to Berlin

Houston to Milan

New York to Athens, Berlin, Bilbao, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Frankfurt, Gothenburg, Hamburg, Lisbon, London, Lyon, Madrid, Malta, Milan, Munich, Naples, Oslo, Porto, Rome, Stockholm, Thessaloniki, Valencia, and Vilnius

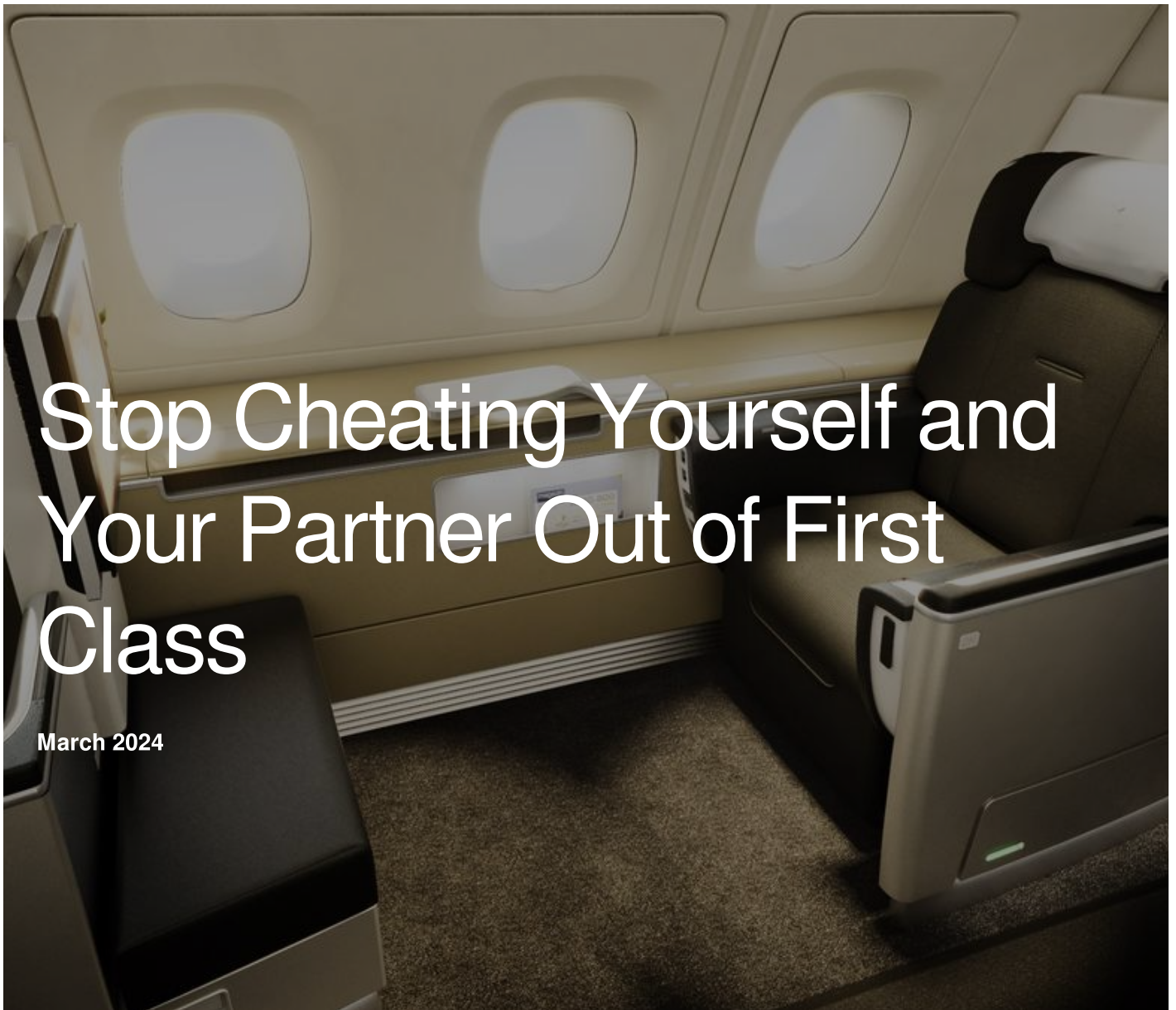
Miami to Frankfurt, Nice, Prague, and Zurich

San Francisco to Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bucharest, Madrid, Paris, Rome, Sofia, Thessaloniki, Vienna, and Zurich

Washington, DC to Berlin, Bologna, Bordeaux, Frankfurt, Nice, Prague, Rome, and Vilnius

Like food, meetings, and debt, bigger isn't always better. And it's the same with airlines. Don't blindly assume that a bigger carrier will give you the best deal, comfort, and flying options. Often those airlines that fly below the radar, particularly in Europe, will get your business with tempting offerings.

See you up front.



Stop Cheating Yourself and Your Partner Out of First Class

March 2024

14 First Class routes for couples to burn their miles on

Are you cheating on your partner, and yourself?
Hey, wait, I don't mean *that* kind of cheating.

I mean when you go on a vacation or a business trip where your partner comes along, are you making the most of your time together?

A big part of that is traveling to and from your destination in maximum comfort.

Yes, you and your partner both want nothing less than First Class.

And yet, airlines are making it harder and harder to fly in First, with the cabin disappearing before our eyes in so many cases. But they aren't all gone.

So, in the spirit of comfort and togetherness, we found 14 First Class routes for couples (hey, it could also be business partners, or you and your mother-in-law) to burn their miles on.

14 FIRST CLASS ROUTES

Of the First Class routes we surveyed, American Airlines has free award seats available on three First Class routes to Europe, Cathay Pacific has two available routes to Hong Kong, Etihad has free award seats on its Washington, DC-to-Abu Dhabi route, and Lufthansa has four routes to Frankfurt and four routes to Munich available.



Are you cheating your partner out of First Class?

Asia

CATHAY PACIFIC

An airline that recently surprised us with First Class mileage award seats between the U.S. and Asia is Cathay Pacific. Their Los Angeles-Hong Kong route can be hit and miss. Currently, we see seats for up to two travelers for travel in the fall. On their New York-Hong Kong route we have been seeing a handful of days with two seats, which is very rare these days.

NO MILES? NO PROBLEM

Cathay Pacific's First Class Los Angeles-Hong Kong route goes for 250,000 miles round-trip, plus \$133 in taxes while their New York-Hong Kong route goes for 320,000 miles plus \$133 in taxes. Cathay Pacific is a points-to-miles transfer partner with Amex, Capital One, and Citi. You can [buy up to 500,000 points annually from Amex](#) for 2.5 cents each and transfer them to Cathay Pacific. New York-Hong Kong fares go for \$30,127+ for a savings of up to \$21,967, or 73%. Huge!

Buy Cathay partner American Airlines miles when on sale: On Cathay's Los Angeles-Hong Kong route the baseline fare goes for \$16,391, you can buy up to 150,000 American Airlines miles for about \$3,668 when they're on sale for about 2.4 cents each, if you need to top-off, you can use cash to buy miles and save up to \$12,656, or 77%, on your next trip to Hong Kong. Note that taxes with the American Airlines loyalty program generally cost \$67.

We recommend that you only buy miles if you are confident there is availability that works for you or if you fly frequently. Should availability shift, you can use those miles on a future trip.

To Hong Kong From	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Los Angeles	Aug., Oct., Nov., Dec.	Aug.	Sept., Oct.		Nov., Dec.	Oct., Nov.
New York	Aug., Dec.	Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.	Sept., Oct.	Sept.	Oct. to Dec.	Oct. to Dec.

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

Europe

AMERICAN

American has free award seat availability on three First Class routes to London.

NO MILES? NO PROBLEM

If you're low on American miles, Amex, Capital One, and Citi members can transfer points to Cathay Pacific to get the ticket for 174,000 round-trip.

Buy American miles when on sale: Given the baseline fare is \$4,220, you can buy up to 150,000 American Airlines miles for about \$2,700 when on sale (if you need to top-off), and given that taxes with American Airlines loyalty program generally cost \$325, you can use cash to buy miles and save up to \$1,125, or 27%, on your next trip from New York to London.

Not flying from Dallas, Los Angeles, or New York and/or to London? [Learn about getting free connecting flights](#) or buying a [positioning flight](#).

To London From	Outbound	Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Dallas	March, April, Aug., Jan.	May, Aug., Nov., Dec., Jan.	March, April, Aug.	April, Jan.
Los Angeles	Dec., Jan.	March, April, Nov.	Dec.	Dec., Jan.
New York	Feb., March, Aug.	Feb., March, April, May, June to Aug., Sept., Nov., Dec.	Feb., March, May, Aug., Dec.	Aug.

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

LUFTHANSA

Lufthansa has nine First Class routes to Frankfurt and seven routes to Munich. We have found free award seats available on eight of those routes. From Boston, Chicago, New York, and Washington, DC, to Frankfurt and from Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, DC, to Munich.

With published First Class fares to Europe generally hovering around \$10,000+, **your savings can range anywhere from 63% to 71%+.**

There are two award types you can book using Lufthansa miles: [First Flex](#) (requires fewer miles and more cash) and FCF's preference, [First Flex Plus](#) (requires more miles and less cash). Depending on your itinerary and situation, there are benefits to each.

SAVE UP TO \$9,316+ / 71%+ WITH FIRST FLEX PLUS

The round-trip mileage cost of a **First Flex Plus** ticket between the U.S. and Europe on Lufthansa is 230,000 miles (115,000 each way). The cost of buying those miles when on sale, plus taxes of about \$200 on round-trip tickets between the U.S. and Europe, comes to a total of \$3,767.

Not traveling to Frankfurt or Munich? Lufthansa's **First Flex Plus** awards allow for free connecting travel *on Miles & More member routes that ONLY include Lufthansa, Austrian, and SWISS*

SAVE UP TO \$8,939+ / 68%+ WITH FIRST FLEX, AND A WAY TO SAVE AN EXTRA \$636

The round-trip cost for First Class between the U.S. and Europe on Lufthansa is 182,000 miles, or 91,000 each way. The cost of buying those miles when they're on sale is \$2,807 round-trip. Taxes on tickets between the U.S. and Europe are about \$1,973 if you book round-trips, for a total of \$4,780.

But watch this: One-way taxes are about \$925 on the outbound *and only \$412* on the return flight. That means you could book two one-ways and **save an additional \$636**.

Not flying from one of Lufthansa's hub cities? Lufthansa's **First Flex** awards allow for partner travel between its U.S. hubs and countless other U.S. cities, so you can get free domestic connecting flights with United.

NO MILES? NO PROBLEM ~THE SALE IS BACK~

Lufthansa is currently offering a juicy purchase bonus of 30% where you can buy miles for about 1.51 cents a mile. [Lufthansa's Bundle&Go](#) buy miles opportunity lets you purchase award miles in three increments of 10,000, 50,000, and 100,000. Members can purchase one bundle per transaction. If you need even more miles, remember [FCF's special strategy to get all the miles you want!](#)

Valid through March 31, anyone can get miles for as low as 1.51 cents, which results in First Class tickets that go for as much as \$14,349+, for just \$3,767, round-trip.

SAMPLE SAVINGS

From	To	Miles	Cost of Miles including Taxes	Fare	Savings	
Boston	Frankfurt	230,000	\$3,767	10,599	\$6,832	64%
Chicago				\$10,049	\$6,282	63%
New York				\$7,560	\$3,793	50%
Washington, DC				\$10,410	\$6,643	
Boston	Munich			\$10,594	\$6,827	64%
Chicago				\$10,344	\$6,577	
Los Angeles				\$10,300	\$6,533	63%

From	To	Miles	Cost of Miles including Taxes	Fare	Savings	
Washington, DC				\$10,694	\$6,927	65%

Just a small note: Their fine print indicates it could take up to five days for the miles to post, however when we bought miles through this promo, they were credited almost instantly. Maybe we got lucky, but the timing is something you should keep in mind.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY TRENDS

Route	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Boston-Frankfurt	March, June, Aug., Sept., Oct.	July, Aug.		March, June, Sept.		
Chicago-Frankfurt	March, April, June, July, Aug., Sept., Dec.	Oct., Nov.	July, Aug., Nov., Dec., Jan., Feb.	March, April, May, June, Sept., Dec.	July, Aug., Nov.	Dec., Jan., Feb.
New York-Frankfurt	Dec., Jan., Feb.		Jan., Feb.	March, Dec., Feb.	Jan.	Jan.
Washington, DC-Frankfurt	Sept., Oct.	July, Aug.	Dec., Jan., Feb.	March, April, May, Sept., Oct., Dec.	May, June, July, Feb.	June, July, Aug., Jan., Feb.
Boston-Munich	June, Sept., Oct.	March, April, Aug.	March, July	April, May, Sept., Oct.	March, May, June, July, Aug.	March, June
Chicago-Munich	July	Nov.	Aug., Sept.		Aug. to Nov.	July
Los Angeles-Munich	Dec., Jan.	Jan.	Feb.	Jan.	Jan., Feb.	Feb.
Washington, DC-Munich	April to June	Aug.	July, Aug., Sept.		April to July	April to July, Aug., Sept.

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

Middle East

ETIHAD

Etihad has brought back its New York-to-Abu Dhabi route with service resuming on April 22 which will be served by a B787 and by its famed A380. Since you can only find free award seats using partner miles with American 14 days out, we hope to start seeing available award seats early April. If you want the experience of a lifetime it's certainly worth checking American's website up until departure time if you're "[upgrade open-minded](#)," or for the grab-em-now upgrade traveler who has their [bags-packed](#) and ready at the front door.

You can find free award seats on its Washington, DC-to-Abu Dhabi route using partner American Airlines' miles for 115,000 miles each way. Considering American, Delta, and United charge 150,000 to 200,000 miles for Business Class each way, these prices for First Class are a free upgrade.

SMART UPGRADE PLAY: BUY MILES TO FLY ETIHAD

Buy Etihad partner American Airlines miles when on sale: American Airlines miles usually cost 2.8 cents per mile to buy. However, they frequently offer purchase bonuses and discount promotions for as low as 2.4 cents each (you can buy up to 150,000 per year, plus any bonuses). **That amounts to a First Class flight to the Middle East for \$1,864 each way — for a ticket that can cost up to \$10,000.** Follow our strategy here to know when to buy miles.

Etihad is a points-to-miles transfer partner with Amex, Capital One, and Citi. If you don't have enough points, you can [buy points from Amex](#) for 2.5 cents each and transfer them to Etihad and save up to \$7,172 or 66%. Huge!

DON'T LIVE IN WASHINGTON, DC?

If [you don't live in Washington, DC](#), you can also get connecting flights from all over the U.S. when available for the same number of miles or get connecting flights to places like Johannesburg, the Maldives, New Delhi, and Seychelles for as little as 5,000 more miles each way when available. Note that flights beyond Abu Dhabi are usually in Business Class.



Saving more than \$7,000+ In First Class? That's an upgrade.

To Abu Dhabi From	Outbound			Return
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month
Washington, DC	March	March	March	March

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

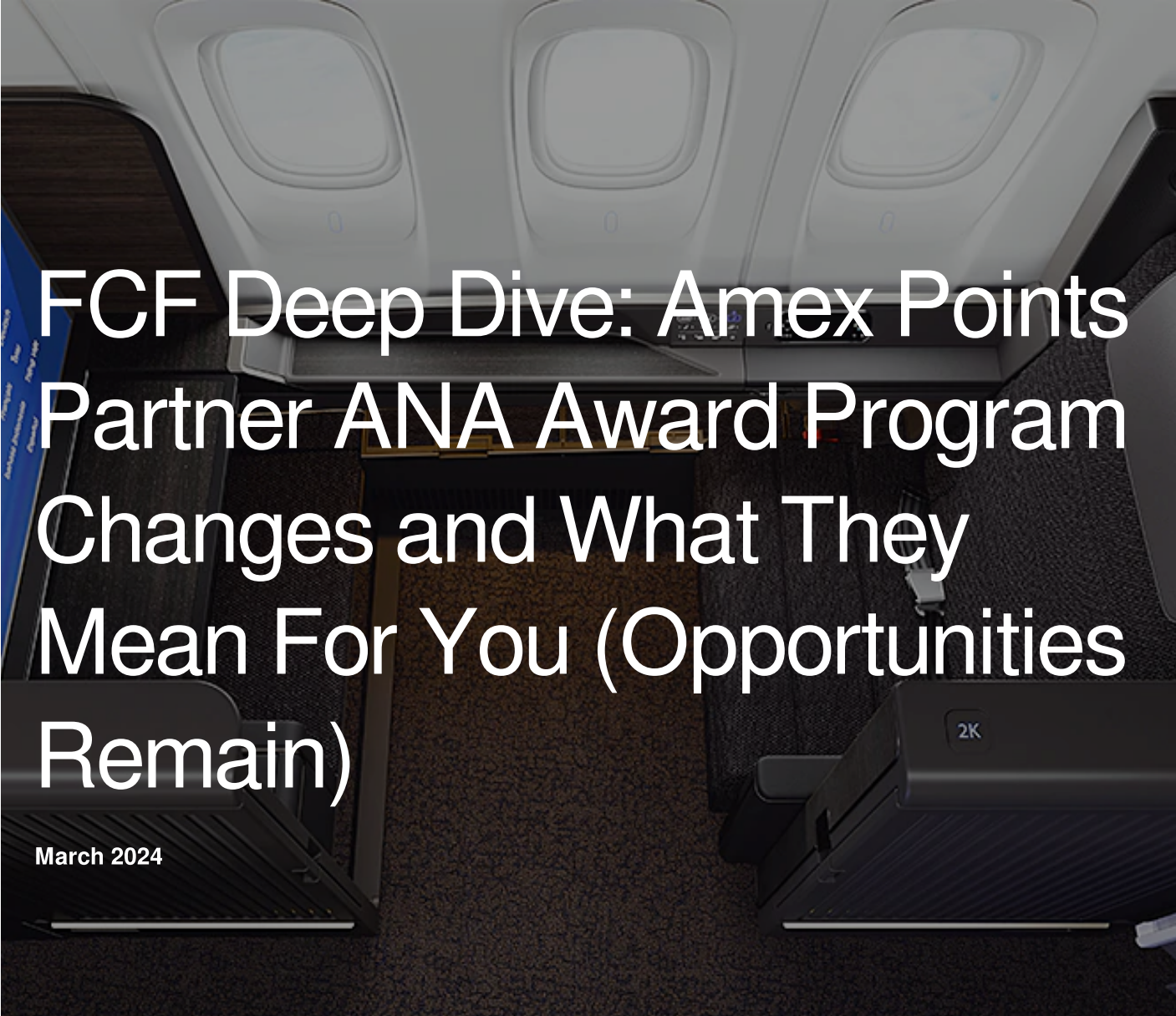
GO ON, YOU DESERVE IT

Where to Look: Check [FCF's Sweet Redeems](#) page frequently for First Class award availability for travel between the U.S. and Asia.

How to Do it: [Be flexible and reflexive to get the seats](#). You may have to be open to alternative travel dates and be ready to pounce when flash deals become available.

When to Look: Constantly! Our [Sweet Redeems](#) are constantly updated with availability, so keep it top of mind. Even some stingy airlines have recently released award seats.

Like I often say, a great vacation starts in a great cabin, not when you exit the plane. There are still First Class options to be found, and with our ideas above, they're very affordable. Make your next trip a special one for you and your travel buddy, and I'll see you up front.

A photograph of an airplane cabin interior, showing rows of seats and overhead storage bins. The image is dark and serves as a background for the title text.

FCF Deep Dive: Amex Points Partner ANA Award Program Changes and What They Mean For You (Opportunities Remain)

March 2024

We uncover the ins and outs of All Nippon's award chart changes

It's never great news when an airline raises its award prices, and All Nippon has done just that. The program devaluation takes place on April 18. On a positive note, ANA hasn't raised award prices for quite a while, but it still hurts. The good news is that ANA is giving some notice for these changes, so you have a chance to burn your miles now.

We thought we'd take a closer look at what the changes mean for you, and if we can dig a few gold nuggets out of ANA's gray rock.

ALL NIPPON FLIGHT AWARD CHART CHANGES

WHAT HASN'T CHANGED? (AKA: THE SILVER LINING)

Low-season prices for First Class and Premium Economy to Tokyo will not increase. ANA's Premium Economy price is typically less than what American and Delta charge for coach.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

First Class regular season prices are increasing by 20,000 miles, round-trip. Meanwhile, high-season prices are increasing by 35,000 miles, round-trip.

First Class to Tokyo From	Current R/T Cost through April 17, 2024	Cost from April 18, 2024	Difference
Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco	Low/Regular: 150,000	Low: 150,000	Low: No Change
	High: 165,000	Regular: 170,000	Regular: 20,000
		High: 200,000	High: 35,000

Business Class

Low-season prices are increasing by 25,000 miles, round-trip.

Regular and high season prices are increasing by 20,000 miles, round-trip.

Business Class to Tokyo From	Current R/T Cost through April 17, 2024	Cost from April 18, 2024	Difference
Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington, DC, Vancouver	Low: 75,000	Low: 100,000	Low: 25,000
	Regular: 85,000	Regular: 105,000	Regular/High: 20,000
	High: 90,000	High: 110,000	

Premium Economy

No change

Premium Economy to Tokyo From	Current R/T Cost through April 17, 2024	Cost from April 18, 2024	Difference
Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington, DC, Vancouver	Low: 62,000 Regular: 72,000 High: 77,000	No Change	No Change



PAYING WITH MILES

All Nippon Airways is an Amex points-to-miles partner. If you don't have ANA or Amex points, you can [buy them from Amex](#) for 2.5 cents each and transfer them to its partner, All Nippon Airways.

Given the baseline fare in First Class on the low end is typically around \$22,243, you can buy 150,000 Amex Rewards Points for about \$3,750. Taxes with the All Nippon Airways loyalty program generally cost \$65, so you can use cash to buy points and save up to \$18,493, or 83% on your next trip from Chicago to Tokyo.

SAVINGS IN FIRST CLASS

Route	Cost R/T	Cost to Buy Miles	Published Fare	Savings	
Chicago	150,000	\$3,750	\$22,243	\$18,493	83%

*Based on [low season](#).

SAVINGS IN BUSINESS CLASS

With a 25% cost increase in Business Class, compare the current savings of 80% to 83% vs future cost savings of 73% to 78%.

CURRENT COST IN BUSINESS CLASS

Tokyo To/From	Cost R/T	Cost to Buy Miles	Published Fare	Savings	
Chicago	75,000	\$1,875	\$9,313	\$7,438	80%
San Francisco			\$9,314	\$7,439	
Seattle			\$9,313	\$7,438	
Washington, DC			\$11,342	\$9,467	83%

*Based on [low season](#).

FUTURE COST IN BUSINESS CLASS

Tokyo To/From	Cost R/T	Cost to Buy Miles	Published Fare	Savings	
Chicago	100,000	\$2,500	\$9,313	\$6,813	73%
San Francisco			\$9,314	\$6,814	
Seattle			\$9,313	\$6,813	
Washington, DC			\$11,342	\$8,842	78%

*Based on [low season](#).

SAVINGS IN PREMIUM ECONOMY

Given that the baseline fare in Premium Economy typically runs from \$3,125 to \$5,075, you can buy 62,000 Amex Rewards Points for about \$1,550. Taxes with the All Nippon Airways loyalty program generally cost \$65, so you can use cash to buy points and save up to \$3,525, or 69% on your next trip from Houston to Tokyo.

To Tokyo From	Amex Partner Cost	Cost to Buy Miles	Published Fare	Savings	
Chicago	62,000	\$1,550	\$4,090	\$2,540	62%
Houston			\$5,075	\$3,525	69%
Los Angeles			\$3,125	\$1,575	50%
New York			\$4,125	\$2,575	62%
San Francisco			\$3,400	\$1,850	54%
Seattle			\$3,483	\$1,933	55%
Vancouver			\$3,642	\$2,092	57%
Washington, DC			\$4,225	\$2,675	63%

*Based on [low season](#).

ANA FREE AWARD SEAT AVAILABILITY

All Nippon flights using All Nippon miles: All Nippon does not offer award space for departures within 96 hours (four days). However, between five and 15 days from departure, we've recently seen low-cost free award seats to Tokyo with availability in First Class from Chicago, and in Business Class from Chicago, San Francisco, Vancouver, and Washington, DC.

We've also seen free award seats in Premium Economy for travel all year from Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver, and Washington, DC.

All Nippon flights using partner miles: We have not found availability with any partners in Premium Economy. We also have not seen any free award seats using partners Air Canada or LifeMiles miles in any class. Partners United and Lufthansa often have close-in availability.

Our team studied availability over the last **30 days for routes with one to four seats**. On the bright side, bags-packed and close-in travelers can often find free award seats. Let's check how those trends shake out whether you're using All Nippon miles or partners Lufthansa or United miles. These trends often change, so be sure to check in advance to see how things look.

ALL NIPPON FIRST CLASS AWARD AVAILABILITY USING ALL NIPPON MILES

You are most likely to find free award seats using All Nippon miles for close-in travel fewer than a handful of days, outbound only, on their Chicago-Tokyo route.

ALL NIPPON BUSINESS CLASS AWARD AVAILABILITY USING ALL NIPPON MILES TO TOKYO FROM:

Chicago has a handful of days with free award seats for up to four travelers, for close-in travel, round-trip.

San Francisco has a handful of days with free award seats for up to two travelers, for close-in travel, round-trip, and up to four travelers on the return.

Vancouver has a handful of days with free award seats for up to two travelers, for close-in travel, round-trip.

Washington, DC, has a handful of days with free award seats for up to one traveler, for close-in travel, round-trip, and up to two travelers on the outbound flight.

You are most likely to find free award seats for close-in travel, outbound only, on their Los Angeles, Houston, New York, and Seattle routes.

ALL NIPPON PREMIUM ECONOMY AWARD AVAILABILITY USING ALL NIPPON MILES TO TOKYO

There are free award seats available on each of All Nippon's eight routes to Tokyo from the U.S.

Using All Nippon miles, routes from Chicago, New York, Seattle, and Washington, DC, to Tokyo have more than a handful of free award seat availability for up to two travelers.

Tokyo routes from Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Vancouver have more than a handful of free award seat availability for one traveler.

You are most likely to find free award seats for up to two people for farther-out travel, rather than close-in travel.

To Tokyo From	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Chicago	June, Aug.		July to Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec., Jan., Feb.	March, July	June	Aug., Sept. to Feb.
Houston	July		Aug. to Feb.	March to July	Aug.	Sept. to Feb.
Los Angeles	July, Sept., Jan., Feb.		Aug., Oct. to Feb.	May to Aug.		Sept. to Feb.
New York	Aug., Nov., Dec.	Sept., Jan., Feb.	Jan., Feb.	May, June, Nov., Jan., Feb.		Oct., Dec. to Feb.
San Francisco	May,		July to Feb.	July		May, Aug. to Feb.
Seattle	Aug., Sept.	Oct., Nov.	Sept. to Dec., Jan., Feb.	Nov.	June, Aug., Oct., Feb.	Sept. to Dec., Jan., Feb.
Vancouver	July, Aug.	Sept.	Oct. to Feb.	May to July	Sept.	Oct. to Feb.
Washington, DC	Oct., Nov.	July, Nov., Dec., Jan., Feb.	Aug., Oct., Jan., Feb.	June, Aug., Sept.	Nov.	Oct., Dec. to Feb.

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

ALL NIPPON AWARD CHART CHANGES FOR PARTNER FLIGHTS

What hasn't changed? (More silver linings)

Costs for partner travel to Europe and Domestic U.S. travel are not increasing.

What has changed?

Costs for Business and First Class to Tokyo are increasing but not by much. Considering that American's dynamic pricing for one-way awards costs up to 400,000+, ANA's increase from 15,000 to 35,000 miles round-trip could be worse.

ALL NIPPON PARTNER FLIGHTS IN FIRST CLASS OLD VS NEW AWARD CHART

First Class	Current R/T Cost through April 17, 2024	Cost from April 18, 2024	Difference
Japan (Zone 1-A)	150,000	170,000	20,000

First Class	Current R/T Cost through April 17, 2024	Cost from April 18, 2024	Difference
Japan (Zone 1-B)	165,000	187,000	22,000
South Korea, Russia 1 (Zone 2)	180,000	204,000	24,000
Asia (Zone 3)			
Hawaii	120,000	135,000	15,000

ALL NIPPON PARTNER FLIGHTS IN BUSINESS CLASS OLD VS NEW AWARD CHART

Business Class	Current R/T Cost through April 17, 2024	Cost from April 18, 2024	Difference
Japan (Zone 1-A)	85,000	110,000	25,000
Japan (Zone 1-B)	90,000	117,000	27,000
South Korea, Russia 1 (Zone 2)	95,000	130,000	35,000
Asia (Zone 3)			
Hawaii	68,000	85,000	17,000

USING PARTNER LUFTHANSA AND UNITED MILES FOR ALL NIPPON FLIGHTS

First Class Using Partner Lufthansa Miles

You're most likely to find seats using partner United for close-in travel on fewer than a handful of days on All Nippon's Washington, DC-Tokyo routes.

First Class Using Partner United Miles

You're most likely to find seats using partner United for close-in travel on fewer than a handful of days on All Nippon's Washington, DC-Tokyo routes.

BUSINESS CLASS USING PARTNER LUFTHANSA MILES TO TOKYO FROM:

Chicago has a handful of days with free award seats for up to two travelers for close-in travel, round-trip, and up to four travelers outbound.

San Francisco has a handful of days with free award seats for up to four travelers for close-in travel, round-trip.

Seattle has a handful of days with free award seats for up to four travelers for close-in travel outbound, and fewer than a handful of days for up to two travelers on the return.

Washington, DC, has a handful of days with free award seats outbound only for up to four travelers, and for up to two travelers on the return.

You're most likely to find fewer than a handful of days with free award seats for close-in travel, outbound only, on Los Angeles, Houston, and Vancouver-Tokyo routes.

BUSINESS CLASS USING PARTNER UNITED MILES TO TOKYO FROM:

Chicago has a handful of days with free award seats for two travelers for close-in travel, round-trip.

San Francisco has a handful of days with free award seats for up to four travelers for close-in travel, round-trip.

Washington, DC, has a handful of days with free award seats for one traveler for close-in travel, round-trip, and up to four travelers outbound.

You're most likely to find fewer than a handful of days with free award seats for close-in travel, outbound only, on Houston and Vancouver-Tokyo routes.

FINAL CALL ON ANA'S PROGRAM CHANGES

Some of All Nippon's price increases are significant, and that's never great news to hear. The 10 years or so since the last price increase softens that blow, I guess. It's also worth noting that ANA doesn't allow awards on one-way flights, only on round trips. Some ANA partners are more generous with this.

Among some silver linings are low-season First Class and Premium Economy prices staying the same. Further, Europe and domestic U.S. partner flight award costs are staying the same, while Business and First Class to Tokyo only show minor increases.

See you up front.

Upgrade Economics 101, Part 10: FCF Deep Dive: United's Closeout Upgrade Availability Trend to Asia

March 2024

Flying United's Business Class to Asia Doesn't Have to Karate Chop Your Budget

Traditionally, Business Class fares to Asia are high, hovering in altitudes of \$5,600 to \$8,500, and fares for close-in travel can be even higher, \$12,000+.

What an unfortunate way to start a special report. But NOT if you're "[upgrade-open-minded](#)," or you have your [bags-packed](#) and ready at the front door for some grab-em-now upgrades.

Upgrade-open-minded folks tend to drive their own travel destiny, rather than hope for a lucky break at the gate. It's more doable than you might think, and it can happen right up until flight time, even when you've got a "meh" ticket in your hand.

Make this your eleventh commandment:

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO UPGRADE.

For ticket holders, that could mean flying at a better time and ditching that red eye. Perhaps it's flying on a better day for your schedule when previously only certain days were available. It could even be flipping to a better airline, or the holy grail for us upgraders: flying in a better cabin for no extra price, or even less. Yes it happens, and I've done it many times.

For bags-packed travelers, [mileage upgrades make a lot of sense](#). There's less cash out of pocket, more inventory to choose from, [fewer miles to spend](#) — and you still earn miles. Lots of wins.

How's your brinkmanship game? Do you think that making moves at the last minute is way too stressful? Last May we wrote about [Anne and her experience with a last-minute upgrade](#) for an Australian adventure. You can do this too, but you must be open to the possibility to begin with. That's having an upgrade-open-mindset.



Close-in for the win

FLY THE FRIENDLY UPGRADE WAY

For United's free mileage awards, advance bookers are looking at pricing in the 340,000- to 400,000-mile price range, round-trip. On occasion, we have seen free awards available for as low as 100,000 miles one-way within 10 days of travel, although admittedly, they are hit-or-miss, depending on the route.

Typically, we don't see United upgrades available more than 14 days out. That's crucial intel. Upgradeable economy fares for close-in travel are generally in the \$2,200 to \$3,600 range round-trip, plus 30,000 miles and up to \$600 co-pay, each way.

United is a points-to-miles transfer partner with Chase. Miles can also be purchased from United, which are typically 1.8 cents each when on sale. So, if you're short on miles, you can top-up to 175,000 miles annually.

SAMPLE UPGRADE TO BUSINESS CLASS COSTS ON UNITED

Route	Fare Including Taxes	Miles Required R/T	Co-Pay R/T	Regular Published Fare	Savings	
Chicago-Tokyo	\$2,482	60,000	\$900	\$9,305	\$5,923	64%
Houston-Tokyo	\$3,193			\$12,485	\$8,392	67%
Los Angeles-Tokyo	\$2,443		\$1,200	\$7,671	\$4,028	53%
San Francisco-Beijing	\$2,946			\$6,320	\$2,174	34%
San Francisco-Osaka	\$3,417		\$900	\$11,432	\$7,115	62%
San Francisco-Seoul	\$2,718		\$1,200	\$5,764	\$1,846	32%
San Francisco-Taipei	\$2,207			\$5,651	\$2,244	40%
San Francisco-Tokyo	\$3,616		\$900	\$9,305	\$4,789	51%
Washington, DC-Tokyo	\$2,917			\$11,334	\$7,517	66%

SAMPLE SAVINGS UNITED BUSINESS CLASS PUBLISHED FARE VS AWARD MILEAGE COST VS UPGRADE COST

BUSINESS CLASS PUBLISHED FARE

The screenshot below shows the price NON-upgrade-minded travelers pay for the San Francisco-Osaka trip where an advance-purchase fare runs about \$10,932. For the bags-packed traveler, that'll cost you \$13,431. That's quite a Fuji-sized hit to the wallet.


UNITED

DEPART ON: October 8

NONSTOP

10:50 AM

2:50 PM

SFO

12H

KIX

UA 35 (Boeing 777-200)

[Details](#)
[Seats](#)

632 kg CO₂

Business

Roundtrip

\$10,932

United Polaris business (Z)

RETURN ON: October 18

RECOMMENDED FLIGHT

NONSTOP

4:50 PM

11:00 AM

KIX

10H, 10M

SFO

UA 34 (Boeing 777-200)

[Details](#)
[Seats](#)

460 kg CO₂

Business

Roundtrip

\$10,932

United Polaris business (Z)

Fare	\$10,832.00
Taxes and fees	\$99.60
Total due	\$10,931.60

BUSINESS CLASS FREE AWARD SEAT

Now look at the screenshot that follows for a free mileage award booking. Whether close to departure or far out, the lowest cost is 170,000 miles each way or 340,000 miles round-trip.


UNITED

Wed, Mar 13, 2024

San Francisco SFO to Osaka KIX

SFO - KIX

United Polaris business

Tue, Mar 26, 2024

Osaka KIX to San Francisco SFO

KIX - SFO

United Polaris business

Fare	340,000 miles
Taxes and fees	\$50.70
Total due	340,000 miles + \$50.70

UPGRADE FROM ECONOMY TO BUSINESS CLASS

And then you could consider a cash + miles option, upgrading from coach to Business Class. You pay \$3,403 plus 60,000 miles. Again, upgrade-mindedness saves you an Emperor's feast of miles and dollars.

UNITED	
Wed, Mar 13, 2024	30,000 miles
San Francisco SFO to Osaka KIX	
SFO - KIX	United Polaris business ☒ Upgrade available
Tue, Mar 26, 2024	30,000 miles
Osaka KIX to San Francisco SFO	
KIX - SFO	United Polaris business ☒ Upgrade available
Fare	\$2,303.00
Taxes and fees	\$99.60
Service fees	\$1,000.00
Upgrades	60,000 miles
Total due	\$3,402.60
	+ 60,000 miles

When you consider a cash + miles option, upgrading from coach to Business Class is often the way to go. Although the co-pay is minimally less, if you purchase an upgradeable Premium Economy fare, it would cost you \$800 more. Again, upgrade-mindedness saves you an Emperor's feast of miles and dollars.

That deserves a stamp.



Our team studied Business Class upgrade availability trends over the last 30 days for routes to Asian cities with one to four seats on United Airlines. These trends fluctuate so always check in advance to see how things look.

We found nine routes with upgrade seat availability to Asia, from Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, DC, to Tokyo, and from San Francisco to Beijing, Osaka, Seoul, and Taipei for an ["upgrade-open-minded,"](#) or [bags-packed](#) traveler.

UNITED BUSINESS CLASS UPGRADE AVAILABILITY TRENDS

Route	Summary of Availability Trends
Chicago-Tokyo	Outbound up to four seats a handful of days; return one seat, a handful of days, up to four seats fewer than a handful of days.
Houston-Tokyo	Outbound up to four seats a handful of days; return up to two seats, a handful of days, up to four seats fewer than a handful of days.
Los Angeles-Tokyo	Outbound up to two seats a handful of days, up to four seats fewer than a handful of days; return up to four seats a handful of days.
San Francisco-Beijing	Outbound up to four seats more than a handful of days; return up to two seats more than a handful of days, up to four seats a handful of days.
San Francisco-Osaka	Outbound up to four seats a handful of days; return up to two seats more than a handful of days, up to four seats a handful of days.
San Francisco-Seoul	Outbound one seat a handful of days, up to four seats fewer than a handful of days; return up to four seats a handful of days.
San Francisco-Taipei	Outbound up to two seats a handful of days, up to four seats fewer than a handful of days; return up to four seats a handful of days.
San Francisco-Tokyo	Outbound up to two seats a handful of days, up to four seats fewer than a handful of days; return up to four seats a handful of days.
Washington, DC-Tokyo	Outbound up to four seats a handful of days; return up to two seats, a handful of days, up to four seats fewer than a handful of days.

*Handful 4-8 days in the month.

SCORE WITH CLOSEOUT AVAILABILITY TRENDS

Just like in sports, a lot can happen close to the end. I think it starts with perspective: Keep your mind open to possibilities, especially if you have a ticket in hand. What's the downside? You use that ticket without an upgrade and c'est la vie. On the upside, you get an actual massive "tell everyone" seat upgrade that a closed mind would never have even considered.

Keep that in mind, and I'll see you up front.