

# Thank the Traveler Who Booked 11 Months Ahead. He’s Paying for Your Flat Seat.

**October 2026**

## How to make a snap decision six months in advance and fly Business or First Class for half the cash or miles

This story is NOT for Nervous Ned.

Ned needs to know, nine months out, which croissant he’ll eat the Tuesday he lands in Paris. So he books early, pays full freight, and sleeps like a baby.

Ned isn’t wrong. He’s buying certainty, and certainty is the most expensive seat on the plane.

Hold that thought. You'll meet Ned again in 2A.

## LUCKY ONCE. DELIBERATE ALWAYS.

This story is for the traveler who wants the best seat in the house without paying the house's full price.

Retirees, entrepreneurs, work-from-anywhere wanderers, and points players with big appetites.

If money is no object, book 2A and skip ahead to the Champagne.

Everyone else, meet the two kinds of upgrades.

**Accidental upgrades are dumb luck -** a gate agent's whim, a seat that falls in your lap, a win you can't repeat.

**Deliberate upgrades are designed -** and you can repeat them on purpose.

Opportunists get lucky. Maximizers get deliberate.

Meet the Deliberate Maximizer: a traveler who wants the most life per dollar, mile, and point, and runs a process instead of chasing a hunch.

The short-notice trip is where the Deliberate Maximizer struts.

Call it *prepared improvisation*. A maximizer with a half-packed bag.

## FIREFIGHTERS & THE PARADOX THAT PAYS

Plan a snap decision? Sounds like throwing yourself a surprise party.

Here's the twist. A snap decision isn't always a decision at all. It's often the fast execution of a slow decision.

Firefighters don't decide to run into a burning building when the alarm rings. They decided that at the academy years ago. Their boots are by the bed, and the alarm only announces when.

Dwight Eisenhower put it plainly: "Plans are worthless, but planning is everything." The rule is to be far- and near-sighted.

Far-sighted about **what** you want.

Near-sighted about **how and when** you grab it.

Months before any seat appears, the Deliberate Maximizer settles the big rocks:

- Cabin: Business or First.
- Ceiling: the most miles, points, or cash you'll pay.
- Seats: how many.
- Window: which weeks or months.
- Destination: which continents.
- Products: the airlines and seats you'd love, like, or can live with.

When the seat shows up, only pebbles remain. Monday or Tuesday. Connect here or there.

Most people can't decide fast because they don't know what they want, haven't ranked it, and aren't honest about the trade-offs.

In Upgrade Process terms, they skipped **Desires**, so **Decisions** feel like a hostage negotiation.

You can't make a fast decision about something you never decided you wanted.

## THE LATE BIRD GETS THE LIE-FLAT, CHEAP

It's the late bird that often catches the juiciest worm.

This is Upgrade Dynamic #1 at work: everything changes, seat maps included. As departure nears, airlines often release what's left rather than fly empty.

Car buyers know the pattern. One drives the new model off the lot the day it debuts; the other waits for the model-year changeover and saves 20% to 30% on a brand-new car with last year's date on the paperwork.

Same leather.

Same new-car smell.

Smaller sticker price.

In the cabin, we call it Remnant Class: the same plush carpet sold off the end of the roll.

Now board the flight. Ned settles into 2A. You're in 2B, having **decided six months ago** what you wanted, **waited,** and then pounced **19 days out** for half price.

Same seat. Same Champagne. Same flat bed.

**Every discount has a donor.**

And Ned is yours. He isn't a sucker; he bought something real.

**He just bought your upgrade, too.**

## THE TRADE-OFF TRUTH

Economist Thomas Sowell said it best: "There are no solutions. There are only trade-offs."

Remnant Class is no exception: You're trading certainty for value. An upgrade is when the benefit outweighs the cost, so count every cost: change fees, prep time, uncertainty, and your spouse's nerves.

Don't fall in love with your plan; figure the costs of a fare divorce. If a cancellation fee buys a far better seat, write it off as the cost of comfort.

Pretend there's no trade-off, and the suffering starts.

Accept it, and the value starts.

## TWO MIND STRETCHERS

First: Your bucket list has 100 places. Would you rather do #1 in mediocre style, or #2 in First Class – with budget left over to upgrade everything else on the trip.

Second: People drop $7,000 on a flight, then balk at anything over $300 a night for the hotel. Pocket that $3,728 difference, and the 4-star becomes a 5-star, or the suite, or the extra week.

Ned traded money for certainty.

You traded certainty for a prince's itinerary.

Everybody trades; the only question is whether you trade on purpose and for the ROI.

## FLEXIBILITY: MONEY IN THE MATTRESS

**Flexibility is a currency.**

Most people stuff it under the mattress where it earns exactly nothing.

Many retirees, business owners, and work-from-anywhere folks still book like they have a 9-to-5 and two weeks off. Their calendar got an upgrade; their booking habits didn't.

So start with an honest baseline: How much freedom do you really have? Then invest it in layers. Flex the day, and you make a deposit; flex the airline, and it compounds; flex the continent, and you're collecting real interest.

Do you need Paris, or do you want a great week in Europe that starts in a flat bed? Often "Paris" is a borrowed desire, while "Europe in a suite" can be truly yours.

When you fly Business or First Class, your trip begins when you arrive, not two days later when the jet lag wears off.

So choose continent first, city second. Land wherever Remnant Class lands you, then take the train or buy a separate ticket onward.

Flex the return, too. One extra night can buy First Class home, and I'm always looking for excuses to stay longer anyway.

## PLAN THE POUNCE IN FOUR MOVES

**Move 1: Get a Flavor for the Opportunity Landscape.**

You don't need to know it like the back of your hand. You just need a feel for how it works: which airlines open which seats, to where, in which months – in general.

Once you see how much is out there, the breadth hits you instantly.

Taste before you chase.

Our favorite shortcut to see at a glance in one or two clicks is FCF's Sweet Redeems, the fresh finds we publish every week. Filter by travel month, and you'll see which airlines and destinations are live right now.

Our monthly special reports do heavy lifting too. A few recent examples, just to give you a taste:

- The Final 30 Days: Here we showed you how airlines quietly dump saver Business Class seats close in, with 60 of 64 route legs open from New York-London to Los Angeles-Tokyo, so instead of a 300,000-mile ransom you could fly for as little as 34,000 miles each way.
- Etihad First Apartment Worldwide: Here we showed you four or more A380 First Class seats open on many days within two weeks of departure, Toronto to Abu Dhabi, where you could pay more than $10,000 in cash or 115,000 American miles plus $59.30.
- United Upgrades to Europe and South America: Here we showed you how a paid coach fare plus miles and an $1,100 co-pay each way lands you in a flat bed for thousands less.
- Alaska's Klondike: Here we showed you how Alaska miles open **American Airlines** Business Class on 11 routes to Europe and Buenos Aires, where Philadelphia-Edinburgh retails at $7,420 or flies for $2,190 all-in, 70 percent off.
- Lufthansa and SWISS: Here we showed you 2,411-plus Business Class options to Europe for solo travelers and families of up to eight, where a seat that sells for up to $7,534 could be had for $1,842 round-trip close-in.
- British Airways: Here we showed you why yesterday's worst mileage award is today's best family play, with Business Class rows open from 15 U.S. gateways to London, where you could pay $4,400 to $6,000-plus in cash or 126,000 miles plus $897 round-trip.

These are just a few recent digs. The map changes monthly; the method never does.

**Move 2: Write Your Snap Sheet.**

One page, big rocks ranked, must-haves separated from nice-to-haves. Then get your travel partner's yes before the seat appears, because that makes the snap possible.

**Move 3: Keep Your Currency Liquid.**

Park points in flexible programs that transfer fast. Points that can't move can't pounce.

Know which airlines your points reach. Got the lingo? Then you've got the bingo.

**Move 4: Boots by the Bed.**

Passport current; house, pets, and business covered; bag half-packed. When the seat shows up, you're not just deciding – you're departing.

**Move 5: Grab Close by, Then Take Off.**

When availability hits, book the closest match to your Snap Sheet. Don't wait for certainty; that's the Certainty Delusion, and it's why most travelers live in "ready, aim, aim, aim."

Deliberate Maximizers decide at about 70% certainty, then iterate. Action creates clarity that thinking never will.

Keep improving: a better day, a better connection, a better cabin, a better return. Your first booking is a rough draft, not the final edit.

One caution. Read the cancellation terms before you pounce, and leave a buffer day when you stitch together separate tickets. And skip this play for time-sensitive experiences like the Olympics or the World Cup.

## SAME TRIP, SWITCHED SEQUENCE

Early: Ned, the Certainty Buyer. He books early, decides as he goes, and pays retail for peace of mind.

Late: you, the Deliberate Maximizer. You decide early, book late, and pay remnant prices for the same seat.

Same trip. Flipped script. Deliberate about the what, maximize on the when.

## A TOAST TO 2A

Five hours into your flight, you won't be thinking about change fees. You'll be asleep in a top-tier suite.

But before you drift off, raise a glass to Ned in 2A. He bought certainty and allowed you to buy the best possible.

Everybody won.

Decide slow. Pounce fast. Keep climbing.

Because spontaneity is a luxury of the prepared.



# Fall Is Seduction Season: Perspectives on Elite Status, Part 1

**October 2026**

## Everybody wants to upgrade. Almost nobody notices the plastic card isn't the upgrade; the process is.

Picture a guy at the polo club showing off his brand-new airline platinum card.

His wallet just got one card heavier.

His life possibly didn't get one bit better.

Now check your inbox. "You're only 9,000 points from Platinum." "Finish strong."

Welcome to fall, elite status seduction season.

The Sirens are singing, and they sound an awful lot like your airline.

Here's the good news. There's a bigger upgrade on the table this month, and it doesn't come in plastic.

## SELLING SONGS, HANDING OUT EARPLUGS

The Sirens of Greek myth were half-woman, half-bird beauties perched on a rocky island. They never laid a finger on a sailor; they just sang, and the sailors steered themselves onto the rocks.

Every fall, the travel world cranks up the volume. Every blog, banner, and card offer hums the same sweet nothing: three more trips and you're in.

Everybody else is selling the song.

First Class Flyer has been handing out earplugs.

Decades ago I reminded you that mileage programs focus more on "luring, not rewarding." Our message hasn't changed. Think twice, because the moment you reach for elite status is the moment you get sucked in and hand over your freedom.

## THE ROCKS JUST MOVED

Need a reminder? Look at what United just did. For 2027 qualifying, some members need up to 45% more activity to hold the same status.

**Same** seats, **same** flying, **less** status.

Notice what happened. Members didn't change a thing, and the rocks moved anyway.

That's Upgrade Reality. There is no status quo. Drift always goes down, and whoever writes the rules controls the current.

**What this demonstrates:** When someone else writes the rules, standing still is sliding back.

## EVERYBODY WANTS TO UPGRADE

Twenty-three hundred years ago, Aristotle observed that every action and every pursuit *aims at some good.*

Status chasing included.

So let's be fair. Wanting elite status isn't foolish. It's an upgrade attempt, a bet that there's a way to be better off.

The problem isn't the desire.

It's the method.

And method is where Upgrade Intelligence lives: knowing whether a move will make you better off before you make it. Travel is simply the laboratory where it's easiest to see.

## PLASTIC THINKERS AND PROCESS THINKERS

There are two kinds of travelers looking at an elite program.

The Plastic Thinker believes the card is the upgrade: colored boarding pass, fancy bag tag, polo club bragging rights. It's a borrowed desire. He wants the picture, not the seat.

The Process Thinker sees a machine full of mechanisms, from upgrade lists to lounges to priority lines. Each is a possibility with odds of becoming an actuality, and a price for access.

To the wise, that card isn't freedom. It's a leash with a logo – one decision made last January that now makes a hundred decisions for you.

You only have eyes for the program, but the program has its eyes fixed on revenue.

That isn't romance.

It's seduction.

## POSSIBLE IS NOT PROBABLE

**Elite status isn't an upgrade.** It's barely an option. It's a possibility, and a long-shot, expensive one at that.

The upgrade list is a lottery ticket. You clear only when a premium seat goes unsold, while the **airlines are working overtime to sell it.**

Meanwhile, as we showed in January, **hub loyalists often pay 37% more to Europe and 39% more to Asia for the privilege of hoping.**

Locked-in loyalists get fleeced.

Politely, with a warm towel.

But fleeced nonetheless.

In Upgrade Formula terms, this is Step 3 – Options. A phantom option looks viable right up until you lean on it.

A vetted option holds your weight.

Everyone else hands you tactics for getting the status. Intelligence asks whether the status gets you the upgrade.

Tactics work once. Intelligence compounds.

**What this demonstrates:** The card is a possibility dressed up as an actuality. Before it buys, Upgrade Intelligence asks “how likely,” “at what cost,” and “compared to what.”

**Other examples of this:** the "sure thing" stock tip, the promotion that's "practically yours."

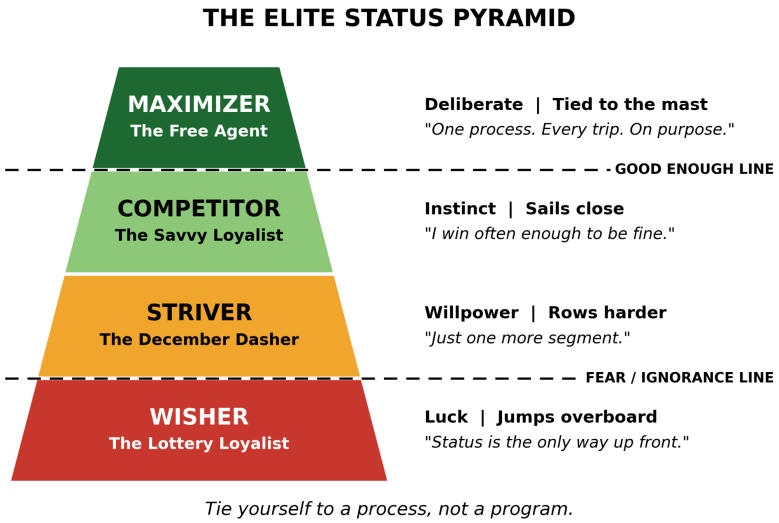
Make sense?

## FOUR FLYERS, FOUR FUELS

Thirty years in First Class Flyer’s upgrade laboratory, I've watched travelers sort themselves into four kinds.

They're the same four we see in every area of life.

Don't pick the one you wish you were. Pick the one your last booking proves.




*Tie yourself to a process, not a program.*

**The Wisher** runs on luck. This Lottery Loyalist signs up, hopes, and reacts blindly to every program email. "Status is the only way up front."

When the Sirens sing, he jumps overboard.

**The Striver** runs on willpower. This December Dasher books the year-end run and starts from scratch every January, fantasy-trapped and frequently stuck. "Just one more segment."

When the Sirens sing, he rows harder.

**The Competitor** runs on instinct. This Savvy Loyalist works the program and clears benefits somewhat often. "I win often enough to be fine."

True. And fine is the ceiling. When the Sirens sing, he sails close, sure he can handle it.

**The Maximizer** runs on deliberate process. This Loyalty Free Agent decides trip by trip, across every airline, with cash and points, based on the best opportunity. "One process, every trip, on purpose."

When the Sirens sing, he's already lashed to the mast.

**What this demonstrates:** Luck, willpower, and instinct all hit a ceiling. Only a deliberate process delivers.

## THE MAP: FIVE STEPS, FOUR FLYERS

Everybody runs the same five-step upgrade process – Baseline, Desires, Options, Decisions, Implementation – thousands of times a day.

The only difference is whether you **run it by accident or on purpose.**

Find your column.

| Step | Wisher (Luck) | Striver (Willpower) | Competitor (Instinct) | Maximizer (Deliberate) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Baseline | "I'm loyal." | "I'm only 9,000 points short." | "I clear some of the time." | What I can pay vs. what the seat is worth |
| **2. Desires** | **The card** | **The tier** | **The upgrade** | **The rest the flight was for** |
| 3. Options | One airline's luck list | One airline, more flying | One airline, played well | Every airline, cash and points |
| 4. Decisions | Hope | Pay more to protect status | Weigh inside one program | Weigh each trip, name the trade |
| 5. Implementation | Wait at the gate | December mileage run | Book the home carrier by habit | Books the best value |

Notice the Options row. Three of the four columns shop from the same tiny menu: one airline. That's a portfolio of one, and no sane investor would call it a strategy.

That's the Sirens' real trick. They don't sink you in one big wreck.

**They shrink your menu one "loyal" booking at a time.**

Now notice the Desires row. The Maximizer runs on Ordered Desires.

He doesn't want the tier. He wants what the tier was supposed to buy: rest, room, and arriving ready.

## LOYALTY-CHAINED OR LOYALTY-FREE?

Here's what changes when you stop steering by the song.

| Aspect | Loyalty-Chained | Loyalty-Free |
|---|---|---|
| **Mindset** | Hoping, not shopping | Shopping, not hoping |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Menu** | One airline, a portfolio of one | Every airline, cash and points |
| **Price** | Pays the loyalty premium | Pays the best fare of the day |
| **Upgrade odds** | A lottery ticket on the list | A seat that's actually booked |
| **Decisions** | One choice in January makes a hundred | Chooses trip by trip, on purpose |
| **Routing** | Connects through the hub to protect the tier | Flies the best nonstop, whoever runs it |
| **Points** | Co-brand card, loyalty infections | Flexible points, the right connections |
| **December** | The December dash | Home for the holidays |
| **Devaluations** | Devastated every time | Shrugs. Nothing to lose. |
| **Elite status** | The goal, bought at a premium | A side effect, earned by accident |
| **Identity** | Borrowed: a color on a card | Owned: a seat chosen on purpose |
| **Freedom** | A leash with a logo | A free agent, every trip |

Read the right column again. Not one row in it needs the Sirens' permission.

The right connections, without the loyalty limitations.

## STATUS FOUND, NOT STATUS BOUGHT

Let's be clear. There's nothing wrong with elite status.

Plenty of loyalty-free travelers trip over it by accident. They fly a lot, and the points pile up.

The difference? They never paid a premium to get it, and they won't pay one to keep it.

And yes, if your life runs on a route that only one airline flies nonstop, giving that carrier most of your flying can be the smart call. If all you do is fly from Atlanta to Savannah, then no problem, give Delta your heart.

That's not blind loyalty. It's a vetted option you chose, not one that chose you.

## TIE YOURSELF TO THE MAST

This fall, the whole industry will tell you to finish strong. We suggest you finish smart.

Odysseus didn't out-muscle the Sirens. He plugged his crew's ears and had himself tied to the mast before the music started.

Willpower grits its teeth when the song starts. Process ties the knot before it begins.

You can't stop the song. You can choose your ropes.

You have arrived when you are *free*.

True elite status isn't a color on a card. It's freedom, the one status nobody can devalue.

See you there.



# The Map Moved Again: Europe Runs Deep, Families Finally Win, and November Is Now

**October 2026**

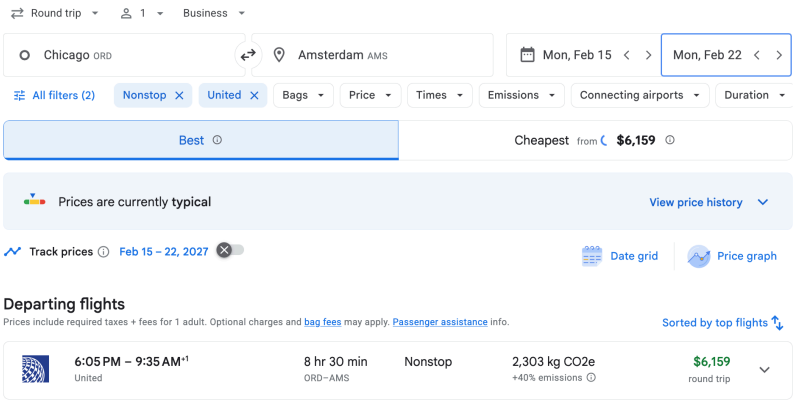
## United Upgrades: Asia and Australia went dark, but 19 routes to Europe and South America turn a coach fare into Business Class for roughly half the price and families can find four seats almost as often as one, even months out.

Mileage awards for Business Class now routinely cost 300,000 to 500,000 miles round-trip.

Pay cash instead? Brace yourself.

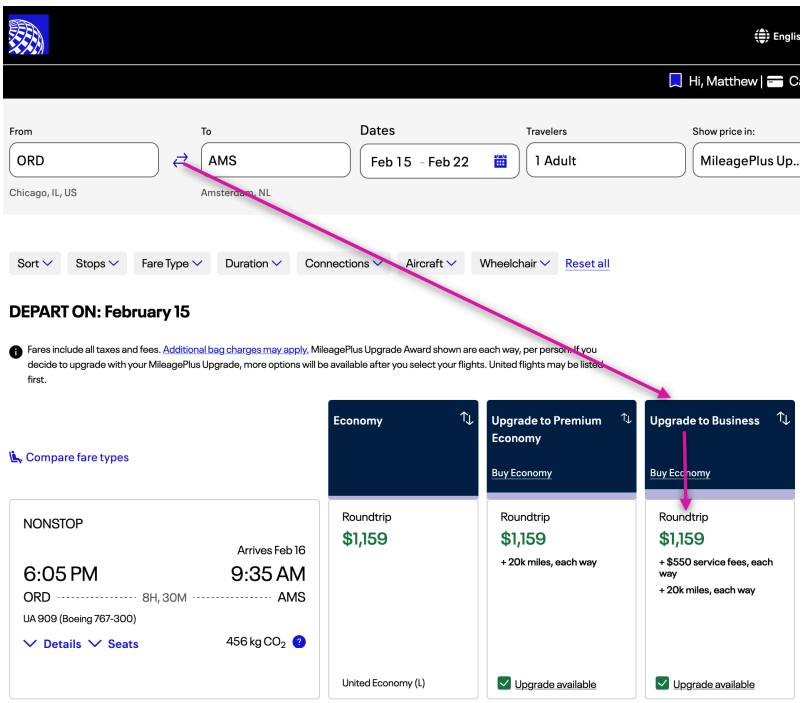
Most flyers think that's the menu: Pay through the nose with cash, pay through the nose with miles, or squeeze into coach.

***Chicago-Amsterdam Round-Trip February 15 - 22***
***$6,159***




Now look at this one.

***Chicago-Amsterdam Round-Trip February 15 - 22***
***$2,259 + 40,000 Miles***




Same cabin. Same flat bed. A fraction of the price.

You can't spend fantasy miles on a real seat. But you can spend real miles on this one.

In August, we told you Asia was back and Australia wouldn't wait. We meant it. This month, both are dark.

Bad news? Only if you waited. Anyone who moved at 70% certainty got those seats, and anyone holding out for the perfect plan got a closed door.

## THE MAP MOVED – JUST LIKE WE SAID IT WOULD

That's the whole miles game in one sentence: Nothing stays put.

Today's treasure sits in 19 route pairs – 38 flights – through Newark, Washington, Chicago, and Houston. Fifteen run to Europe and four to South America.

You don't control the airline's inventory. You never did. Believing otherwise is the Control Delusion – the number one reason smart flyers stay stuck in seat 34E.

Low Upgrade IQ mourns the Pacific. High Upgrade IQ crosses the Atlantic.

That's Reality Navigation.

And remember: The map is true as of today. It's a snapshot, not a forecast.

## THE HALF-PRICE PLAY – STILL PAYING, STILL PLAYING

Buy a coach fare, add miles plus a co-pay, and land in Business Class for 25% to 60% off.

Figure roughly 40,000 to 60,000 miles round-trip, plus a co-pay of about $550 each way.

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

That's Leverage Intelligence in a single transaction: one small input applied at the point of maximum impact – the long-haul leg.

## TWO BASELINES, ONE MAP

Every upgrade starts with Step 1 of the Upgrade Process: your Baseline.

This map serves two.

**Baseline A:** You're already booked. Maybe you booked six months ago and paid $6,000 for Business Class – or 300,000 miles – and winced. Your Step 2 desire is to cut that fare in half – and on these routes, Step 3 hands you the option.

**Baseline B:** You're NOT booked yet. You desire Business Class without the Business Class price, and your option is to lock in trips now that you can cancel this spring – or whenever life changes the plan.

Desperate people don't have options. Upgrade-intelligent people stockpile them – and this report is an options inventory, not a commitment.

## NOVEMBER IS NOW – SHORT NOTICE, SWEET SAVINGS

November is the strongest month on the map. Twenty-five of 38 flights show space for one traveler, and 24 show space for four or more.

**Play one is pure spontaneity:** Europe in Business Class on weeks of notice. Spontaneity is a luxury of the prepared.

The map is what makes you prepared.

**Play two** is FCF's Iterative Upgrade strategy – the switcheroo. Already holding a high-priced November ticket? Book the half-price play, then take the refund or credit on the expensive one.

Same trip. Thousands back in your pocket.

That's the Upgrade Formula in one move: easier, faster, cheaper, better. The best trip is often the one you improve, not the one you got the first time.

Don't hesitate.

Iterate.

## FAMILIES FINALLY WIN – FOUR SEATS, FEWER TEARS

Try finding four Business Class seats on the same flight with miles. Go ahead. I'll wait.

Usually the family splits up, or the family flies in back. Not this month.

Of the 107 times a flight showed space for one traveler, 93 showed space for four. That's 87%!

## OPEN JAWS, OPEN DOORS – THE SHUFFLE

An open jaw means flying into one city and home from another. Why? Because the best outbound and the best return rarely live on the same route.

Try this: Fly Chicago to London in February, then come home Amsterdam to Chicago, where February shows many seats – for four travelers, too. London to Amsterdam is a short hop, and you can easily book a fare all the way through in coach.

Stop searching for trips. Start hunting bridge routes.

The long-haul nonstop is the bridge, since nobody goes to Frankfurt as a final destination. But fly there to go on to Prague, Vienna, or Rome. Lufthansa flies nonstop from Frankfurt to over 100 European cities.

**One bridge. Many trips.** That's Upgrade Dynamics: a single leverage point that multiplies your options.

Some bridges deliver you straight into the dream. Fly Newark to Palermo in November, and you step off in Sicily.

## RIGID DATES PAY RETAIL, FLEXIBLE DATES FLY FLAT

Two or three days of flexibility sounds small. On a map this lopsided, it changes everything.

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

## WINTER WINDOW, SUMMER SHADOWS

After November, February shows 20 flights to Europe with space, as well as January 16 and December 11. Then it thins fast.

June and July show zero on every route, and August shows only a sprinkle of homebound space.

But that's today's map. Space tends to surface close-in. For example, in our August survey, August alone showed more openings than the other 11 months combined.

So don't predict summer. Hold a cancellable option and keep checking.

That's kaizen and the Patience Quotient working together. Impatience is the number one killer of upgrades.

## DECIDE, DON'T DITHER – THE 70% RULE

Step 4 of the Upgrade Process is Decisions, and here's where most flyers fumble the treasure. They find the space, then wait – for certainty, for confirmation, for the perfect plan.

You can't think your way to clarity. You have to act your way there.

Ask, “What's the return policy?” The answer can be a refund or a credit.

Step 5, Implementation, comes down to three verbs: book, monitor, switch. You don't care about being right.

You care about upgrading.

Getting the best possible life experience.

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

## THE MIND GAME BEHIND THE MAP

You can't control the map. You can control an honest baseline, a deep inventory of options, and the speed of your decisions.

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

The map moved. It always does.

The fantasy died. The opportunity didn't.

Read it. Book it. Iterate it.

## FCF'S OCTOBER UNITED UPGRADE TREASURE MAP

*Many = more than 13 dates in the month | Handful = 8-13 dates | Few = fewer than 8 dates*

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.

| 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 |
| Newark - Rome | | Nov. | | Nov., Feb. | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chicago - London | Oct., Jan., Feb. | | | Oct., Jan. | Dec., Feb. | Nov. |
| Houston - Sao Paulo | March | | | March | | |
| Washington - Frankfurt | Dec. | Feb. | | Dec., April, Aug. | Nov. | Jan. to March |
| Washington - Sao Paulo | Oct. | | | Oct. | Oct. | |
| Newark - London | Oct., Nov., Jan., Feb. | | | Oct., Dec., March, April, Aug. | Nov., Jan., Aug. | Feb. |
| Washington - Rome | Oct., Nov. | | | Oct. | | |
| Chicago - Dublin | Oct., Nov., Jan., Feb. | | | Dec., Jan., March | Nov., Feb. | |
| Newark - Rome | | Nov. | | Nov., Dec. | Feb. | |
| Washington - Brussels | Feb. | | | Dec., Jan., May, Sept. | March, April, Aug. | Nov., Feb., March |
| Chicago - Sao Paulo | Oct., April | | | Oct. | | |
| Chicago - Amsterdam | Nov., Jan., Feb. | | | Oct., Nov., Jan. | | Feb. |
| Newark - Amsterdam | Nov. | | | Jan., Feb. | | Nov. |
| Newark - Dublin | Oct. to Feb. | | | Oct., Jan., Feb. | Nov., Dec., Feb. | |
| Washington - Dublin | Nov. | | | Nov. | | |
| Newark - Palermo | Nov. | | | Dec. | Nov. | |
| Newark - Frankfurt | Feb. | | | Nov., Jan., March | Feb. | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chicago - Zurich | Oct., Nov. | | | Oct., Nov. | | |
| Newark - Geneva | Oct., Nov. | | | Oct., Dec., Jan. | Feb. | Nov. |
| Houston - Lima | Jan. | | | Dec., Feb. | | |



# The Top 50 New Hilton Deals: Record-Cheap Points Cut Luxury Stays Up to 79%

**October 2026**

## One simple move turns your savings into square footage.

$904.

That’s one night at Conrad New York Downtown on Friday, November 13 – in cash, taxes included, at Hilton’s loyalty member rate.

Or about $382 a night in Hilton points, bought during this month’s sale.

Same hotel. Same Manhattan. 58% off.

Unwrap your pillow chocolate, slip on that fluffy white bathrobe, and settle back for some lucrative reading. The treasure hunt is back – and the reward just got better.

## RECORD LOW, REASONABLE DOUBT

Hilton is selling points with up to a 120% bonus through November 21, 2026. That works out to about 0.45 cents a point – the cheapest Hilton has ever sold them.

When we heard “lowest price ever,” we didn’t celebrate. We got suspicious.

Hilton has been quietly raising award prices at its top hotels. So the real question was simple: Did point inflation eat the deal?

We checked 50 Waldorf Astorias, Conrads, LXR’s, and other top Hilton hotels across six continents. Deals range from 39% to 79% off.

Prices pivoted.

The play didn’t.

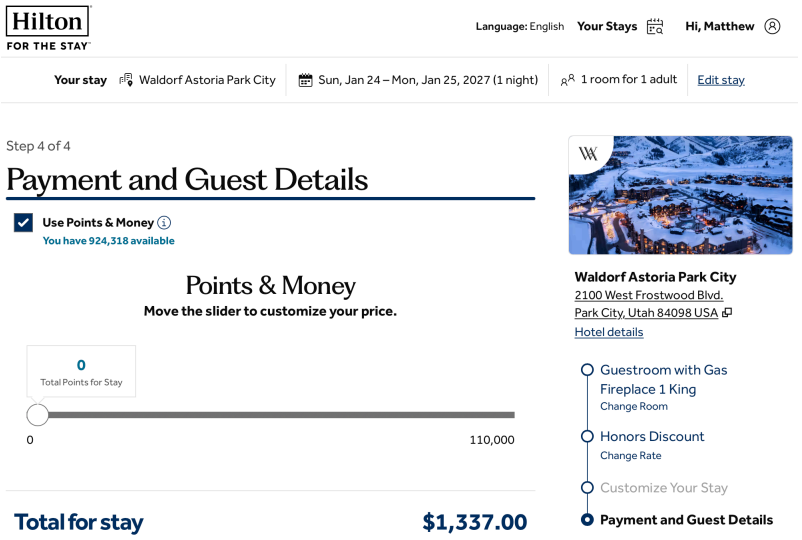
## MIND THE GAP, MOVE THE LEVER

Archimedes said give him a lever long enough and he’d move the world. Hilton just handed you a longer one.

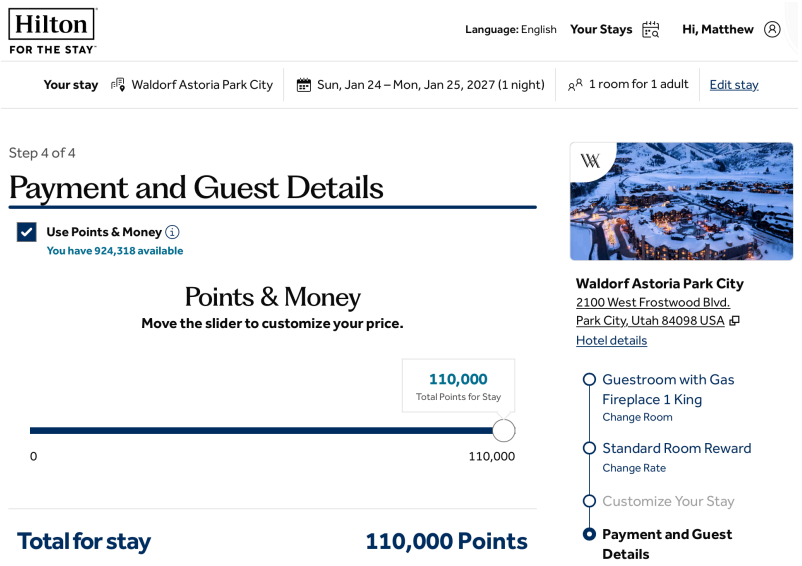
That’s Leverage Intelligence – spotting the gap between what something costs and what you can get it for.

Take Waldorf Astoria Park City in January: $1,337 a night in cash, or about $500 a night in points on a five-night stay.

**That’s 63% off.** Every dollar spent on points saves nearly $5 on the cash price of this hotel.




## *On points for about $500 (63% Off)...*




But leverage lives at the top. The DoubleTree in Kuala Lumpur saves $81 a night. The Waldorf in Park City saves $837. Same program, steeper savings, sharper play.

Most travelers see 63% off a Waldorf and squint. Too good to be true, they say. That reflex is Travel Default Thinking – and it's the most expensive habit in travel.

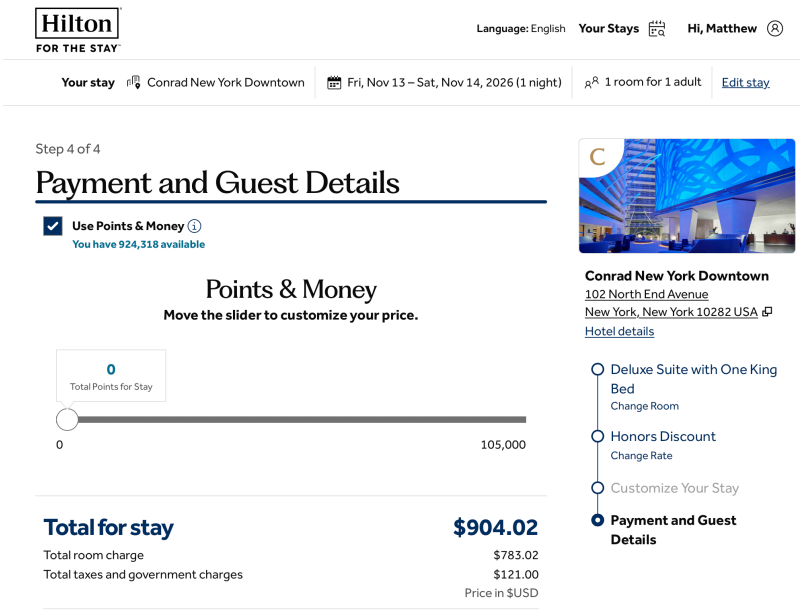
## THE SUITE SPOT: SAVINGS INTO SQUARE FOOTAGE

Most people treat savings as a prize. Upgraders treat them as a budget.

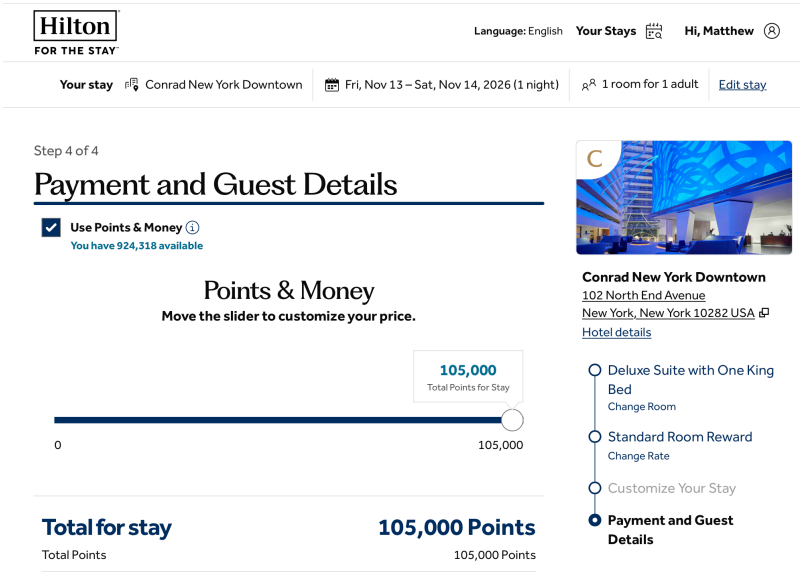
Conrad New York Downtown is an all-suite hotel. Hilton calls the cheapest accommodation there a “standard room,” but your feet will call the extra space something else. That’s the Suite Spot hiding in plain sight.

Before: “New York is too expensive.” After: “I’m in a Manhattan suite for less than half price.”

Find your standard-room deal, then price the suite award for the same dates. In Park City, the $837 a night you didn’t spend in cash can get you a suite with points for a fraction of the cost. Desire clarity drives decision quality.




***On points for about $500...***



## FIFTH NIGHT, FORCE MULTIPLIER

Hilton Silver elite members and above get every fifth night free on standard-room award stays of five nights or more. Pay for four, sleep five. That's 20% fewer points.

Stack it on the sale and 0.45 cents effectively becomes 0.36 cents. That's why standard-room prices below assume a five-night stay. Silver comes free with many credit cards, including the Amex Hilton Honors card.

Staying fewer than five nights? Add 25% to the points cost in our tables – losing a 20% discount costs you 25% more. One catch: the free night applies to standard rooms, not suite awards.

## REALITY CHECK: FINE PRINT, FAIR WARNING

Upgrade Intelligence runs on reality over fantasy, so here's the fine print.

Confirm award availability before you buy a single point. Points are like ice cubes – brilliant in the glass, useless puddled on the counter. Buy for a trip, not a some day.

The bonus is targeted, so some members will see less than 120%. Prices move daily, so re-run your numbers. Hilton raised the price of the room and lowered the price of the points. Consider both when evaluating your play.

## BEST STANDARD ROOM DEALS

Below are two tables, both priced per night at 0.4545 cents a point. The first shows standard rooms on a five-night stay with the fifth night free.

| Hotel | Date Priced | Cash/Night | Pts/Night | Cost to Buy Pts/Night | Savings/Night | Savings % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Waldorf Astoria Park City | Oct 23, 2026 | $1,893 | 88,000 | $400 | $1,493 | 79% |
| Conrad Orlando | Feb 10, 2027 | $1,323 | 72,000 | $327 | $996 | 75% |
| Oceana Santa Monica, LXR Hotels & Resorts | Dec 6, 2026 | $1,390 | 84,000 | $382 | $1,008 | 73% |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Waldorf Astoria Panama | Jan 23, 2027 | $522 | 36,000 | $164 | $358 | 69% |
| Conrad Osaka | Dec 27, 2026 | $1,049 | 76,000 | $345 | $704 | 67% |
| Zemi Beach House, LXR Hotels & Resorts | Dec 9, 2026 | $1,188 | 88,000 | $400 | $788 | 66% |
| Casa Marina Key West, Curio Collection by Hilton | Jan 25, 2027 | $937 | 76,000 | $345 | $592 | 63% |
| Conrad Makkah | Dec 20, 2026 | $784 | 68,000 | $309 | $475 | 61% |
| Grand Wailea, Maui | Dec 13, 2026 | $1,006 | 88,000 | $400 | $606 | 60% |
| Waldorf Astoria Washington DC | Dec 10, 2026 | $988 | 88,000 | $400 | $588 | 60% |
| Waldorf Astoria New York | Jan 11, 2027 | $1,347 | 120,000 | $545 | $802 | 60% |
| Hilton Queenstown Resort & Spa | Dec 24, 2026 | $570 | 52,000 | $236 | $334 | 59% |
| ROKU KYOTO, LXR Hotels & Resorts | Jan 15, 2027 | $1,220 | 112,000 | $509 | $711 | 58% |
| Susona Bodrum, LXR Hotels & Resorts | Jul 1, 2027 | $808 | 76,000 | $345 | $463 | 57% |
| Mango House Seychelles, LXR Hotels & Resorts | Apr 21, 2027 | $996 | 96,000 | $436 | $560 | 56% |
| Conrad Bengaluru | Dec 8, 2026 | $414 | 40,000 | $182 | $232 | 56% |
| Conrad Algarve | Dec 18, 2026 | $1,037 | 104,000 | $473 | $564 | 54% |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conrad Abu Dhabi Etihad Towers | Dec 12, 2026 | $557 | 56,000 | $255 | $302 | 54% |
| Conrad Koh Samui | Mar 3, 2027 | $874 | 88,000 | $400 | $474 | 54% |
| Conrad Centennial Singapore | Feb 4, 2027 | $589 | 60,000 | $273 | $316 | 54% |
| DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Kuala Lumpur | Dec 27, 2026 | $154 | 16,000 | $73 | $81 | 53% |
| Conrad London St. James | Dec 1, 2026 | $766 | 80,000 | $364 | $402 | 53% |
| Conrad Los Angeles | Jan 26, 2027 | $726 | 76,000 | $345 | $381 | 53% |
| Conrad Macao | Dec 29, 2026 | $458 | 48,000 | $218 | $240 | 52% |
| Conrad Istanbul Bosphorus | Jan 11, 2027 | $457 | 48,000 | $218 | $239 | 52% |
| Waldorf Astoria Chicago | Jan 8, 2027 | $716 | 76,000 | $345 | $371 | 52% |
| Signia by Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek | Jan 3, 2027 | $408 | 44,000 | $200 | $208 | 51% |
| Waldorf Astoria Cairo Heliopolis | Apr 10, 2027 | $513 | 56,000 | $255 | $258 | 50% |
| Hilton Whistler Resort & Spa | Jan 2, 2027 | $607 | 68,000 | $309 | $298 | 49% |
| Waldorf Astoria Amsterdam | Feb 5, 2027 | $1,050 | 120,000 | $545 | $505 | 48% |
| Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal | Dec 4, 2026 | $1,743 | 200,000 | $909 | $834 | 48% |
| Waldorf Astoria Atlanta Buckhead | Feb 15, 2027 | $655 | 76,000 | $345 | $310 | 47% |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conrad Maldives Rangali Island | May 8, 2027 | $1,048 | 128,000 | $582 | $466 | 44% |
| Hilton Abu Dhabi Yas Island | Dec 7, 2026 | $458 | 56,000 | $255 | $203 | 44% |
| Conrad Punta Mita | Jan 23, 2027 | $621 | 76,000 | $345 | $276 | 44% |
| Conrad Washington, DC | Dec 10, 2026 | $550 | 68,000 | $309 | $241 | 44% |
| Conrad Manila | Nov 28, 2026 | $348 | 44,000 | $200 | $148 | 43% |
| Hilton Grand Naniloa | Jan 10, 2027 | $316 | 40,000 | $182 | $134 | 42% |
| West Hotel Sydney, Curio Collection by Hilton | Dec 10, 2026 | $442 | 56,000 | $255 | $187 | 42% |
| Conrad Seoul | Nov 29, 2026 | $501 | 64,000 | $291 | $210 | 42% |
| Waldorf Astoria Cancun | Dec 10, 2026 | $844 | 112,000 | $509 | $335 | 40% |
| Waldorf Astoria Osaka | Nov 8, 2026 | $723 | 96,000 | $436 | $287 | 40% |
| Conrad Bali | Dec 23, 2026 | $328 | 44,000 | $200 | $128 | 39% |

** All standard-room prices assume a five-night stay with the fifth night free. Points per night shown are the five-night average (four paid nights across five). Staying fewer than five nights? Add 25%.*

*** Prices are a snapshot and change daily.*

## SUITE DEALS

The fifth night free applies only to standard-room awards. All other suite awards below are priced at the full nightly rate.

| Hotel | Date Priced | Cash/Night | Pts/Night | Cost to Buy Pts/Night | Savings/Night | Savings % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conrad Bora Bora Nui | Dec 22, 2026 | $2,454 | 200,000 | $909 | $1,545 | 63% |
| Waldorf Astoria Costa Rica Punta Cacique | Nov 10, 2026 | $3,274 | 296,000 | $1,345 | $1,929 | 59% |
| Conrad New York Downtown | Nov 13, 2026 | $904 | 84,000 | $382 | $522 | 58% |
| Maysan Doha, LXR Hotels & Resorts | Dec 18, 2026 | $1,156 | 140,000 | $636 | $520 | 45% |
| Conrad Fort Lauderdale Beach | Jan 10, 2027 | $718 | 105,000 | $477 | $241 | 34% |
| Shima Kanko Hotel the Bay Suites, SLH | Jul 23, 2027 | $713 | 105,000 | $477 | $236 | 33% |

## SAME PILLOW, SMALLER BILL, BIGGER ROOM

Two travelers. Same Conrad. Same suite. Same chocolate on the same pillow.

One paid the cash rate. One paid less than half with points.

The only extra cost: 15 minutes of evaluating differently.

The difference isn't luck.

It's Upgrade Intelligence – the decision to stop defaulting and start thinking like someone who knows how the game actually works.

The gaps are out there. The only question is whether you see them.

Now you do.

The sale ends November 21.

The pattern doesn’t.

Sweet dreams.



# October's Top 117 Mileage Awards & Special Fares Greatest Hits (Still Available)

**October 2026**

## October 2026 Deals

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

### Sweet Redeems

**AFRICA**

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

Miles / Points > 2+ Seats > Royal Air Maroc > Business Class > Washington to Casablanca

Miles / Points > 2+ Seats > Royal Air Maroc > Business Class > New York to Casablanca

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

**ASIA**

Miles / Points > Singapore Airlines > Business Class > 2+ Travelers > London to Singapore

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

Miles / Points > 2+ Seats > Japan Airlines> Business Class > Seattle to Tokyo

**EUROPE**

American Airlines > Business Class With Miles > from New York to London > 4+ Seats

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

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

American Airlines > Business Class With Miles > from New York to Madrid > 4+ Seats

American Airlines > Business Class With Miles > from Los Angeles to London > 4+ Seats

American Airlines > Business Class With Miles > from Philadelphia to Rome > 2+ Seats > 1-stop

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

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

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

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

118,000 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 2+ Seats > Iberia > Newark to Madrid

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

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

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

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

143K AA Miles R/T > 2+ Seats > Biz Class from New York to Paris > 2027 Travel

Brussels Airlines Business Class with Miles/Points > New York to Brussels > 4+ Seats

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

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

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

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > 4+ Seats > from Chicago to Amsterdam

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > Four Seat Opportunities > from Washington, D.C. to Dublin

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > 4+ Seats > from Newark to Amsterdam

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

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

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

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

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

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > Air France > Dallas to Paris > 4+ Seats

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

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > Air France > Houston to Paris > 4+ Seats

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > Air France > Detroit to Paris > 4+ Seats

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > Air France > Washington, DC to Paris > 4+ Seats

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > Air France > Chicago to Paris > 4+ Seats

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > Air France > New York to Paris > 2+ Seats

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > Air France > Mexico City to Paris > 4+ Seats

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

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

Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Lufthansa > Business Class > St. Louis to Frankfurt

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

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

American Airlines > First Class With Miles > from Miami to London > 4+ Seats

American Airlines > First Class With Miles > from New York to London > 2+ Seats

**MIDDLE EAST**

240,000 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 4+ Seats > Etihad Airways > Boston to Abu Dhabi

240,000 Miles / Points R/T > Biz Class > 4+ Seats > Etihad Airways > Chicago to Abu Dhabi

**SOUTH AMERICA**

American Airlines > Business Class With Miles > from Miami to Santiago > Single Seat

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

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

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

Miles & Cash > United Upgrade > 4+ Seats > from Houston to Lima

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

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

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

Miles > Cheap LATAM Business Class from Orlando to Sao Paulo > Single Seat

Miles > Cheap LATAM Business Class from New York to Santiago > 2+ Seats

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

Miles > Cheap LATAM Business Class from Miami to Sao Paulo > Single Seat

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

**SOUTH PACIFIC**

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > American Airlines > Phoenix to Sydney > 4+ Seats > 1-stop

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > American Airlines > San Francisco to Sydney > 4+ Seats > 1-stop

Cash OR Miles > Business Class > American Airlines > Dallas to Sydney > Single Seat > 1-stop

# Special Published Fares



**AFRICA**

Money > Canada/USA to Morocco > All Year > Business with Royal Air Maroc > $2,213 to $3,437 USD R/T

Money > Cairo > All Year > Biz Class > $2,863 to $3,284 R/T

**ASIA**

Money > Colombo > Biz Class > All Year > $3,429 to $4,330 R/T

Money > Southeast Asia > All Year > Biz Class > $3,463 to $4,307 R/T

Money > Japan > All Year > Biz Class > $3,654 to $4,295 R/T

**CARIBBEAN**

Money > San Juan > All Year > Biz Class > $659 to $895 R/T

Money > St. Maarten > All Year > Biz Class > $1,006 to $1,071 R/T

Money > Saint Kitts > All Year > Biz Class > $1,127 to $1,304 R/T

Money > Aruba > All Year > Biz Class > $966 to $1,179 R/T

Money > Providenciales > All Year > Biz Class > $1,063 to $1,290 R/T

Money > St. Thomas > All Year > Biz Class > $791 to $1,291 R/T

Money > Grand Cayman > All Year > Biz Class > $904 to $1,297 R/T

Money > St. Croix > All Year > Biz Class > $773 to $1,266 R/T

**EUROPE**

Money > France > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > $3,193 to $3,679 R/T

Money > Portugal > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > $3,188 to $3,679 R/T

Money > Dublin > All Year > Biz Class > $3,097 to $3,594 R/T

Money > Italy > All Year > First Class > $4,493 to $5,703 R/T

Money > Europe > All Year > Biz Class with TAP Portugal > $2,708 to $3,573 R/T

Money > Lisbon > All Year > First Class > $4,165 to $5,431 R/T

Money > Budapest > All Year > First Class > $4,925 to $5,515 R/T

Money > France > Fall/Winter > First Class > $4,636 to $5,982 R/T

Money > Greece > All Year > First Class > $4,505 to $5,459 R/T

Money > Spain > All Year > First Class > $4,491 to $5,908 R/T

Money > Switzerland > Fall/Winter > First Class > $4,993 to $5,881 R/T

Money > Amsterdam > Fall/Winter > First Class > $5,062 to $5,563 R/T

Money > from New York to Paris and Milan > Nonstop Biz Class > with La Compagnie from $3,184 R/T

**HAWAII**

Money > Honolulu > All Year > Biz Class > $1,254 to $1,638 R/T

Money > Maui > All Year > Biz Class > $1,254 to $1,576 R/T

Money > Kona > All Year > Biz Class > $1,345 to $1,660 R/T

Money > Kauai > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > $1,156 to $1,667 R/T



**INDIA**

Money > Bengaluru > All Year > Biz Class > $2,905 to $3,632 R/T

Money > Chennai > Spring > Biz Class > $3,482 to $3,874 R/T

Money > New Delhi > Spring > Biz Class > $3,284 to $3,952 R/T

**MEXICO**

Money > Puerto Vallarta > All Year > Biz Class > $765 to $987 R/T

Money > Cancun > All Year > Biz Class > $708 to $1,040 R/T

Money > Cabo San Lucas > All Year > Biz Class > $795 to $1,040 R/T

**SOUTH PACIFIC**

Money > Australia and New Zeland > All Year > Biz Class > from $4,393 to $7,172 R/T

**UNITED STATES AKA TRANSCON**

Money > from Europe to New York with La Compagnie > All Year > Biz Class > $2,307 to $3,153 R/T

Money > Europe to U.S. > All Year > Biz Class > $2,453 to $ 2,960 R/T

Money > Domestic Transcon > All Year > Business Class > $862 to $1,349 R/T

Money > Europe to U.S. > All Year > Biz Class with JetBlue > $2,556 to $3,665 R/T