



# Baseline and Options Assessment Intelligence for Flight Shoppers and Post- Purchase Upgraders

October 2025

## The process is the same for careers, relationships, and anything else you want to improve

If you're not interested in improving your situation or getting more than average or below-average – instead of the **highest-quality life experience possible** – don't bother with this special report.

But if you're about to pull the trigger on your next ticket – or if you bought one and plan to live with what you've got – consider this: You might spend the next 16 to 24 hours round-trip wishing you'd taken 15 or 20 minutes on the ground to **assess the various features of what you are about to purchase**: seat quality, in-flight experience, privacy, cabin layout, and density, etc.

Minutes of diligence now can eliminate surprise and misery for hours at 35,000 feet.

This special report is intended to help you assess the parameters of the flight experience, identify the best sources for reality-based data, and ultimately, make the best decision for you.

You'll also learn a new WAY to think that eliminates the complexity that otherwise overwhelms.

[Harvard says we make 30,000 decisions a day.](#)

What if there was a better WAY to go about those decisions?

This report is for you if you wish there were.

First things first.

## **YOUR TRIP STARTS WHEN YOU REACH THE AIRPORT, NOT WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT YOUR DESTINATION**

About to book a ticket? This is for you.

[Already holding a ticket?](#) This is for you, too.

## **WHEN THIS INTELLIGENCE APPLIES**

Travel happens in four phases – and **The Anything Process™** (aka The Upgrade Process™) follows The Five Steps.

Every time.

Understanding where you are determines how you apply this intelligence.

## **THE FOUR PHASES OF TRAVEL**

- Phase 1 – Dreaming: Exploring random possibilities
- Phase 2 – Planning: Narrowing to specifics
- Phase 3 – Booking: Making purchase decisions
- Phase 4 – Post-Purchase: [Improving what you have](#)

## **THE FIVE UPGRADE PROCESS STEPS**

- Step 1 – Baseline: What's my starting point? What am I upgrading or improving FROM?
- Step 2 – Desires: What are my goals and requirements? What do I *want* to upgrade TO?

- Step 3 – Options: How can I get what I want?
- Step 4 – Decisions: What option will I choose?
- Step 5 – Implementation: Making it so.

## AHHH LIFE'S COMPLEXITY SIMPLIFIED IN 5 WORDS

**If you're in Trip Phase 3 (Booking):** Use this intelligence for Process Step 3 – collecting and assessing competing flight and seat options.

Should you decide to book the carrier with new Business Class seats but with a less favorable schedule than the one with older seats?

Which airline's product and schedule actually match your priorities best?

**If you're in Trip Phase 4 (Post-Purchase):** Use this intelligence for Process Steps 1 – knowing your baseline so you can identify genuine upgrade options.

You've got a ticket on an older aircraft with seats 18 inches wide. Is upgrading to a newer configuration with 22-inch seats worth pursuing? Also, use Process Step 3 when you're holding a ticket to evaluate potential upgrade options against your current booking's baseline.

## THE UPGRADE INTELLIGENCE PRINCIPLE: COMPARING FLIGHT OPTIONS

This is what decision *intelligence* looks like: having concrete data about competing flight options before choices are locked in. This isn't about choosing between seat 5A or 5B in the same cabin, although you may want to check that out too before you purchase. Knowing the reality of what IS available beats being wishful. This is about comparing fundamentally different product options.

Should you fly Emirates or Qatar? Do the Delta flights I'm looking at have the new seats or the airline's waaaaaaay old seats?

One carrier's Business Class seats are 21 inches wide and fully recline with privacy doors, while another's has 18-inch seats with less legroom. These are different experience options at similar prices – if you know what to assess.

The difference between "good enough" and "best possible" is often just knowing what distinguishes one flight option from another. Same route, same cabin class, vastly different comfort level. But you need specific information to assess the differences.

The Anything Process “Career Parallel”: This is exactly how smart job seekers operate. They don't just compare titles – they evaluate actual team dynamics, growth trajectories, and compensation structures across competing offers. Same intelligence, different laboratory.

**The intelligent move is identical:** Collect the attributes that distinguish options according to your desires, assess them in reality (against your baseline), and decide deliberately – BEFORE you implement.

This is The Anything Process™ (aka The Upgrade Process™), because anything you do in life follows it.

Either unconsciously or consciously.

And either wishfully or deliberately.

Right?

## THE THREE REASONS FLIGHT DECISIONS FAIL

People who end up disappointed with their flights – whether booking or upgrading – typically fail for one of three reasons. This Upgrade Intelligence framework addresses all three.

**1. Not Deliberate:** They wing it, hoping things work out. They book whichever option looks reasonable without assessing what distinguishes competing flights. They discover the issues at 35,000 feet when it's too late to change.

**2. Uninformed:** They guess instead of gathering data. They assume "Business Class is Business Class" and miss the fact that Emirates operates both an exceptional First Class product and a below-average Business Class. Or that Delta's newest aircraft offer dramatically better seats than their legacy fleet, although at similar prices.

**3. Fantasy vs. Reality:** They believe marketing materials without checking variant-specific details. Ever booked "lie-flat" only to discover it means "angled at 170 degrees"? Ever trusted "premium economy" only to find it's just a couple of inches more legroom than regular economy?

**The airline's general reputation tells you nothing about the specific seat on your particular flight.**

Career Parallel: Ever been surprised after a few days on a new job? Same pattern – trusting the recruiter's pitch about "great culture" instead of doing diligence on the actual team you'd join. The company's reputation matters less than the specific team, manager, and role.

Relationships Parallel: Believing what an improvement option "should" feel like instead of honestly assessing what it actually means when implemented.

The Upgrade Intelligence move is identical across any domain in life: deliberate assessment beats wishful guessing.

## BEYOND PRICE AND SCHEDULE: THE ATTRIBUTES THAT DISTINGUISH FLIGHT OPTIONS

Everyone evaluates price and schedule; those are obvious. But once you've narrowed those down, you need to go deeper. What actually distinguishes one flight option from another?

There are infinite possible attributes to assess. Below are the 18 most common ones that are easily quantifiable and distinguish mediocre flights from exceptional ones.

### START WITH SEAT INTELLIGENCE

For me, three attributes matter most: seat width, legroom (pitch), and recline. These are the physical dimensions that distinguish comfortable flights from cramped ones generally speaking.

If you're like me at 6'3" with broad shoulders, a seat 22 inches wide versus 18 inches is the difference between spacious and constrained. A 76-inch pitch versus a 60-inch pitch means sleeping flat versus curling up. Full lie-flat versus angled-flat might determine whether you arrive rested or exhausted.

**But everyone prioritizes differently.** Is the in-flight entertainment screen size most important to you? No problem – you can get that data. Wi-Fi availability and pricing? Refundability for schedule changes? Aircraft type for cabin pressure and noise? All available. The intelligent move is figuring out which attributes matter most to YOU, then assessing that information to distinguish competing flight options.

### OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE EXPERIENCE

Beyond seat dimensions, consider what distinguishes flight options:

- **In-Flight Entertainment** content variety (strong library versus minimal selection makes 12 hours manageable or miserable)
- **Wi-Fi** availability and pricing (essential for business travelers, varies wildly by carrier and aircraft)
- **Privacy features** (suites with doors versus open cabins)
- **Cabin density** (24-seat Business Class versus 60-seat high-density configurations)
- **Direct aisle access** (no climbing over others)
- **Refundability and change fees** (flexibility when plans shift)

These are just a few.

A list of the most common flight option attributes appears in the reference chart below. Pick your top three to five priorities – you don't need to assess all 18. That's the efficiency principle: Ten minutes of focused diligence distinguishing real differences beats 19 round-trip hours of regret at 35,000 feet.

Again, if you'd rather spend your time doing something else than getting the **highest-quality life experience possible** on your trip, no judgment. Everyone's taste is different, and of course, you know my bias.

Thank heavens I'm not alone. I've heard many a well-heeled traveler say their premium flight experience was as memorable as anything on their trip.

## WORK SMART: DELEGATE THE DATA COLLECTION

This Upgrade Intelligence framework is perfect for delegation. Work with your travel agent, administrative assistant, travel companions, or whoever to collect these attributes for competing options. Give them your top three to five priorities or more, and the flight options you're assessing. Let them build it into your decision process.

Once you establish your dominant desires, this gets faster on every trip – you're building a system, not starting from scratch each time. FCF is working on a tool for this.

## YOUR INTELLIGENCE TOOLKIT: FIVE TOOLS

Distinguishing flight options requires accurate, variant-specific data. These five resources provide seat dimensions and cabin configurations, but they vary dramatically in reliability and freshness. Here's how to use each one strategically when comparing competing flights.

## THE SEARCH OPTIONS FOR ASSESSING FLIGHT OPTIONS

### [AeroLOPA](#)

The most accurate and detailed resource for aircraft cabin layouts, covering over 90 airlines. Each variant-specific page outlines exact seat models, configurations, and technical specs – such as seat pitch, width, recline, and bed length – plus design features like headrests, tray tables, storage spaces, display size, and power outlets. Every page shows when it was last updated, ensuring you know how current the information is. For accuracy and reliability, AeroLOPA is the benchmark source.

### [SeatMaps](#)

Offers the widest airline and aircraft coverage available, with variant-specific seat maps showing pitch, width, and recline. Interactive maps let you hover over individual seats to view color-coded comfort ratings, written seat reviews, and linked traveler photos. While it excels in accessibility and user feedback, it provides less detail on cabin components and seat design features compared to more technical sources. Use it as a broad, fast way to compare flight comfort across fleets.

### [SeatMaestro](#)

Covers 178 airlines and lists basic specifications such as seat pitch, width, and total seat count. Some aircraft pages include only partial data—often just seat width and number of seats. It includes traveler reviews, though photos are limited and typically negative in tone. There are no single-seat reviews or cabin feature details, and the database is largely outdated. SeatMaestro is best used as a secondary reference for quick verification.

SeatGuru

Once the go-to resource for travelers, SeatGuru provides aircraft layouts and in-flight cabin details across a wide range of airlines. It lists seat pitch, width, and recline, along with basic information about entertainment and power options. However, some listings are vague, updates have been infrequent for several years, and there are no seat photos. Use SeatGuru primarily when researching older aircraft or cross-verifying cabin information.

Airline Websites

The most direct and trustworthy source for official seat and cabin information. Most airlines list verified data such as seat pitch, width, recline, and onboard amenities like entertainment and Wi-Fi. Some, like Delta, go further – providing accessibility information, including which seats have movable armrests. However, few sites include full cabin layouts or seat models, so it’s best to cross-check with alternate sources that offer more detail on which seats are best to choose.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO 1: AMERICAN AIRLINES DALLAS - LONDON THE ONE-DIGIT UPGRADE 777 VS 787-P

A single number can separate standard from standout.

Scrolling through Business Class options from Dallas to London on AA.com, you’ll find multiple flights. Same route, same price, almost the same time. One shows a 772, the other a 78P. It looks like a minor code difference – until something catches the eye: the “Flagship Suite” banner next to the 78P flight.

DFW	LHR	9h 5m Nonstop	Round trip from	Round trip from	Round trip from
5:10 PM	→ 8:15 AM <sup>+1</sup>		\$760	\$2,173	\$4,745
✈ AA 20	772-Boeing 777				
<a href="#">Details</a>   <a href="#">Seats</a>					

DFW	LHR	9h 5m Nonstop	Round trip from	Round trip from	Round trip from
8:35 PM	→ 11:40 AM <sup>+1</sup>		\$760	\$2,708	\$4,745
✈ AA 78	78P-Boeing 787				
<a href="#">Details</a>   <a href="#">Seats</a>					

That’s when the *options-intelligence antenna* sparks to life. A small aircraft variation often hides a major upgrade in comfort.

A glance at [AA.com’s fleet page](#) shows the 772 still flying American’s older Business cabin – open layout, aisle exposure, and dated finishes. Then, a quick check on **AeroLOPA** confirms what that “Flagship Suite” tag promises: the 78P introduces American’s newest Business Suite, complete with sliding doors, expanded work surfaces, mood lighting, and a modern design built for privacy.

Both fares are identical. The 787-9P simply departs 1 hour and 45 minutes later. The trade-off? A short wait for a completely different world – more space, more rest, and total privacy.

Catching that single digit turns an ordinary flight into an exceptional one.

## EXAMPLE SCENARIO 2: ALL NIPPON SALT LAKE CITY-TOKYO THE CONNECTION-CITY UPGRADE ANA'S "THE ROOM" 777 VS 787-P

The right connection can transform the entire onboard experience – often for the same fare.

Take Sam from Salt Lake City on a trip to Tokyo. He notices two ANA Business Class options: one connecting through Los Angeles and another through San Francisco. Both are ANA-operated and similarly priced, yet a subtle difference appears – the aircraft type. The Los Angeles routing shows a **Boeing 787-9**, while the San Francisco flight lists a **Boeing 777-300ER**.

That single detail triggers the *options-intelligence antenna*. Different aircraft frequently mean different seat products. Instead of selecting the shorter layover, the Sam takes 90 seconds to confirm the details:

- On [ANA's website](#), he discovers the Los Angeles flights use ANA's older, staggered 2-2-2 configuration with limited privacy.
- **He goes to AeroLOPA** and hovers over the 777-300ER seat map, and it reveals ANA's flagship "*The Room*" suite: a 1-2-1 configuration featuring an extra-wide seat, a 4K screen, and full-height sliding doors for total privacy.

The Los Angeles option delivers an exposed, decade-old design, while the San Francisco routing – departing only **1 hour and 45 minutes later** – offers one of the most advanced Business Class products in the sky.

**The result:** a five-star Business Class experience instead of three stars, complete with a closing door.

Ninety seconds of research turns a routine flight into a world-class journey.

## WHAT THIS INTELLIGENCE DEMONSTRATES

This is Process Step 4 – decision criteria collection – in action. Upgrade Intelligence means knowing your evaluation criteria before you decide among options.

It's human to implement prematurely.

Whether you're in Travel's Phase 3, comparing flight options to book or Phase 4, evaluating upgrade options against your baseline, you're using the same intelligence move: identify what matters, collect real data, and evaluate.



You're being deliberate (comparing deliberately, not winging it), informed (using data to distinguish among options, not guessing based on reputation), and reality-based (using variant-specific facts, not marketing fantasy).

The reference chart below shows the 18 most common attributes that are most quantifiable, with sources and rationale. Start with your top three to five. Build them into your decision process. Watch how quickly "they're all basically the same" becomes "here's exactly why this option is better for me."

TAKE MINUTES UP FRONT TO AVOID HOURS OR YEARS OF MISERY  
LATER

The WAY to get **the highest quality flight** is the same WAY to improve your career, your relationships, your health, and your business – anything you want to improve.

That's why we also call The Upgrade Process™ The Anything Process™.

Know your baseline. Identify your desires. Assess your options. Decide deliberately. Implement. The domain changes, but the intelligence doesn't.

Approach your next trip deliberately, informed, and reality-based. You will improve upon, or upgrade, what you would otherwise have done. Just use the cheat sheet below, or better yet, hand it to your assistant.

Remember: Your trip starts when you reach the airport, not when you arrive at your destination.

The hours in between matter.

Take to the skies with your eyes wide open.

See you up front – on a lot more than just flights.

Flight Experience Quality Assessment Cheat Sheet

Attribute	Definition	Unit of Measure	Sources	Why It Matters
Seat pitch/legroom	Distance between rows	Inches	AeroLOPA, SeatMaps, SeatGuru, SeatMaestro	This distinguishes comfortable long-haul

Attribute	Definition	Unit of Measure	Sources	Why It Matters
				flights from cramped ones more than anything else for most.
Seat recline	Degree of recline	Degrees	AeroLOPA, SeatMaps, SeatGuru, SeatMaestro	Angled-flat versus true 180-degree lie-flat is the line premium travelers draw. One lets you rest, the other keeps you awake.
Seat width	Distance across seat in inches	Inches	AeroLOPA, SeatMaps, SeatGuru, SeatMaestro	Every inch matters. A 20-inch seat compared to 22 inches is the difference between snug and spacious for many.
Privacy features	Doors, dividers, shields	Yes/No	Airline Websites	Suites with doors versus open cabins is the difference between private and communal. One feels exclusive, the other shared.
Cabin layout	Seat arrangement (1-2-1, 2-2-2, etc.)	1-2-1, 2-2-2, 2-3-2	AeroLOPA	If you are climbing over strangers to reach the aisle, that is yesterday's Business Class. Layout determines accessibility.

Attribute	Definition	Unit of Measure	Sources	Why It Matters
Seat location	Window, aisle, bulkhead, exit	Location	AeroLOPA, SeatMaps, SeatGuru	Bulkhead may mean more space; near galleys and lavatories means more noise. Everyone has different desires.
Direct aisle access	Whether each seat has aisle access	Yes/No	AeroLOPA, SeatMaps, SeatGuru, SeatMaestro	Direct aisle access means no climbing over knees. Standard for premium products, worth confirming.
Cabin density	Number of seats in premium cabin	Seats per cabin	AeroLOPA, SeatMaps, SeatGuru	A 60-seat Business Class cabin compared to 24 seats can feel less exclusive in ways. Density affects service, quality, and atmosphere.
Aircraft type	Narrowbody vs. widebody	Model (e.g., 787, A350)	FlightRadar24, FlightAware	A 787 or A350 offers smoother rides, better pressurization, and quieter cabins. Feel the difference in older narrowbodies.

Attribute	Definition	Unit of Measure	Sources	Why It Matters
IFE screen size	Size/resolution of screen	Inches/Resolution	Airline Websites, YouTube Reviews	A 24-inch 4K screen versus a 12-inch older display. One makes 12 hours manageable, the other tedious.
IFE content variety	Breadth of movies, shows, music	Titles Available	Airline Websites, YouTube Reviews	A strong library makes 12 hours fly by; a weak one has you watching the safety video on loop.
Wi-Fi availability	Whether internet is offered	Yes/No	Airline Websites, YouTube Reviews	For business travelers, Wi-Fi is required. Availability varies dramatically by carrier and aircraft.
Wi-Fi pricing	Cost of connection	Currency	Airline Websites	\$30 per hour Wi-Fi versus free makes a difference. Knowing pricing helps evaluate the true cost of the flight.

Attribute	Definition	Unit of Measure	Sources	Why It Matters
Miles/points earning rate	Rate of mileage accrual	% earning	Where to Credit, AwardWallet	A 200% earning fare accelerates toward status twice as fast. If your baseline earns only 100%, that is leverage left on the table.
Alliance/partner benefits	Flexibility in crediting miles/status	Yes/No	Star Alliance, SkyTeam, OneWorld	Crediting to the right partner can mean upgrade opportunities later. Alliance strategy matters for frequent travelers.
Refundability	Ability to get cash/points back	Yes/No	Airline Websites: Directly / the rules link on your ticket	Flexibility s valuable. A refundable baseline lets you pivot when better options appear, without significant penalty.
Change fes/rules	Penalties for modifying ticket	USD (\$)	Airline WebsiteDirectly	Rules can trap you. A low fare with brutal change fees might cost more than a flexible premium ticket when plans shift or upgrade options surface.
Directionality of routing	Efficient vs. backtracking routes	Extra Miles/KM	FlightConnections.com	Backtracking three hours to save miles or money is often false savings. Routing efficiency can matter as much as some

Attribute	Definition	Unit of Measure	Sources	Why It Matters
				cabin elements if you desire to be in the air as little as possible.



# October's Top 78 Mileage Awards & Special Fares Greatest Hits (Still Available)

October 2025

## Cool October 2025 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 > 2026 Travel](#)

[Miles / Points > Single Seat > Royal Air Maroc > Business Class > Toronto to Casablanca > 2026 Travel](#)

[Miles / Points > Single Seat > Royal Air Maroc > Business Class > Miami to Casablanca > 2026 Travel](#)

[Miles / Points > Single Seat > Royal Air Maroc > Business Class > Washington DC to Casablanca > 2026 Travel](#)

[Miles / Points > Single Seat > Royal Air Maroc > Business Class > New York to Casablanca > 2026 Travel](#)

## **EUROPE**

[American Airlines > All Year > Business Class With Miles > from Chicago to Frankfurt > 4+ Seats](#)

[American Airlines > Business Class With Miles > from Philadelphia to Rome > 4+ Seats](#)

[115K AA Miles R/T + Low-taxes > 4+ Seats > Biz Class from New York to Rome](#)

[115K AA Miles R/T + Low-taxes > 4+ Seats > Biz Class from Philadelphia to Venice](#)

[Miles or \\$ > Lufthansa > Business Class > San Francisco to Munich > 4+ Seats](#)

[Miles > Europe > All Year > Scads of Singapore Business Class Opportunities from New York to Frankfurt / 4+ Seats](#)

[115K AA Miles R/T + Low-taxes > 4+ Seats > Biz Class from Philadelphia to Budapest](#)

[Use Star Alliance Miles \(or CC Points\) for Business Class from Newark to Porto](#)

[Cash OR Miles > Business Class > Air France > Newark to Paris > 2+ Travelers > 2026 Travel](#)

[Discount SWISS Business Class with Miles/Points Availability from Newark to Zurich and Beyond > 4+ Travelers](#)

[Discount SWISS Business Class with Miles/Points Availability from Chicago to Zurich and Beyond > 4+ Travelers](#)

[Discount SWISS Business Class with Miles/Points Availability from Montreal to Zurich and Beyond > 4+ Travelers](#)

[Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > SWISS > Business Class > Boston to Zurich](#)

[Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Austrian Airlines > Business Class > Montreal to Vienna](#)



[American Airlines > Close In> Business Class With Miles > from New York to London > 4+ Seats](#)

[Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > SWISS > Business Class > New York to Geneva > All Year](#)

[Cash OR Miles > Business Class > Air France > Detroit to Paris > 4+ Travelers > 2026 Travel](#)

[Miles / Points > 4+ Seats > Lufthansa > Business Class > Boston to Frankfurt](#)

[Miles / Points > London > First Class > Close In > 2+ Travelers > from Dallas to London](#)

## **ASIA**

[Cathay Pacific Discount Business Class > 2+ Seats > Chicago to Hong Kong > 2026 Travel](#)

[First Class > Cash OR Miles > 2026 Travel > Cathay Pacific > New York to Hong Kong > 2+ Travellers](#)

[Cathay Pacific Discount Business Class > Boston to Hong Kong > 2+ Travelers > 2026 Travel](#)

[Miles / Points > Singapore Airlines > Business Class > 4+ Travelers > London to Singapore](#)

[Miles / Points > Singapore Airlines > Business Class > 2+ Travelers > Los Angeles to Tokyo](#)

[Miles / Points > Singapore > Business Class > Single Seat > Singapore Airlines from San Francisco](#)

[Tokyo: Japan Airlines Discounted Business Class Availability from Los Angeles and Many Other Cities > 2026 Travel](#)

[Tokyo: Japan Airlines Discounted Business Class Availability from Chicago and Many Other Cities](#)

[Miles / Points > Single Seat > EVA Air > Business Class > Dallas to Taipei > 2026 Travel](#)

## **MIDDLE EAST**

[Discount Opportunities with Qatar Qsuites from Chicago to Doha and Beyond With Miles & Points](#)

[Cash OR Miles > 2026 Travel > Middle East > Qatar Airways Business Class Montreal to Doha / 2+ Seats](#)

## **SOUTH AMERICA**

[Miles > Cheap LATAM Business Class from New York to São Paulo > Single Seat](#)

## **SOUTH PACIFIC**

[\\$3,898 R/T \\*OR\\* 170,000 Miles Business Class > American Airlines > Dallas to Auckland > 9+ seats](#)

[\\$3,751 R/T \\*OR\\* 163,500 Miles Business Class > American Airlines > Los Angeles to Auckland > 9+ seats](#)

[American Airlines > Business Class With Miles > from Dallas to Brisbane > 4+ Seats](#)

## **Special Published Fares**



## **AFRICA**

[Money > Cairo > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,680 to \\$3,382 R/T](#)

[Money > Nairobi > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,946 to \\$4,135 R/T](#)

## **ASIA**

[Money > Manila > All Year > Biz Class > \\$3,228 to \\$4,314 R/T](#)

[Money > Seoul > Winter/Spring > Biz Class > \\$3,448 to \\$4,155 R/T](#)

## **EUROPE**

[Money > Italy > All Year > First Class > \\$3,905 to \\$5,656 R/T](#)

[Money > France > Fall/Winter > First Class > \\$4,006 to \\$5,799 R/T](#)

[Money > Europe > All Year > Premium Economy > \\$701 to \\$1,033 R/T](#)

[Money > Milan > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,784 to \\$3,324 R/T](#)

[Money > Rome > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,556 to \\$3,300 R/T](#)

[Money > London > Winter/Summer > Biz Class > \\$2,679 to \\$3,322 R/T](#)

[Money > Paris > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,496 to \\$3,211 R/T](#)

[Money > Europe > All Year > Biz Class with TAP Portugal > \\$2,276 to \\$2,794 R/T](#)

[Money > Frankfurt > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,851 to \\$3,302 R/T](#)

[Money > Austria > Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,757 to \\$3,208 R/T](#)

[Money > Amsterdam > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,295 to \\$3,264 R/T](#)

[Money > Venice > Spring/Summer > Biz Class > \\$2,784 to \\$3,332 R/T](#)

[Money > Copenhagen > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,825 to \\$3,308 R/T](#)

[Money > Dublin > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,626 to \\$3,278 R/T](#)

[Money > Amsterdam > Fall/Winter > First Class > \\$3,921 to \\$5,603 R/T](#)

[Money > Bologna > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,712 to \\$3,324 R/T](#)

[Money > Budapest > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,636 to \\$3,140 R/T](#)

[Money > Oslo > Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,804 to \\$3,259 R/T](#)

[Money > Poland > Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,791 to \\$3,334 R/T](#)

## **HAWAII**

[Money > Kauai > All Year > Biz Class > \\$1,145 to \\$1,672 R/T](#)

[Money > Maui > Fall > Biz Class > \\$1,237 to \\$1,653 R/T](#)

[Money > Kona > Winter > Biz Class > \\$1,136 to \\$1,551 R/T](#)

[Money > Honolulu > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$1,210 to \\$1,438 R/T](#)



## **INDIA**

[Money > Mumbai > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,402 to \\$3,936 R/T](#)

[Money > New Delhi > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,754 to \\$3,918 R/T](#)

## **MEXICO**

[Money > Cabo San Lucas > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$710 to \\$1,018 R/T](#)

[Money > Cozumel > All Year > Biz Class > \\$675 to \\$1,029 R/T](#)

[Money > Cancun > All Year > Biz Class > \\$531 to \\$836 R/T](#)

[Money > Puerto Vallarta > All Year > Biz Class > \\$630 to \\$975 R/T](#)

## **MIDDLE EAST**

[Money > Istanbul > Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,942 to \\$3,373 R/T](#)

[Money > Dubai > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,979 to \\$3,418 R/T](#)

## **NORTH AMERICA**

[Money > Barcelona to U.S. > Winter/Spring > Premium Economy > \\$805 to \\$863 USD R/T](#)

[Money > Domestic Transcon > All Year > Business Class > \\$876 to \\$1,303 R/T](#)

## **SOUTH AMERICA**

[Money > Buenos Aires > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,265 to \\$3,324 R/T](#)

[Money > Santiago > All Year > Biz Class > \\$2,698 to 3,169 R/T](#)



# Options Intelligence Applied to Trips: How to Control \$50K in Premium Travel at Zero or Little Cost With Generous Cancellation Policies

October 2025

## What Step 3 of the Upgrade Process looks like in action - and why this intelligence applies to everything

**The Opportunity:** You just got an alert. First Class seats on a premium carrier. Routes that typically cost \$15,000 to \$30,000 in cash. Available now using miles or points you already have – or [use miles anyone can buy](#).

This is opportunity. This is what Step 3 of [The Upgrade Process](#)<sup>™</sup> looks like in real life.

Big dreams come true when big opportunities are leveraged. Every success story is full of people who seized moments like this – not people who waited for perfect *certainty*.

That's Upgrade Intelligence in action. Let me show you what it looks like – in the travel world – and every other world in life.

## WHAT STEP 3 OPTIONS INTELLIGENCE ACTUALLY MEANS

In the five-step Upgrade Process™ (aka The Anything Process™), Step 3 is Options. Most people think expanding options *a/ways* means more research, more analysis, more thinking.

**Wrong.**

Intelligent option expansion often also means taking advantage of great options, when you encounter them. For example, when you see spectacular premium space – First Class seats that cost \$15K-\$30K in cash available for a fraction of that in miles you already have or can [easily buy](#) – you can book it.

**Lock it in with a confirmed ticket number.**

Then cancel for free or a small fee if plans change.

Free or cheap cancellation. Zero or low risk. Maximum optionality.

And here's what happens next: The booking doesn't just preserve an option. **It transforms your identity from passive to active.**

**Before** booking: "I'm someone who dreams about First Class travel."

**After** booking: "I have a confirmed First Class ticket in 127 days."

That **identity shift** is where intelligence often lives.

## THE CORE INTELLIGENCE MOVE

**The pattern to understand: Book things with easy cancellation policies that transform uncertainty into momentum.**

**Most major airline loyalty programs let you cancel award bookings for free or a small fee.**

You get a confirmed seat with a ticket number. But if plans change, you can cancel and get your miles back – often for free, sometimes for \$25-\$50. See the policy table below for specifics and always double-check with the airline directly.

**What This Demonstrates:** The power of a booking to create momentum, not just preserve options. The booking doesn't wait for certainty. The booking creates certainty.

This is the Intelligence Inversion: flipping from waiting for the right moment to creating the right moment through action.

**Also Applies to:** Hotels with free cancellation policies, refundable event tickets, and memberships that can be canceled.

## THREE INTELLIGENCE APPLICATIONS

### The Booking Backwards Move

**Upgrade Reality:** Change is the only constant. Planning around rigid constraints can result in suboptimal outcomes.

You know you want a major trip this summer, but you haven't locked in where yet. Then you see Business Class to a major European hub at 70,000 miles instead of the usual 250,000. Dates *might* work. Destination is spectacular. Free or cheap to cancel if needed.

**The Intelligence Move:** Book the flight first. Get your ticket number.

Decide later whether it's your destination or your gateway.

You've just locked premium transatlantic travel for 70% less than normal. Free or cheap to cancel. Low risk to explore. Maybe that city will become your destination. Maybe you connect to other cities. Maybe you spend two days there, then train elsewhere. I LOVE trains.

**Notice what happened:** You stopped the backwards approach (pick destination > find flights > pay premium). Now you're optimizing around opportunity (capture value > design experience around it).

**Also Applies to:** Booking refundable hotels before finalizing exact city/date, purchasing refundable concert tickets before confirming your schedule.

## THE PORTFOLIO INTELLIGENCE MOVE

**Upgrade Reality:** Most people see one path forward. Intelligent people see multiple paths simultaneously.

You're booking that major trip. You have points across two different bank programs. All with transfer partners. All with different sweet spots. The same destination has premium availability through multiple programs. Different dates. Different pricing. Usually cancellable for free or small fees.



**The Intelligence Move:** Book all three. Different dates, different programs, minimal total risk.

Suddenly, you're not hoping one option works. You're controlling three options simultaneously. Your schedule shifts? You've got flexibility across multiple date windows. Your companion's availability changes? You've got options that accommodate. Cancel the ones you don't use for free or a small fee.

One trip. Three confirmed bookings. Low total risk. Exponential flexibility.

**What This Demonstrates:** Portfolio thinking versus single-path thinking. Your desires WILL often change. Having multiple bookings with easy cancellation is insurance against the only constant: change itself.

**Also Applies to Career Upgrades:** Multiple side projects while employed; test new direction without leaving current position. There's little commitment or downside when getting a taste for other options.

## THE STRATEGIC INSURANCE MOVE

**Upgrade Reality:** Perfect outcomes are rare. Intelligence means eliminating downside while preserving upside.

You're waitlisted for the world's best First Class product. The cabin that gets written about. Odds are 50/50 it clears. Meanwhile, premium Business Class on the same route has instant availability. Cancellable for free or a small fee.

**The Intelligence Move:** Book Business as backup while waitlisted for First.

First Class clears? Cancel Business for free or a small fee. First Class doesn't clear? You've got confirmed premium travel. You've removed the downside (stuck in economy or paying through the nose for premium) while preserving the upside (First Class clearing). This isn't speculation. This is strategic optionality at low risk.

**Applied to Business:** Probationary employment periods; both sides can exit during first 90 days with minimal consequence.

## MORE ADVANCED OPTIONS

### The Flexibility Arbitrage

Not all constraints are equal. Intelligent people weaponize their specific type of flexibility.

Date-flexible? Book the same destination, three different date ranges, across three programs.

Destination-flexible? Book three different ones for the same dates. Cabin-flexible? Book Business Class as backup while pursuing First. All cancellable for free or small fees when using miles.

**What This Demonstrates:** Intelligence isn't generic optimization. It's the specific leverage of your unique constraints.

**Applied to Health:** Class schedule flexibility. Book three different yoga class times across the week with studios that have capacity and won't be out of pocket if you're a no-show; cancel the ones that don't fit your needs, keep the time slot that actually works best.

## THE MAYFLY RESPONSE

**Upgrade Reality:** Exceptional opportunities are ephemeral. They often exist for hours, not days.

Premium travel availability appears. World-class products at a fraction of normal cost. Then they vanish like the mayfly – that tiny insect that lives for 24 hours.

**The Intelligence Move:** Immediate booking on ephemeral opportunities. You see it. You book it. You optimize later. Your hesitation costs more than any cancellation fee.

This works great with airfares. See our report on hold options published last month: [The Option Optimizer's Secret: How to Turn One Fare Into Infinite Possibilities](#). (Keep an eye out next month when we combine the previous month's airfare options and this report's mileage award options - part 3 in this series.)

**What This Demonstrates:** Decision velocity often beats perfect planning. This is Upgrade Intelligence: knowing when to act instantly versus when to deliberate.

**Also Applies To:** Flash sales with easy returns in any other industry, limited-time refundable offers, and time-sensitive opportunities with low-cost exit options. Many do this with Macy's and Amazon returns. We don't recommend exploiting policies willy-nilly, however. Do unto others...

## WHY THIS IS INTELLIGENCE, NOT TACTICS

Here's the critical distinction: Tactics work once. Intelligence compounds forever.

Learning "you can cancel award tickets for free or cheap" is a tactic. Useful once. Doesn't transfer.

Understanding how to leverage cancellation policies across all contexts to create commitment without irreversible consequences? That's intelligence. Useful everywhere.

This is what Step 3 of the Upgrade Process teaches us: Options aren't just about quantity. They're about intelligence.

**Most people expand options only through research. Research is good, but it's passive. Research often delays action.**

Intelligent people expand options through strategic bookings with easy cancellation that:

- Create momentum (accelerate commitment)
- Preserve flexibility (cancel if needed)
- Eliminate downside (free or cheap exit)
- Generate clarity (**action creates information**)
- Force alignment (**turn dreams into deadlines**)

Note: This intelligence doesn't transfer to everything. It applies specifically to situations with good cancellation policies. You can't apply it nicely to jobs or homes very well – the exit costs are higher and backing out hurts others. But anywhere cancellation policies exist? This thinking transforms how you operate.

That's why travel is the perfect laboratory for understanding this specific form of intelligence. The stakes are manageable. The cancellation policies are frequently generous. The results are measurable. And the lessons transfer to anything else with similar policies.

## Award Cancellation Policy Cheat Sheet

Note: Always verify current terms before booking. AND keep in mind that most policies require you to cancel within 24 hours prior to departure. Be sure to double-check and not cut it too close.

Route	Direction	Class of Service	Summary
Dallas - Tokyo	Outbound	Business	Good availability primarily 7-14 days out (often up to 9 seats),  with occasional 1-2 seats showing 1-5 days before departure.
	Return		Almost nothing

	Return	First	1 seat here and there a week prior to departure
San Francisco - Tokyo	Outbound	Business	High outbound availability, often 9 seats, most consistently  in the 1-10 day range, with some reaching out to 14 days.
	Return		Tight with the rare 1-2 seat day scattered in mid-range dates  (4-15 days out); for up to 9 seats
Chicago - Tokyo	Outbound	Business	Consistently 9 seats from ~2 to 14 days before departure,  sometimes with smaller releases (1-4 seats) sprinkled in.
		First	Scattered 1-seat availability
	Return	Business	Limited, showing scattered 1-2 seat days in the 3-14 day window,  with a few 9-seat releases close-in
		First	Scattered 1-seat availability
San Diego - Tokyo	Outbound	Business	Strong close-in availability, with multiple 9-seat releases from 1-14  days out, particularly concentrated in the first week before departure.
	Return	Business	Mostly singles or pairs in the 6-14 day window, with occasional

			big 9-seat drops on day 0, day 10, and days 12-13.
Seattle - Tokyo	Outbound	Business	Frequent 9-seat blocks in the 1-10 day range
		First	Scattered 1-seat availability both directions
	Return	Business	Intermittently 1 and 2 seats available

## THE BOTTOM LINE

You didn't just learn how to control \$50K in premium travel at zero or little cost.

You considered what Upgrade Intelligence looks like in action. Travel is just the laboratory where it's often easy to see. Now go apply it wherever you can find good cancellation policies.

You may already do this to some extent. Hopefully you will **leverage** the approach more now.



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October 2025

**HILTON POINTS:** [50% OFF THROUGH 11/21](#)

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## **MORE FCF BUY MILES TO FLY IN STYLE RELATED REPORTS:**

[Beginner's Guide: How to Play the "Buy Miles to Fly In Style" Strategy to Net Up to 86% Off Premium Travel](#)

[How to Get Around Buying Miles Maximum Limits](#)

[How to Buy American Express Membership Rewards Points](#)

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# The 'Blue Sky' Upgrade Mindset: How To Get \$29,972 First Class Seats for \$3,686

October 2025

**Apply Upgrade Intelligence to ANYTHING to get equivalent deals on cars, careers, relationships, business, and life**

If you're not after the **highest quality life experience possible**, stop reading.

If convenience and inflexibility are your priorities, you might get lucky, but **reality** says your odds decrease, and the quality of life experience suffers.

But if you want to live beyond your *ordinary* means – for the same money or less – this intelligence brief is for you.



## MOST PEOPLE APPROACH GETTING WHAT THEY WANT ALL WRONG

They start at the bottom and work up. Coach class to premium economy, premium economy to Business. Toyota to Lexus. Good enough job to a slightly better job. **They stop before they reach the peak** because they never looked there in the first place.

This is Step 3 of the [Upgrade Process™](#): **Options Intelligence**. And here's the intelligence move: Start with blue sky, the best possible outcome, then work DOWN based on your flexibility. Not bottom up.

## THE BLUE SKY UPGRADE MINDSET

Why not start at the top? Because you'll never discover value inversions if you don't look.

**Here's today's inversion:** First Class for HALF the price of Business Class.

A double upgrade.

Most people never see this because they're working bottom up. They price coach (\$1,000-ish) or premium economy (\$2,000-ish), maybe stretch to Business (\$6,000-ish), and never even glance at First Class, thinking it's out of reach at \$29,000+.

But the person with Upgrade Intelligence?

**They start at the First Class flight experience**, see it's typically \$29,972, and then find the path to get it for \$3,686 round-trip. As you will discover in a moment.

**Peak life-experience quality at a valley price.** That's the winning combo.

**This same intelligence move works everywhere.** See what it looks like in travel, then we'll show you how it applies to cars, careers, relationships, and anything in life.

## THE LABORATORY: JAPAN AIRLINES FIRST CLASS



**The Opportunity:** Japan Airlines is one of the few airlines still offering First Class cabins. If you're departing from the U.S., you can find First Class seats to/from Asia on select flights from Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, New York, Boston, and San Francisco.

The typical cost for one of these First Class tickets outright? **A staggering \$29,972 round-trip.**

But what if you could book the exact same seat for just a fraction of the price? That's not fantasy. That's flexibility meeting intelligence.

**Sure, availability is definitely limited and fluctuates.** When seats are available, it's typically close to departure or 300+ days in advance, although random days in between can be found periodically.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

**Japan Airlines First Class to Asia is available through its partner's loyalty program, American Airlines,** for 80,000 miles and \$5.60 in taxes. Business Class runs 65,000 miles and \$5.60 in taxes.

**No American miles? No problem.** By [buying miles when they go on sale](#) and by being strategically flexible, these "blue sky" options can be yours.

Just take a look at this screenshot from AA.com. ANYONE can easily buy the miles required...

Buy or Gift miles and save up to 40% off.

Use your eligible AAdvantage® credit card to earn additional miles for every dollar you spend.

AAdvantage® members must purchase at least 3,000 AAdvantage® miles or more in a single transaction from the Buy or Gift Miles program to be eligible for a discount. Offers to eligible members may vary and are subject to change by American without notice.

When you buy	You get
3,000 - 9,000	10% off
10,000 - 29,000	15% off
30,000 - 89,000	20% off
90,000 - 150,000	30% off
151,000 - 200,000	40% off

All screenshots from AA.com

The airline runs [sales on their miles](#) off and on all the time. Right now you can buy up to 200,000 miles for \$4,515. That comes to 2.3 cents per mile. Take a look:

Enter number of miles •

Round to the nearest 1,000 miles  
Minimum 2,000 miles  
Maximum 200,000 miles

Calculate

Total miles

**200,000**

Includes 40% discount

Total cost

**\$4,515.00**

Includes taxes and discounts

You only need to buy as many miles as you need. The more miles you buy, the bigger the discount.

Need even more miles? Just use my [unlimited buy-miles strategy](#).

### Flights Operated by Japan Airlines

American

Plan travel

Travel information

AAdvantage®

Chicago, IL to Tokyo, Japan

Depart ▾	Arrive ▾	Duration ▾	Main ▾	Premium Economy ▾	Business ▾	First ▾
<p>ORD</p> <p>1:30 AM</p> <p>JL 9 • 773-Boeing 777</p> <p> </p> <p>Operated by Japan Airlines</p> <p><a href="#">Details</a></p>	<p>HND</p> <p>4:20 AM<sup>+1</sup></p>	<p>12h 50m</p> <p>Nonstop</p>	<p>One way</p> <p><b>35K</b></p> <p>+ \$5.60</p>	<p>One way</p> <p><b>50K</b></p> <p>+ \$5.60</p>	<p>One way</p> <p><b>60K</b></p> <p>+ \$5.60</p>	<p>One way</p> <p><b>80K</b></p> <p>+ \$5.60</p> <p>1 seat left</p>

## THIS SAME INTELLIGENCE WORKS EVERYWHERE IN LIFE

The **Blue Sky** Upgrade Mindset applies elsewhere. Get peak-life experience quality at a valley price through strategic flexibility. For example:

**Car Dealership:** Walk in asking for 20 custom specifications – exact wheel color, exact trim, exact everything – and they'll quote you \$100,000 with a four-month wait. Want the best value? Wait till model year ends, buy something 90% amenable off the lot for half that price. Strategic flexibility on timing and specs = extraordinary value.

**Hiring:** Most companies hire average talent and stack headcount. Upgrade Intelligence move? Pay 50% more for an A-Player that can give you 200% more output. First Class isn't 33% better than Business – it's exponentially better. Non-linear value calculation.

**Career and Relationships:** The best possible job might require relocation. The best possible partner might not live in your zip code. Rather have a seven that's close, or a nine and you have some things to figure out? Strategic flexibility on location = access to the highest-quality life experience.

Most people pay an 'inconvenience tax' – they pay MORE for convenience. You capture that premium by accepting *strategic inconvenience*.

**The pattern:** Start with Blue Sky. Find the path, and work down from there. Accept strategic flexibility on ONE dimension. Capture extraordinary value.

## THE IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION

**Before:** "I take what I can get when I need it."

**After:** "I start with the best possible outcome, find the path, and capture extraordinary value."

For those who know how to play the game, \$29,972 First Class seats for around \$3,686 round-trip aren't just possible – they're well within reach.

This isn't for the casual traveler. This is for those who love the thrill of flying in the best possible way for the lowest possible price – and are willing to do what it takes to make it possible.

See you up front, in one of these...



*Japan Airlines First Class*