



Star Alliance Elites Status Secret: 55% Off First Class to Europe and When the Upgrade Stars Align

October 2024

Round-trip upgrades to First Class with Star Alliance miles you can buy to score a ticket normally \$10,785 on Lufthansa

Problem: If you're an elite status member or seeker, say with United, not only are you owned by the airline, but you can't leverage some of the best deals in the sky — the ones with the buy miles strategies — because you don't earn miles or elite credit on free award tickets.

But that wouldn't be a problem if United had decent availability using miles to upgrade, which they don't really. You see, when you buy a coach or Business Class ticket and you use miles to upgrade, you earn elite credit, unlike free award tickets. So what are you going to do?

SOLUTION

Here's how to get that golden ticket — an upgrade from Business to First Class on Lufthansa, but without the staggering \$10,785 price tag. You can slip into the luxury cabin for a fraction of the cost by spending \$2,997-ish on a Business Class fare and using 140,000 miles to upgrade to First ([which anyone can buy](#)), for a savings of \$5,959, or 55%.

If you don't have the miles, they can be acquired during one of Lufthansa's frequent buy miles bonus promotions, for the cost of just \$1,829, at about 1.3 cents each. Even at the regular rate of 1.9 cents, the upgrade still only adds \$2,733 for a total of \$5,532 to \$5,802 all in — a far cry from the full fare of \$10,785 and a savings of up to \$5,241 / 49%.

HOW TO WORK IT

First, you secure your Business Class ticket on routes between the U.S. and Europe. Lufthansa's upgrade inventory is the same for award and upgrade seats, so if an award seat is open, you can use miles to upgrade. [Check First Class availability on Lufthansa first.](#)

If you buy the Business Class ticket online at [united.com](#), you have 24 hours to get it refunded if anything goes sideways. If you travel often and know you can eventually use the Lufthansa miles, for a free ticket or upgrade, buy miles when on sale, so you have the miles you need when you need them.

Otherwise, you risk upgrade award availability shifting if the miles take too long to arrive after you purchase them. Usually, the miles purchase transaction is instant, but it can take a few days in some cases.

MANY ROUTES POSSIBLE

Lufthansa offers First Class on the long-haul leg of your trip from major cities like New York, Boston, or Chicago, connecting through Frankfurt or Munich to many destinations within Europe.

Here are 13 low Business Class fare sample routes to upgrade:

- Seven routes from Boston to Athens, Bilbao, Copenhagen, Dublin, Milan, Palma, and Venice
- Three routes from Chicago to Barcelona, Dublin, and Rome
- Three routes from New York, Copenhagen, Dublin, and Warsaw

MAKING A CONNECTION

Upgrades to First Class are valid on the long-haul flight. Routes within the U.S. would require a separate Star Alliance upgrade, if available, at an additional cost.

FIRST CLASS AVAILABILITY TREASURE MAP

To/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
Boston - Frankfurt	Oct., Sept.	Nov., May	Nov. to April, May, July to Aug.		Nov., May, Sept.	Nov., Dec. to April, June to Aug.
Chicago - Frankfurt	Nov., Dec., May, June	Nov., Jan., Feb., April, May	Feb., March, April, June, July, Aug.	Nov., March, May, June, Sept.	Nov., Dec., April, May, July, Aug.	Dec., Jan., Feb., March, April, May, June to Aug.
Los Angeles - Frankfurt	March, July, Aug.			March, Aug.		
New York - Frankfurt	Nov., Dec., April, June	Nov., Dec.	Jan. to Feb., July, Aug.	Nov., Dec., April, June, July, Aug.		Jan. to Feb.
San Francisco - Frankfurt	Jan., March, July, Aug.			Dec., Jan., June, Feb., March, July	Dec., Jan., March, Aug.	Feb.
Washington, DC - Frankfurt		July, Aug.			April	April, May to Aug., Sept.
Boston - Munich		May	April, May, June to Aug.			April to Aug.
New York - Munich	May, June	April, June	July, Aug.	April, May, Sept.	May, June	July, Aug.

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

The best part? You're not just spending miles — you're earning them, too. When you pay for Business Class, you're earning more miles to fuel future upgrades and getting elite status credit.

The real victory is getting there in First Class for a fraction of the cost.

A person is seated in a first-class airplane cabin, leaning back in a comfortable seat. A white tablecloth is draped over the seat in front of them, holding a meal consisting of a plate of food, a glass of wine, and some small containers. The cabin has large windows with white curtains, and the overall atmosphere is warm and luxurious.

Two Airlines Offer Up to 85% off First Class Over Five Months Next Year to Asia

October 2024

191 days over the next 330 that you can use your miles for First Class *OR* buy the miles to save up to 85% off in cash

Imagine you're wandering through a vault of luxury, a treasure trove that seems out of reach for most but can be yours with the right key only a few solo travelers know about. Today, I'll be handing you three golden keys, each leading to a First Class escape at a fraction of the price.

CATHAY PACIFIC NEW YORK TO HONG KONG ROUND-TRIP WITH 320,000 MILES *OR* \$8,133

Let's start with Cathay Pacific's First Class from New York to Hong Kong. Normally priced at an eye-watering \$30,128, this luxury experience is available for 320,000 miles. Cathay is a transfer partner of Amex, Capital One, and Citi. Or you can get it for \$8,133 in cash if you don't have the miles and need to buy them at 2.5

cents each. That's a 73% savings, leaving \$21,995 of your travel budget intact for more adventures. Taxes only add a small \$133 to the equation.

With Cathay, April, July, and August open the door wider on the outbound with more than 36 days of availability and more than 20 days in June and July on the return, for two travelers.

For solo travelers, the dates shine brighter for those with flexibility with more than 20 days in February and March outbound and March to May on the return to experience this elite trip.

Not flying from New York or Hong Kong? Take a [positioning flight](#) instead.

To/From Hong Kong	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
New York	April	Feb. to April	July, Aug.	March, April, June	May	June, July

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...

ALL NIPPON AIRWAYS CHICAGO TO TOKYO ROUND-TRIP WITH 150,000 MILES *OR* \$4,206

Next, let's shift to another gem—this time with All Nippon Airways. If you use Amex points, you can save a fortune on the First Class ticket from Chicago to Tokyo. The secret is using 150,000 Amex points, which you can purchase for 2.5 cents per point. With taxes of about \$456, the savings stand tall at \$18,215, or 81%.

The stars align in September 2025 with eight days of availability for two travelers outbound, and three days on the return, at time of research. Availability fluctuates so keep that in mind. A few fleeting days are available for solo travelers: seven days in August outbound and four days on the return.

Not flying from Chicago or Tokyo? Take a [positioning flight](#).

To/From Tokyo	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	Aug., Sept.		Sept.	Aug., Sept.		

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...

YOUR MAP TO THE SKY

As with any treasure hunt, timing and persistence are essential. These deals don't last forever, and seat availability is as fleeting as a rare comet. But for those who map out their strategy, the reward is an unforgettable experience.



Flexible Traveler Alert: Free Two-Class Upgrades on American with Miles from the U.S. to London

October 2024

When the stars align to get First Class for the price of Premium Economy

There are two kinds of travelers: the ones who've carved out their journey in stone. Their dates are locked, like a ship stuck in ice, and they're unable to shift course no matter how the winds change.

The other ones crave getting the most bang for their buck or miles, and plan around when that's possible.

Enter the Opportunity Traveler.

Here's the truth. If you're value-conscious, locking in your ticket too early is like shooting an arrow before you see the target. The beauty of flexibility is that it allows you to seize extraordinary opportunities when they arise. And for First Class travel, these opportunities are becoming as rare as sightings of a blue moon.

Still, some travelers lock themselves in. "When should I book my flight?" they ask, hoping for some secret hour like midnight on Saturdays. The answer is simpler: **Book when flights are cheapest.** It's that straightforward. But here's the catch: Deals don't sit around waiting for your convenience — they come, they go, and if you're not ready to pounce, you'll miss them.

As we all know, First Class routes are becoming fewer as time goes by. American currently has five nonstop First Class routes to London from the U.S. with typical published fares ranging from:

- Charlotte \$5,760 to \$13,700 (service begins November 5)
- Dallas \$6,600 to \$7,510
- Los Angeles \$5,780 to \$8,280
- Miami \$5,780 to \$7,330
- New York \$4,180 to \$5,210

So, when fares are on the high side, it's time to consider some golden opportunities.

Okay, so you know what's coming next... a deal, a big deal. Think First Class to London for as low as 72,000 miles each way, but with very limited availability.

That's right. We found a smattering of First Class one-stop flights to London with maybe 10 days a year where **First Class can be had for nearly the price of Premium Economy.** These flights range from 72,000 to 90,000 one-way and depart from Austin, Cleveland, Columbus, Houston, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Memphis, Nashville, New Orleans, San Antonio, San Francisco, and St. Louis.

While the nonstop from Dallas to London typically runs 300,000 miles, it's almost laughable how a one-stop option can bring you luxury at a fraction of the cost.

FOR EXAMPLE :

- Dallas to London nonstop in **First Class** on American costs 300,000 miles
- Dallas to London nonstop in **Business Class** on American costs 219,000 miles
- Dallas to London nonstop in **Premium Economy** costs 90,000 miles
- Houston to London *via Dallas* in **First Class** costs 72,000 miles

Dallas to London nonstop in First Class for 300,000 miles

First (One way (per person))

300,000 miles

+ \$5.60

Total (all passengers)
300,000 miles + \$5.60

DEPART
Dallas/Fort Worth, TX to London, United Kingdom
Friday, December 6, 2024

DFW LHR
3:20 PM → 6:20 AM⁻¹ 9h 0m Nonstop First
AA20 • 77W-Boeing 777
⚠ Overnight flight or connection

Dallas to London nonstop in Business Class for 219,000 miles

Business (One way (per person))

219,000 miles

+ \$5.60

Total (all passengers)
219,000 miles + \$5.60

DEPART
Dallas/Fort Worth, TX to London, United Kingdom
Friday, December 6, 2024

DFW LHR
3:20 PM → 6:20 AM⁻¹ 9h 0m Nonstop Business
AA20 • 77W-Boeing 777
⚠ Overnight flight or connection

Dallas to London nonstop in Premium Economy for 90,000 miles

Premium Economy (One way (per person))

90,000 miles

+ \$5.60

Total (all passengers)
90,000 miles + \$5.60

DEPART
Dallas/Fort Worth, TX to London, United Kingdom
Friday, December 6, 2024

DFW LHR
3:20 PM → 6:20 AM⁻¹ 9h 0m Nonstop Premium Economy
AA20 • 77W-Boeing 777
⚠ Overnight flight or connection

Houston to London via Dallas in First Class for 72,000 miles

First (One way (per person))

72,000 miles

+ \$11.20

Total (all passengers)
72,000 miles + \$11.20

DEPART
Houston, TX to London, United Kingdom
Friday, December 6, 2024

IAH LHR
6:03 PM → 6:20 AM⁻² 30h 17m 1 stop First
IAH - DFW • AA2438 • 738-Boeing 737
DFW - LHR • AA20 • 77W-Boeing 777
⚠ Overnight flight or connection

Nonstop routes vs. one-stop routes

When you compare typical one-way First Class nonstop awards to nearby one-stop awards, you come out way ahead just by making a stop. Here's a comparison of nonstop routes to those with a stop via their major hubs.

CHARLOTTE-LONDON

The highest cost for a one-stop in the month of February from Atlanta, Jacksonville, Richmond, Raleigh, and Savannah (besides just two low-cost days) is still lower than the lowest cost on most days when compared to the nonstop from Charlotte to London.

For Travel in February 2025	Lowest Cost	Number of Days Available At Lowest Cost	On Most Other Days
Charlotte	110,500	2	285,500 - 392,000
Atlanta	135,500	8	136,500 - 165,500
Jacksonville, FL	125,500	17	127,500 - 142,500
Richmond, VA	135,500	17	136,000 - 178,000
Raleigh, NC	118,500	17	122,000 - 129,500
Savanna	135,500	11	138,000 - 162,500

DALLAS-LONDON

The highest cost in the month of February from Austin, Houston, and San Antonio (besides just four low-cost days) is still lower than the lowest cost on most days when compared to the nonstop from Dallas to London.

For Travel in February 2025	Lowest Cost	Number of Days Available At Lowest Cost	On Most Other Days
Dallas	115,000	4	201,000 - 440,000
Austin	115,000	19	115,000 - 123,000
Houston	111,000	15	112,000 - 120,500
San Antonio	115,000	20	117,000 - 195,000

LOS ANGELES-LONDON

The highest cost in the month of February from San Diego, San Francisco, and Seattle (besides just two low-cost days) is still lower than the lowest cost on most days when compared to the nonstop from Los Angeles to London.

For Travel in February 2025	Lowest Cost	Number of Days Available At Lowest Cost	On Most Other Days
Los Angeles	110,000	2	284,000 - 440,000

For Travel in February 2025	Lowest Cost	Number of Days Available At Lowest Cost	On Most Other Days
San Diego	120,500	1	121,500 - 152,000
San Francisco	110,500	9	112,000 - 141,000
Seattle	135,500	10	138,500 - 163,000

MIAMI-LONDON

The highest cost in the month of February from Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando, and Tampa (besides just three low-cost days) is still lower than the lowest cost on most days when compared to the nonstop from Miami to London.

For Travel in February 2025	Lowest Cost	Number of Days Available At Lowest Cost	On Most Other Days
Miami	285,500	3	370,000 - 440,000
Ft. Lauderdale	135,500	8	140,500 - 240,000
Orlando	110,500	6	111,000 - 143,500
Tampa	110,500	6	111,000 - 130,000

NEW YORK-LONDON

The highest cost in the month of February from Boston, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh (besides just nine low-cost days) is still lower than the lowest cost on most days when compared to the nonstop from New York to London.

For Travel in February 2025	Lowest Cost	Number of Days Available At Lowest Cost	On Most Other Days
New York	110,000	9	222,000 - 440,000
Boston	118,500	6	121,500 - 204,000
Cleveland	119,000	12	121,500 - 152,500
Pittsburgh	125,500	18	140,000 - 223,500

If you're a flexible Opportunity Traveler, congrats. I'll see you up front.



How to Get a Singapore Airlines \$19,400 First Class Seat to Asia With Points *OR* for 50% Off With Cash

October 2024

If you want a cheap Business Class ticket, there's a time and a place to go for those deals. But not always.

Sometimes you want to splurge. Sometimes you want an unforgettable flight. It's not uncommon for me to hear from someone who says their flight was the most memorable part of the trip. But when people who can afford anything say that to me, and they often will say that about a solid Business Class product, I suggest that they pay a bit more for a lot more.

I'm talking about First Class on a First Class airline. What if I could get you to Asia for \$4,875 each way, or 50% off? Or better, what if you could use those miles or points you've had stashed just sitting there collecting dust for First Class? Think about doing it just one-way, too.



Enter Singapore Airlines with its only nonstop First Class flight departing the U.S. to Asia. It's to/from Los Angeles and Tokyo. Technically, what they call for Freedom Road. You can get it for 50% off.

Outbound Singapore flight #11 departs mid-day around 12:45 PM from Los Angeles for 12 hours in the air and arrives at Tokyo Narita at 5:40 PM the next day.

Singapore's 10-hour return flight #12 is an evening flight, which departs around 6:15 PM from Tokyo Narita and arrives in Los Angeles at 11:15 AM.

[More on Singapore First Class here...](#)

NO MILES? NO PROBLEM

If you have Amex, Capital One, Chase, or Citi points, Singapore's "Advantage" everyday award First Class cost is 187,000 each way.

If you don't have any points but you have an AMEX card in your wallet, you can buy the points outright for \$4,675 (and about \$100 in taxes each way) by using Amex buy miles deal (2.5 cents each) for a savings of \$9,850 / 50%.

Need more miles? There are ways of getting around the [max purchase annual limit](#) of 500,000.

AVAILABILITY

What about availability?

The reason the price is 187,000 miles is because there are no normal low saver prices of 120,000 miles available. [Because this is that one trip a year you want a flight that's unforgettable](#), Singapore Airlines jacks up the miles, but makes it available using miles and points.

For two travelers, it's available 77 days of the year, for travel from January through September 2025 on the outbound and 81 days for travel from January through September 2025 on the return.

For one traveler, it's available 123 days for travel from January through September 2025 on the outbound and 122 days for travel from October through September 2025 on the return.

Awards with Singapore can be booked up to 355 days in advance.

MAKING CONNECITONS

Don't live in Los Angeles or not flying to Tokyo? No problem. There are a lot of ways to get to Los Angeles.

As for Tokyo? There are countless flights from Tokyo to all over Asia.

If you're looking for a First Class splurge to Asia at half off, now you know how.