



The Cheapest Business Class Round-Trip I Ever Found to Australia? Maybe This \$2,232 One

September 2023

How + where relentless upgraders who've already purchased and spontaneous travelers can save up to 79% on Air New Zealand, American, Qantas, and United flights

Who is this article for?

#1: Those who have already booked a ticket to the South Pacific and are still looking to “upgrade” their trip. I put “upgrade” in quotes because our definition of upgrade is improving your travel situation.

In the last few issues of The Upgrade Advisor, we've found great examples of "[iterative upgrading](#)," which is the art of improving your flight circumstances **even after you've booked**. That continues here for people who've already booked to the South Pacific but suffer from the nagging feeling that they could have done better.

#2: Last-minute bookers are always on the lookout for a gleaming sunset deal. "Last minute" to the other side of the world, you say? Darn right.

PAIN POINTS OR ARE THEY?

Sure, it takes longer to get to places like Australia and New Zealand, but it's just more hours on a plane. Don't let that trick you into thinking the entire trip is somehow a bigger affair. It takes the same time to plan and book as, say, a trip to London. It just *seems* bigger because it's farther.

And it's purely for that very reason — distance — that you want to do it right. You don't want to be flying in coach, but you don't want your retirement savings gouged out of your account, either.

ATTENTION STORY COLLECTORS

This is for story collectors. The South Pacific region is prime territory for that. Tell the kids or grandkids about the crocs in Australia's Kakadu National Park, the impossibly turquoise lakes in New Zealand's South Island, climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge, or experiencing the bubbling mud pools of Rotorua, New Zealand.



But that's where the story could take an iffy plot turn. Both fares and mileage tickets to the South Pacific can easily cost an arm, a leg, and a grass skirt.

Below are samples of typical Business Class fares and mileage costs to Australia and New Zealand for context.

FARES

Business Class Airfares Aren't Cheap:

To Australia:

Qantas' round-trip flights from Los Angeles typically go for \$10,142 to Brisbane and \$10,136 to Melbourne.

American's round-trip flights from Los Angeles to Sydney typically go for \$9,867.

United's round-trip flights from Los Angeles typically go for \$10,136 to Melbourne and \$10,100 to Sydney. From San Francisco, \$9,375 to Melbourne and \$10,136 to Sydney.

To New Zealand:

Air New Zealand's typical round-trip flights to Auckland from Houston go for \$7,672, and from Los Angeles and San Francisco for \$8,772.

United's round-trip flights to Auckland from San Francisco typically go for \$10,860.

BOOKING WITH MILES

Business Class Mileage Rates Aren't Cheap Either:

Take a look at the screenshot below of American Airlines, which is charging 673,000+ miles round-trip for a Business Class award ticket!

American Airlines

Business

Round trip (per person)

673,000 miles

+ \$102.15

LAX to SYD → 450,000 miles
SYD to LAX ← 223,000 miles

Total (all passengers)
673,000 miles + \$102.15

Includes taxes and carrier-imposed fees
[Price and tax information](#)

Award rules and restrictions

- If your trip is eligible, you may be able to change it, but additional miles, fees, and taxes may apply. You can cancel your trip and reinstate miles at no charge if your plans change.

DEPART
Los Angeles, CA to Sydney, Australia
Friday, September 22, 2023
10:45 PM → 7:05 AM 15h 20m Nonstop Business
= AA73 = 77W-Boeing 777

RETURN
Sydney, Australia to Los Angeles, CA
Tuesday, October 10, 2023
10:20 AM → 6:26 AM 14h 6m Nonstop Business
= AA72 = 77W-Boeing 777

SOLUTION: LOOK FOR GREAT, THEN ITERATE

Today we have savings on Air New Zealand, American, Qantas, and United, using their own miles and booking with their partner miles.

No Miles? No Problem!

The table below is key, as it shows how you can iterate yourself to a far better deal. Thanks to the lockdown, there are generally little or no penalties for canceling a ticket. Instead of losing money, you simply use the value on a future flight within a 12-month period. So, if you have a ticket and are grumbling about its cost or in a class of service lower than you'd like, book a better ticket and cancel the old one.

–The Qantas Strategy–

The strategy is to buy the miles required for your South Pacific adventure — **if you don't have the miles already** — from a partner airline versus buying the Qantas ticket directly. For example, you can save up to 78% with Alaska for the Los Angeles-Brisbane route if you buy miles when on sale. If you buy miles when they are not on sale, you can still save up to \$6,690 / 66%.

But Bennett, which partner should I use? Some Qantas partners do not offer the same or any award space on Qantas Business Class flights for close-in travel.

Qantas partners Alaska, American, and Cathay Pacific have similar mileage availability for Qantas flights. More on this below.

SAMPLE QANTAS PARTNER MILEAGE COSTS

Here are the **mileage costs** for partners Alaska, American, and Cathay Pacific for Qantas' Los Angeles-Brisbane route.

Los Angeles - Brisbane	Alaska	American	Cathay Pacific
Buy Miles/Points from	Alaska	American	Amex
Approx. Cost Cost per Mile/Point When on Sale	1.8¢	2.4¢	2.5¢
Points Transfer Partner	N/A	Citi	Amex, Capital One, Citi
Mileage Required R/T	110,000	160,000	150,000
Total Cost of Miles for Business Class R/T	\$2,032	\$3,930	\$3,750
Approx. Taxes R/T	\$200	\$100	\$200
Total Cost R/T	\$2,232	\$4,030	\$3,950
Typical Fare	\$10,142		
Savings	\$7,910	\$6,112	\$6,192
	78%	60%	61%

QANTAS' PARTNERS BUSINESS CLASS MILEAGE AWARD SEAT TRENDS

For award-seat availability on Qantas for Los Angeles-Brisbane and Los Angeles-Melbourne routes, keep in mind it is an **on-again, off-again** affair. So [keep your bags packed](#) and your web browser bookmarked.

BRISBANE TO/FROM LOS ANGELES ON QANTAS

We found award-seat availability recently for up to two travelers on the Los Angeles-Brisbane route in both directions **using Alaska, American, and Cathay Pacific miles**. Three and four seats were occasionally found outbound only.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Qantas Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats
Alaska	Outbound:	9%	6%
	Return:	12%	2%
American	Outbound:	9%	6%

Qantas Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats
	Return:	12%	2%
Cathay Pacific	Outbound:	9%	6%
	Return:	14%	2%

MELBOURNE TO/FROM LOS ANGELES ON QANTAS

A few single award seats were found Los Angeles-Melbourne using Alaska and American miles. A handful of days with award-seat availability for up to two travelers was found using Alaska and American miles on the return. This just means that you want to mix and match your routes, also known as an open jaw. Cathay had no award seats on this route in either direction, so we left them out.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Melbourne to Dallas, and Los Angeles-, Dallas-, San Francisco-, and Vancouver-to-Sydney routes had scattered seats here and there. Be sure to give it a look before you rule them out.

Qantas Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats
Alaska	Outbound:	3%	0%
	Return:	4%	2%
American	Outbound:	3%	0%
	Return:	4%	2%

No award space was found on Qantas' New York-Auckland route in either direction.

–The American Airlines Flight Strategy–

Here are Business Class mileage costs for American's Los Angeles-Sydney route.

Los Angeles - Sydney	
Buy Miles/Points from	American
Approx. Cost per Mile When on Sale	2.4¢
Points Transfer Partner	Citi
Mileage Required R/T	125,000
Total Cost of Miles for Business Class R/T	\$3,070

Los Angeles - Sydney	
Approx. Taxes R/T	\$100
Total Cost R/T	\$3,170
Typical Fare	\$9,867
Savings	\$6,697
	68%

AMERICAN'S BUSINESS CLASS MILEAGE AWARD SEAT TRENDS SYDNEY TO/FROM LOS ANGELES ON AMERICAN

Los Angeles-Sydney had a few days with award-seat availability **for up to four travelers** in both directions, using American miles, though there are more days with seats on the return. Partners Alaska, British Airways, and Cathay Pacific did not show any seats on this route.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Operating Carrier	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
American	To:	4%			
	From:	12%	11%		

No award space was found on American's Dallas- and Los Angeles-Auckland routes in either direction.

–The Air New Zealand Flight Strategy–

Here are Business Class mileage costs for partners Air Canada, All Nippon, United, and LifeMiles for Air New Zealand's Los Angeles-Auckland route.

Los Angeles - Auckland	Air Canada	All Nippon	LifeMiles	United
Buy Miles/Points from	Air Canada	Amex	LifeMiles	United
Approx. Cost Sale Cost per Mile/Point When on Sale	1.3¢	2.5¢	1.4¢	1.8¢
Points Transfer Partner	Amex, Capital One, Chase	Amex	Amex, Capital One, Citi	Chase
Mileage Required R/T	150,000	120,000	160,000	220,000

Los Angeles - Auckland	Air Canada	All Nippon	LifeMiles	United
Total Cost of Miles for Business Class R/T	\$1,950	\$3,000	\$2,192	\$3,960
Approx. Taxes R/T	\$200	\$88	\$80	\$100
Total Cost R/T	\$2,150	\$3,088	\$2,272	\$4,060
Typical Fare	\$8,772			
Savings	\$6,622	\$5,684	\$6,500	\$4,712
	75%	65%	74%	54%

AIR NEW ZEALAND'S PARTNERS BUSINESS CLASS MILEAGE AWARD SEAT TRENDS

Air New Zealand's partners did not offer the same, or in some cases, *any* award space on Air New Zealand's Business Class flights for close-in travel, but some looked really good. Let's look at the trends on Air New Zealand's Houston-, Los Angeles-, and San Francisco-Auckland routes.

AUCKLAND TO/FROM HOUSTON ON AIR NEW ZEALAND

From Houston to Auckland, Air Canada, All Nippon, and LifeMiles had a handful of days with award-seat availability for up to three travelers outbound. Using United miles, we have seen a handful of days with award-seat availability for up to two travelers in both directions.

From Auckland to Houston, All Nippon had a handful of days with award-seat availability for up to two travelers in both directions. Air Canada, LifeMiles, and United had a decent number of days, with four seats available only on the return. This just means that you want to mix and match your routes, also known as an open jaw.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Air New Zealand Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
Air Canada	Outbound:	12%	7%	1%	0%
	Return:	41%	33%	20%	15%
All Nippon	Outbound:	8%	5%	1%	0%
	Return:	4%	3%	0%	
LifeMiles	Outbound:	12%	7%	1%	0%
	Return:	41%	33%	20%	15%

Air New Zealand Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
United	Outbound:	12%	6%	0%	
	Return:	41%	33%	20%	15%

AUCKLAND TO/FROM LOS ANGELES ON AIR NEW ZEALAND

Air Canada, All Nippon, LifeMiles, and United had a handful of days with award-seat availability for up to two travelers from Los Angeles to Auckland and a few days with award-seat availability for up to two travelers from Auckland to Los Angeles. All Nippon had fewer seats in both directions.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Air New Zealand Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats
Air Canada	Outbound:	34%	12%
	Return:	56%	20%
All Nippon	Outbound:	21%	7%
	Return:	17%	2%
LifeMiles	Outbound:	34%	12%
	Return:	56%	20%
United	Outbound:	34%	12%
	Return:	56%	20%

AUCKLAND TO/FROM SAN FRANCISCO ON AIR NEW ZEALAND

Air Canada, LifeMiles, and United had a handful of days with award-seat availability for up to two travelers in both directions. All Nippon had only a handful outbound and none on the return, so we left them out.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Air New Zealand Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats
Air Canada	Outbound:	20%	4%
	Return:	5%	
LifeMiles	Outbound:	20%	
	Return:	5%	
United	Outbound:	20%	
	Return:	5%	

No award seats were found to/from Chicago, New York, and Vancouver to Auckland.

–The United Airlines Flight Strategy–

Here are mileage costs for partners Air Canada, All Nippon, and LifeMiles for United’s Los Angeles-Sydney route.

Los Angeles - Sydney	Air Canada	All Nippon	LifeMiles	United
Buy Miles/Points from	Air Canada	Amex	LifeMiles	United
Approx. Cost per Mile/Point When on Sale	1.3¢	2.5¢	1.4¢	1.8¢
Points Transfer Partner	Amex, Capital One, Chase	Amex	Amex, Capital One, Citi	Chase
Mileage Required R/T	150,000	120,000	160,000	200,000
Total Cost of Miles for Business Class R/T	\$1,950	\$3,000	\$2,192	\$3,600
Approx. Taxes R/T	\$200	\$88	\$80	\$100
Total Cost R/T	\$2,150	\$3,088	\$2,272	\$3,700
Typical Fare	\$10,100			
Savings	\$7,950	\$7,012	\$7,828	\$6,400
	79%	69%	78%	63%

UNITED AND ITS PARTNERS’ BUSINESS CLASS MILEAGE AWARD SEAT TRENDS

United’s partners did not offer the same, or in some cases, *any* award space on United’s Business Class flights for close-in travel.

Award-seat availability trends on United’s Los Angeles-Melbourne and -Sydney, and San Francisco-Auckland, -Melbourne, and -Sydney routes.

AUCKLAND TO/FROM SAN FRANCISCO ON UNITED AIRLINES

Award-seat availability was plentiful using United miles in both directions. Award-seat availability has been decent using partner All Nippon miles. Air Canada has had fewer days with seats, and LifeMiles had none in either direction, so we left them out.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Operating Carrier / Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
Air Canada	Outbound:	4%	3%		
	Return:	10%	9%	8%	
All Nippon	Outbound:	6%	4%	3%	2%
	Return:	16%	10%	8%	
United	Outbound:	20%	18%	17%	16%
	Return:	36%	35%	33%	31%

MELBOURNE TO/FROM LOS ANGELES ON UNITED AIRLINES

Air Canada, LifeMiles, and United have had a few days with award-seat availability in both directions. All Nippon had almost no seats outbound and none on the return, so we left them out.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Operating Carrier / Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
Air Canada	To	2%			
	From	5%			4%
LifeMiles	To	7%	6%	5%	
	From	13%	11%		10%
United	To	7%	6%	5%	
	From	13%	11%		10%

MELBOURNE TO/FROM SAN FRANCISCO ON UNITED AIRLINES

Air Canada, LifeMiles, and United have had a few days with award-seat availability in both directions. All Nippon has none in either direction, so we left them out.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Operating Carrier / Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
Air Canada	Outbound:	2%			
	Return:	3%			
LifeMiles	Outbound:	7%			
	Return:	15%	14%	12%	11%
United	Outbound:	7%			

Operating Carrier / Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
	Return:	15%	14%	12%	11%

SYDNEY TO/FROM LOS ANGELES ON UNITED AIRLINES

LifeMiles and United have had a handful of days with award-seat availability outbound and a decent number of days with seats on the return. Air Canada has only had a few seats on the return; this means you want to mix and match your routes, also known as an open jaw. All Nippon had almost no seats, so we left them out.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Operating Carrier / Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
Air Canada	To	0%			
	From	7%			5%
LifeMiles	To	2%	1%		
	From	23%	22%	20%	17%
United	To	2%	1%		
	From	23%	22%	20%	17%

SYDNEY TO/FROM SAN FRANCISCO ON UNITED AIRLINES

Air Canada, LifeMiles, and United had a decent number of days with award seats in both directions. All Nippon had none, so we left them out.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure we recently found that low-cost Business Class awards were available

Operating Carrier / Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
Air Canada	Outbound:	5%	4%	3%	
	Return:	5%		4%	
LifeMiles	Outbound:	14%	13%	12%	11%
	Return:	21%	21%	20%	19%
United	Outbound:	14%	13%	12%	11%
	Return:	21%	21%	20%	19%

No award space was found on United's Los Angeles-Auckland route in either direction.

So, when was the last time you saw a 15-hour, **\$10,142+ flight in Business Class go for \$2,232?** Who gives this a vote for a top deal of the year?

See you up front.



Upgrade Economics 101, Part 9: Three Instances Why Booking on Delta.com Might Cost You an Upgrade

September 2023

When is Delta.com a big fat downgrade?

Good morning class. Today's lesson is one that I learned the hard way. It's as much a cautionary tale as it is a lesson – one that will save you a lot of pain if you heed its dark teachings.

Grim start, huh? Let's talk about one of my least favorite subjects: Delta Air Lines.

**Delta Dawn, what's that flower you have on?
Could it be a faded rose from days gone by?**

Delta Dawn, Tanya Tucker 1972

The tune Delta sings is often off-key to my ears. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know many of you have given your heart away to the airline. But I say this because **it offers virtually no incentive to collect its SkyMiles**. It's infuriating. I hope you're not valuing your SkyMiles at more than a penny each. That said, I know that Delta travelers love Delta, because it is a good airline.

Ok, if all you do is fly from Atlanta to Savannah, then no problem, give Delta your heart.

But I'm not being loyal to any airline because that's when **airlines win and you lose**. I've talked about being a "loyalty-free agent" for three decades. Here are some of those reports, and the arguments still stand: read about it [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

I know, you probably think I'm a Delta basher, but that's not true. I'm just being realistic. If you want to fly Delta, upfront, you're going to pay through the nose with miles, and often with cash, too.

So, class, this month I'm going to talk about how Delta people blindly head to Delta.com to search for flights, when in reality, it's the last website where you should start your search.

Let's look at why this is the case. The following are three examples of how Delta.com will cost you more for less. Or from another perspective, you'll see how you can get **free upgrades if you don't book on Delta.com**. You could call this idea a "website upgrade." Let's go.

DUDDER BY DELTA EXAMPLE #1
BUSINESS CLASS TO VENICE ON BRITISH AIRWAYS
FOR LESS THAN THE PRICE OF PREMIUM ECONOMY ON DELTA

You could fly Delta from Pittsburgh to Venice and pay \$5,214 in **Premium Economy**. A much better idea is to search on Google Flights, Expedia, or some other online travel agency and find that British Airways in **Business Class** runs around \$3,775. See the dates in the table below. Honestly, class, if you tell people this stuff, they usually don't believe you. My advice is to keep it to yourselves and just post your travel pics to Instagram. Take a look at these numbers...

Operating Airline	Sample Route	Class	Cost R/T	
Delta	Pittsburgh-Venice	Premium Economy	Regular Published R/T Fare from May to June	\$5,214
British Airways		Business		\$3,775
How Much Better?			One-Class Upgrade	

Operating Airline	Sample Route	Class	Cost R/T
How Much Less?			\$1,439



Going, going, gondola

DUDDER BY DELTA EXAMPLE #2
BUSINESS CLASS TO ROME ON UNITED
FOR LESS THAN THE PRICE OF PREMIUM ECONOMY ON DELTA

Feel like some pasta and chianti from the source? You can go from St. Louis to Rome with one stop traveling in April, May, and June in Premium Economy for \$4,896 on Delta. However, if you search on Google Flights, Expedia, or some other online travel agency, you'll find that United Airlines in Business Class goes for \$3,304 on that same route. *Sorprendente!*

Operating Airline	Sample Route	Class	Cost R/T	
Delta	St. Louis-Rome	Premium Economy	Regular Published R/T Fare from April to June	\$4,896
United		Business		\$3,304
How Much Better?			One-Class Upgrade	
How Much Less?			\$1,592	

DUDDER BY DELTA EXAMPLE #3 **FIRST CLASS TO LONDON ON BRITISH AIRWAYS** **FOR LITTLE MORE THAN THE PRICE OF BUSINESS ON DELTA**

For Atlanta-London nonstop through mid-November, Delta's **Business Class** fares fluctuate between \$4,409 to \$5,509. However, if you search on Google Flights, Expedia, or some other online travel agency, you'll find that British Airways offers Atlanta-London in **First Class** for around \$5,501. In other words, there are more dates available where you can get First Class on British Airways for little more than you can get Business Class on Delta. Score: BA 1, Delta 0.

Operating Airline	Sample Route	Class	Cost R/T	
Delta	Atlanta-London	Business		\$4,409 to \$5,509
British Airways		First	Regular Published R/T Fare from April to June	\$5,501
How Much Better?			One-Class Upgrade	
How Much More?			\$100-\$1,100 R/T	

So, the moral of the story? The last thing you want to do is start your search on Delta.com and perhaps the last thing you want to do in the end, too.

See you up front.



How Japan Airlines and Kaizen Can Get You a \$23,300 First Class Ticket to Tokyo for \$3,221 (or 160,000 Miles)

September 2023

Why 13 is your magic number to getting \$23,300 First Class seats for Fuji-sized savings in cash or by using Alaska or American miles; or Amex, Capital One, Chase, or Citi Points

Listen up spontaneous, **bags-packed flyers**. You too, Asia-bound **ticket holders** flying in Business Class, Premium Economy, and even — *heaven forbid* — coach. Your magic number is 13. That's the number of days we're now constantly seeing (let's call it a trend!) prior to departure when availability raises its hand and calls your name. Screams it, actually.

First up, let's talk to ticket holders.

KAIZEN: JAPANESE FOR ITERATIVE IMPROVEMENT

Toyota, McDonald's, Canon, FedEx, and Wal-Mart all use the [concept of kaizen](#), which means "continuous improvement." And so can you, Alice from Alameda holding a ticket in hand. It's all about making continuous incremental changes for the better, which absolutely applies to our travel mindset here.

For ticket holders, it means getting a **better** ticket, maybe in a **better** cabin, or at a **better** flight time, or on a **better** airline, on a **better** day, and even a **better** cabin for a **MUCH better price**.

It's really another way of describing FCF's TUM: **The Upgrade Mindset**, our philosophy of always looking to improve your travel situation, which is how we define "upgrade."

FOR [THE RELENTLESS UPGRADER](#)

You might be amazed about the last-minute opportunities that show up close to departure. [We recently wrote about Anne](#) who had a Premium Economy ticket in her hand for a trip to Australia. The concept is the same for Alice now. She had been looking at Business Class from Dallas to Tokyo, however tickets were in the \$6,000+ R/T range. First Class was \$23,300, so it was definitely out of the question for budget-conscious Alice. For the record, she went with the Premium Economy ticket, which cost her \$3,657 on American.

And then: KAIZEN KAPOW!



In the week before departure, American Airlines opened up some Japan Airline's mileage award seats in First Class to Tokyo priced at 80,000 miles one-way. Then Alice spotted a return flight in First Class for 80,000 miles as well. No, I am not making this up. She canceled the Premium Economy ticket (she can use that value

within 12 months) and jumped on the kaizen express, er, the First Class round-trip flight to Tokyo for a total cost of 160,000 miles.

Oh by the way, Alice didn't have any miles when she started, she just knew about FCF's [Buy Miles to Fly in Style](#) strategy. More on how this got her that \$23,300 for \$3,221 in a minute.

Just remember this: Airlines don't want empty seats, so the closer the deadline looms — i.e., the day the plane takes off — the more nervous they get, and the more likely they are to offer surplus seats for big discounts.

FOR [THE SPONTANEOUS SPRINTER](#)

Are you in the starting position at the front door like Usain Bolt, ready to spring off the starting blocks to grab a great deal? Knowing *when and where* to find Japan Airlines seats puts you ahead of the competition. There are a lot of ambitious flyers out there (many of them are our readers!) looking to “kaizen” their situations. So, what you want to know is how many days out from departure Japan Airlines opens up availability, which brings us back to the magic number: 13.

FCF'S HIGH-LEVEL PARTNER COMPARISON SUMMARY

Here's our partner award availability comparison summary, comparing mileage cost, taxes, and transfer partners for five of Japan Airlines partners. As you can see, they all offer different benefits, so determine what best fits your particular situation.

Booking JAL Flights With:	Pro	Con
Japan Miles	Best availability and lowest cost if you have the miles.	No points transfer partners except Starwood and not at a good ratio.
Alaska Miles	Less award availability than Japan Airlines, but more than British Airways. Low taxes at about \$80 round-trip. The cheapest buy miles option at 1.8 cents each, when on sale.	No major transfer partners.
American Miles	You can buy miles directly from the airline at 2.4 cents each when on sale versus British Airways and Cathay via Amex. Low taxes at about \$50 round-trip. Transfer partners with Citi.	Fewer days with seats for 3+ travelers when compared to Alaska, British Airways, and Cathay Pacific.
British Airways Miles	Award seat availability up to four seats. Transfer partners with Amex, Capital One, and Chase. Often has a 30% or higher transfer bonus with Amex.	Fewer days with award seat availability. Taxes are about \$500 round-trip.
Cathay Pacific Miles	Award seat availability up to four seats. Transfer partners with Amex, Capital One, and Citi.	Award cost is higher than Japan, Alaska, and American and will be even higher in October with the devaluation. Award taxes are about \$500 round-trip.

We left out Japan Airlines partners Air France, Iberia, and Qatar Airways because they **didn't have any availability in First Class at a low cost**, so don't waste your time looking.

FCF'S CLOSE IN FIRST CLASS AWARD AVAILABILITY TREND SURVEY

Our team studied First Class availability within 45 days of departure for one to four seats. We discovered that Japan Airlines usually only started to release First Class mileage award seats up to **13 days prior to a flight's departure date**.

Because these trends are forever changing, be sure to check in advance to see how things are going.

FIRST CLASS TREND #1: TOKYO TO/FROM DALLAS

See below for the frequency (%) of days inside of 13 days prior to departure with cheap First Class awards FCF recently discovered

Japan Airline Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
Alaska	Outbound:	27%	11%	5%	1%
	Return:	14%	4%	1%	
American	Outbound:	31%	13%	5%	0%
	Return:	19%	6%	3%	1%
British Airways	Outbound:	19%	7%		
	Return:	6%	1%	0%	0%
Cathay Pacific	Outbound:	31%	14%	5%	
	Return:	15%	5%	2%	1%

FIRST CLASS TREND #2: TOKYO TO/FROM SAN FRANCISCO

See below for the frequency (%) of days inside of 13 days prior to departure with cheap First Class awards FCF recently discovered

Japan Airline Partner	Route	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
Alaska	Outbound:	15%	8%	5%	3%
	Return:	8%	3%	0%	0%
American	Outbound:	21%	10%	3%	1%
	Return:	9%	6%		
British Airways	Outbound:	12%			
	Return:	3%	1%	0%	0%
Cathay Pacific	Outbound:	15%	7%	4%	3%
	Return:	8%	5%	2%	2%

New York and Los Angeles to/from Tokyo have very limited award-seat availability outbound. If you were persistent, you could find a few days with two+ award seats outbound using American or Cathay Pacific (Amex transfer partner). On the return, however, we have not seen any available award seats.

FCF'S CLOSE IN FIRST CLASS AWARD AVAILABILITY OBSERVATIONS

Based on our recent research, **which is likely to change**, use the following concepts to maximize your travel kaizen:

TO TOKYO

- San Francisco to Tokyo typically offers the best award-seat availability with Dallas being second best. Keep in mind our [Skipping Stones Reports](#) if you don't live in a hub with availability. Check with the airlines to add a connecting flight from the U.S. hub city coming and/or going from any of Oneworld's (American or Alaska) U.S. departure cities based on availability or buy a [positioning flight](#).
- The best award-seat availability exists within 13 days of departure from Dallas and San Francisco.
- From San Francisco, it's best to use Alaska, British Airways, or Cathay Pacific for four or more travelers, as American typically had only two or fewer seats.
- Best to find award-seat availability to Tokyo from San Francisco for travel Monday through Wednesday.
- Best to find award-seat availability to Tokyo from Los Angeles for travel on Mondays and sometimes Wednesdays.

FROM TOKYO

- To Dallas typically offers the best award-seat availability with San Francisco being the second best. Keep in mind our [Skipping Stones Report](#). Check with the airlines to add a connecting flight from the U.S. hub city coming and/or going from any of Oneworld's (American or Alaska) U.S. departure cities based on availability or buy a [positioning flight](#).
- Most award-seat availability found was for one seat, though we have seen up to three seats.
- Award-seat availability can typically be found within six days of departure from Tokyo to Dallas and within three days of departure to San Francisco with Friday being the most likely day for travel.
- Odds of finding award-seat availability from Tokyo to Los Angeles or New York are slim.

NO MILES? NO PROBLEM!

There are two ways to get on a Japan Airlines flight without any miles. You can either buy miles and book through a partner airline, or transfer points to miles with a JAL partner airline.

The buying option can be lucrative. Look for sales through Japan Airlines' partners: Alaska Airlines at around 1.8 cents per mile, American Airlines at around 2.4 cents, or British Airways and Cathay Pacific, which you can get through Amex at 2.5 cents a mile. Let's look at how these buy-miles opportunities can really fly.

THE \$23,300 FIRST CLASS JAPAN AIRLINES TICKET WITH ALASKA AIRLINE MILES FOR \$3,221 R/T

Alaska Airlines usually has an everyday price of 3 cents per mile, however, they frequently offer mileage purchase bonuses and discount promotions for as low as 1.8 cents each.

So, given the mileage cost of 170,000 miles r/t for this journey, **that amounts to a First Class flight to Tokyo for \$1,610 each way.** There are massive savings on the normal published fares as the chart below reveals. Not enough miles for a round-trip ticket? Follow our strategy here for the [purchase limit workaround](#).

Operating Carrier	Between Tokyo and:	Buy Miles From	Mileage Cost	Approx. Cost to Buy Miles When on Sale for 1.8¢ Each Including Taxes	Normal Published Fare	Savings	
Japan	Dallas	Alaska	200,000	\$3,775	\$23,300	\$19,525	84%
	Los Angeles*		170,000	\$3,221	\$22,600	\$19,379	86%
	New York		200,000	\$3,775	\$23,100	\$19,325	84%
	San Francisco**		170,000	\$3,221	\$22,500	\$19,279	86%

*Service through October 28 and resumes March 31, 2024. **Service through October 28 and resumes January 9, 2024.

THE \$23,300 FIRST CLASS JAPAN AIRLINES TICKET WITH AMERICAN AIRLINES MILES FOR \$1,981 EACH WAY

It's a similar equation with American Airlines. Their everyday price is 2.8 cents per mile. However, with their frequently offered mileage purchase discount promotion you can buy them for as low as 2.4 cents each (for up to 150,000 per year, plus any bonuses). **That gives you a First Class flight to Tokyo for \$1,981 each way.** Follow our strategy here for the [purchase limit workaround](#). Let's crunch the numbers:

Operating Carrier	Between Tokyo and:	Buy Miles From	Mileage Cost	Cost to Buy Miles When on Sale for 2.4¢ Each Including Taxes	Normal Published Fare	Savings	
Japan	Dallas	American	160,000	\$3,963	\$23,300	\$19,337	83%
	Los Angeles*				\$22,600	\$18,637	82%
	New York				\$23,100	\$19,137	83%
	San Francisco**				\$22,500	\$18,537	82%

*Service through October 28, resumes March 31, 2024. **Service through October 28, resumes January 9, 2024.

WHAT ABOUT AMEX POINTS?

If you don't have enough points, you can [buy them from Amex](#) and transfer them to partners British Airways and Cathay Pacific to redeem them for that Japan Airlines First Class ticket. It costs a little more than if you go through American Airlines, but the savings are still great: 71% to 76% off the normal fare. See below.

THE \$23,300 FIRST CLASS JAPAN AIRLINES TICKET WITH CATHAY PACIFIC AIRLINE MILES FOR \$3,254 EACH WAY

With Cathay Pacific you can buy up to 500,000 Amex Rewards points per year and they only cost 2.5¢ each. Given the baseline First Class fare from Dallas to Tokyo is often \$23,300 to \$25,200, and that you can buy 240,000 Amex Rewards Points and transfer to Cathay Pacific for about \$6,508 (including taxes of about \$508) round-trip, you'd end up saving up to \$16,792, or 72%. Something to consider **if awards are not available through the other options and if Cathay Pacific is the only airline with First Class availability.**

Operating Carrier	Between Tokyo and:	Buy Points From	Mileage Cost	Cost to Buy Points for 2.5¢ Each	Normal Published Fare	Savings	
Japan	Dallas	Amex then Transfer to Cathay Pacific	240,000	\$6,508	\$23,300	\$16,792	72%
	Los Angeles*				\$22,600	\$16,092	71%
	New York				\$23,100	\$16,592	72%
	San Francisco**				\$22,500	\$15,992	71%

*Service through October 28, resumes March 31, 2024. **Service through October 28, resumes January 9, 2024.

THE \$22,500 FIRST CLASS JAPAN AIRLINES TICKET WITH BRITISH AIRWAYS MILES FOR \$2,829 EACH WAY

With British Airways you can buy up to 500,000 Amex Rewards points per year and they only cost 2.5¢ each. Also, given the baseline First Class fare from San Francisco to Tokyo is often \$22,500 to \$26,000, and that you can buy 206,000 Amex Rewards Points and transfer to British Airways for about \$5,659 (including taxes of about \$509) round-trip, you'd end up saving up to \$16,841, or 75%.

Operating Carrier	Between Tokyo and:	Buy Miles From	Mileage Cost	Cost to Buy Points for 2.5¢ Each	Normal Published Fare	Savings	
Japan	Dallas	Amex then Transfer to British Airways	247,500	\$6,697	\$23,300	\$16,604	71%
	Los Angeles*		206,000	\$5,659	\$22,600	\$16,941	75%
	New York				\$23,100	\$17,441	76%
	San Francisco**				\$22,500	\$16,841	75%

*Service through October 28, resumes March 31, 2024. **Service through October 28, resumes January 9, 2024.

Don't want to buy miles, but have transferable points?

Here are the Japan Airlines partner airlines points transfer options:

Mileage Program	Japan	Alaska	American	British Airways	Cathay Pacific
Points Transfer Partner	N/A	N/A	Citi	Amex, Capital One, Chase	Amex, Capital One, Citi



Fuji-sized savings to Tokyo in First

CONNECTING AND POSITIONING FLIGHTS

“Okay, Bennett, you’re showing me that Dallas and San Francisco departures are the most lucrative, but I live in Boise.” Well, the great news for you, Alice, is that there are two smart ways to connect you to great deals: [free award connecting flights](#), which is the best, or [positioning flights](#).

Of course, by its nature, the kaizen upgrade strategy isn't perfect. But it's another upgrade tool you'll want to have in your travel belt. If you can use it just once in a while, you'll more than cover a whole bunch of future trips. And congrats to you, spontaneous First Class travelers and ticketholders looking to level up.

See you up front.



European 'Congeniality' Dates: Here Are Some You Don't Want to Miss

September 2023

A few hidden December calendar dates with \$2,500 to \$2,700 Biz Class fares to Europe expand to many dates, from October to March up to 38% less than others

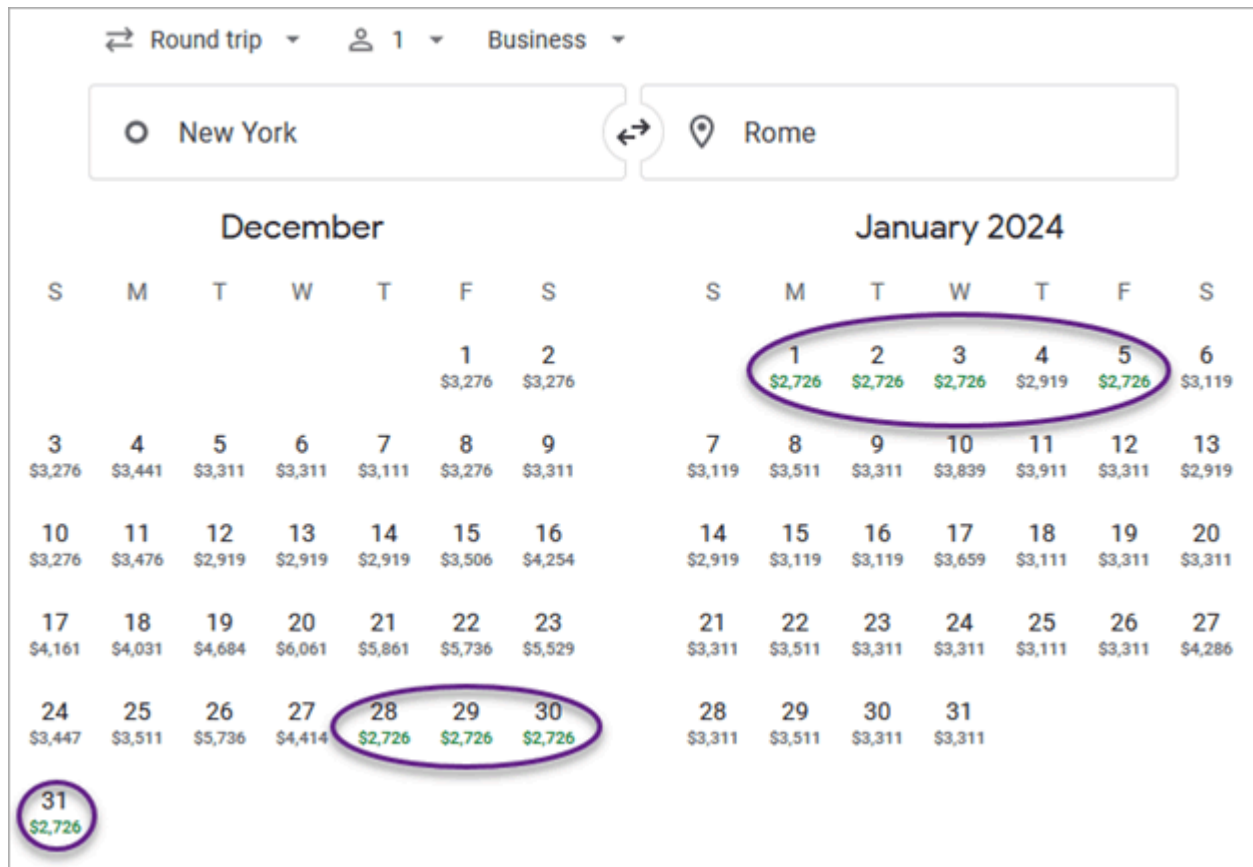
In the film, *Miss Congeniality*, Miss Rhode Island is asked to describe her perfect date. She answers, "That's a tough one. I'd have to say April 25th, because it's not too hot, not too cold. All you need is a light jacket."

Here at FCF, we're finding more perfect dates and now they're expanding.

PREVIOUS FARE BEAUTIES AT FIRST GLANCE

All it took was a quick perusal of the [google.com/flights](https://www.google.com/flights) calendar for December and January, as shown in the screenshot below. On a few days each month, the Business Class fares looked beautifully green, with svelte savings on offer compared with prices just 24 hours earlier in some cases. Just look at the price difference on the New York-Rome route between December 28 and 30, for example, by simply traveling one to four days earlier or later, you could save up to \$1,000 to \$2,000.

*December Travel Fare Trend—Over the Last Few Months,
to Rome from New York Save 38%*



NEW FARE BEAUTIES AT A GLANCE

Now all it takes is a quick perusal of the [google.com/flights](https://www.google.com/flights) calendar over October through March and you can see those dates with fares in the \$2,500 to \$2,700 range have proliferated.

We're seeing this on a bunch of routes to Europe across major airlines such as **Air Canada, Air France, American, British Airways, Delta, Finnair, Iberia, KLM, Lufthansa, SWISS, and United Airlines.**

And the winner is...oh, wait.

Pass the sash because those fares look like pageant winners, right? Evening gown: tick. Swimsuit: tick. But wait, now we come to the interview round, and that's where it's clear that not everything is as it seems. In fact, we think holiday fares will get even better.

Our analysts suggest that these fares will drop even further in another month or so. We've seen this fare drop year after year. The low fares are teasers designed to get you in at a time of the year when travelers are more likely to stay closer to home rather than jump across to Europe. Maybe it's a trip to a beach, or the ski slopes, or simply holiday time with family.

While these are some of the lowest Business Class fares we've seen this year, we believe they are going to drop even further, at least around the holidays.



And the winner is...

THE CROWNING MOMENT

FCF's experienced judges suggest you **book these fares now** with the idea that you're going to trade them in using the [Iterative Upgrade Mindset](#) approach **when they drop even further**. And if demand prevents a fare drop on your particular route and date for some reason, you're still doing well with the fare you've booked.

So **build your trip around the days** in the months that are pricing for \$1,000 or \$2,000 less than normal.

More examples at these links:

[Cash > Switzerland > Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,783 to \\$3,175 R/T](#)

[Cash > Munich > Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,794 to \\$3,188 R/T](#)

[Cash > Brussels > Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,723 to \\$3,133 R/T](#)

[Cash > Frankfurt > Winter/Spring > Biz Class > \\$2,483 to \\$3,204 R/T](#)

[Cash > Stockholm > Winter/Spring > Biz Class > \\$2,424 to \\$3,153 R/T](#)


[Cash > Milan > Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,714 to \\$3,181 R/T](#)

[Cash > Oslo > Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,761 to \\$3,192 R/T](#)

[Cash > Finland > Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,717 to \\$3,108 R/T](#)

[Cash > Copenhagen > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,745 to \\$3,152 R/T](#)

[Cash > Geneva > Fall/Winter > Biz Class > \\$2,616 to \\$3,087 R/T](#)

A photograph of an Etihad First Class cabin interior. The image shows a wide, comfortable-looking seat with a white blanket, a small table with a glass of water and a snack, and a large entertainment screen displaying various flight options. The cabin has a warm, brown color scheme with textured wall panels.

Spontaneous Combustion: How Etihad Can Spark an Epic Discount First Class Escape, Whether You Already Booked or Not

September 2023

Fly First Class to the Middle East, Maldives, Seychelles and more for 115,000 miles or \$2,824 each way (71% off)

When you're flying halfway around the world, you need to be in a comfy seat — as in First Class comfy.

There are only a few airlines that fly First Class these days, and Etihad is one of them. Their First Class seat is much more spacious than your typical Business Class seat. Oh, and they fly to exotic locales regarded by many as some of the most beautiful in the world, such as the Seychelles, the Maldives, and Phuket, Thailand.

DESERVE SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION?

With all that in mind, let me propose an idea. At some time in the next 12 months, do something travel-crazy. Perhaps it's that long-awaited lockdown-busting trip you've been putting off. Or maybe someone said, "Bob, you look tired." Or you overheard someone say, "Bob? Nice guy, but he's kinda boring."

Yes, I think it's time for Bob to enjoy a bit of spontaneity in his life and we have just the ticket. It's perfect for anyone looking for some spontaneous exotic Seychelles-like excitement (or "combustion" because you're busting out!). **This also applies to those who have already bought a ticket** and have a nagging feeling that they've been gouged by that very same ticket. They can take advantage of the [Iterative Upgrade Mindset](#).

That means using close-in mileage availability, **which works whether you have any miles or not**. This has been happening a lot with Etihad, which doesn't like to reveal it. They just want to fill seats, especially their high-priced ones. So they'd rather charge *something* for them – even if it's at a heavily discounted price — than let the seats stay empty. That becomes your opportunity because we just found the best kind of ability: *availability*.

ETIHAD. BOOM!

Etihad offers First Class flights from Washington, DC, to Abu Dhabi and 70+ destinations across Asia, Australia, Europe, and the Middle East. We've had Etihad availability on our radar for a while now. It does fluctuate close in, but **we're starting to see more consistent availability**. And that's great news for ticket holders and "spontaneous combustors" alike.

Close-In First Class Availability



HOW TO BOOK ETIHAD FIRST CLASS

You can book Etihad First Class with American miles from Washington, DC, to Abu Dhabi for 115,000 miles each way. You can get connecting flights from all over the U.S. when available for the same number of miles or get connecting flights to places like Johannesburg, the Maldives, New Delhi, and the Seychelles for as little as 5,000 more miles each way when available. Note that flights beyond Abu Dhabi are usually in Business Class. **Considering American, Delta, and United charge 150,000 to 200,000 for Business Class each way, these prices for First Class can easily be considered a free upgrade.**

NO MILES? NO PROBLEM! BUY MILES TO FLY ETIHAD AIRLINES

American miles usually cost 2.8 cents per mile to buy. However, they frequently offer purchase bonuses and discount promotions for as low as 2.4 cents each (you can buy up to 150,000 per year, plus any bonuses).

That amounts to a First Class flight to the Middle East at \$2,854 each way — for a ticket that can cost up to \$10,000. That's a combustible deal! Follow our strategy here for the [annual purchase limit workaround](#).

Mileage Program Partner	Buy Miles From	Mileage Cost	Cost to Buy Miles When on Sale	Normal Published Fare	Savings	
American	American	230,000	\$5,709	\$10,514	\$4,805	46%

WHAT ABOUT AMEX POINTS?

If you don't have enough points, you can [buy them from Amex](#) and transfer them to partner All Nippon to redeem them for that prized Etihad Airlines First Class ticket. It costs a little more than going through American Airlines, but the savings are still great. I'm talking 54% off the normal fare. See below.

Mileage Program Partner	Points Transfer Partner	Mileage Cost	Cost to Buy Points 2.5¢ Each	Normal Published Fare	Savings	
All Nippon	Amex	195,000	\$5,894	\$10,514	\$4,620	44%

*Note ANA International flight awards must be booked as round-trip and are not available within four days of travel.

CLOSE IN FIRST CLASS AVAILABILITY FROM WASHINGTON, DC, TO ABU DHABI USING PARTNER MILES

Our team studied First Class availability within **30 days of departure for one to four seats**. These trends often change, so be sure to check in advance to see how things look.

Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure with low-cost Business Class awards available recently found

Partner	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
American	42%	35%	27%	5%
All Nippon	23%	18%	8%	1%

CLOSE IN FIRST CLASS AVAILABILITY FROM ABU DHABI TO WASHINGTON, DC, USING PARTNER MILES

*Frequency (%) of days within 30 days of departure
with low-cost Business Class awards available recently found*

Partner	1+ Seat	2+ Seats	3+ Seats	4+ Seats
American	58%	40%	20%	15%
All Nippon	20%	13%	10%	1%

FCF'S CLOSE IN FIRST CLASS AWARD AVAILABILITY INSIGHTS

First Class to Abu Dhabi

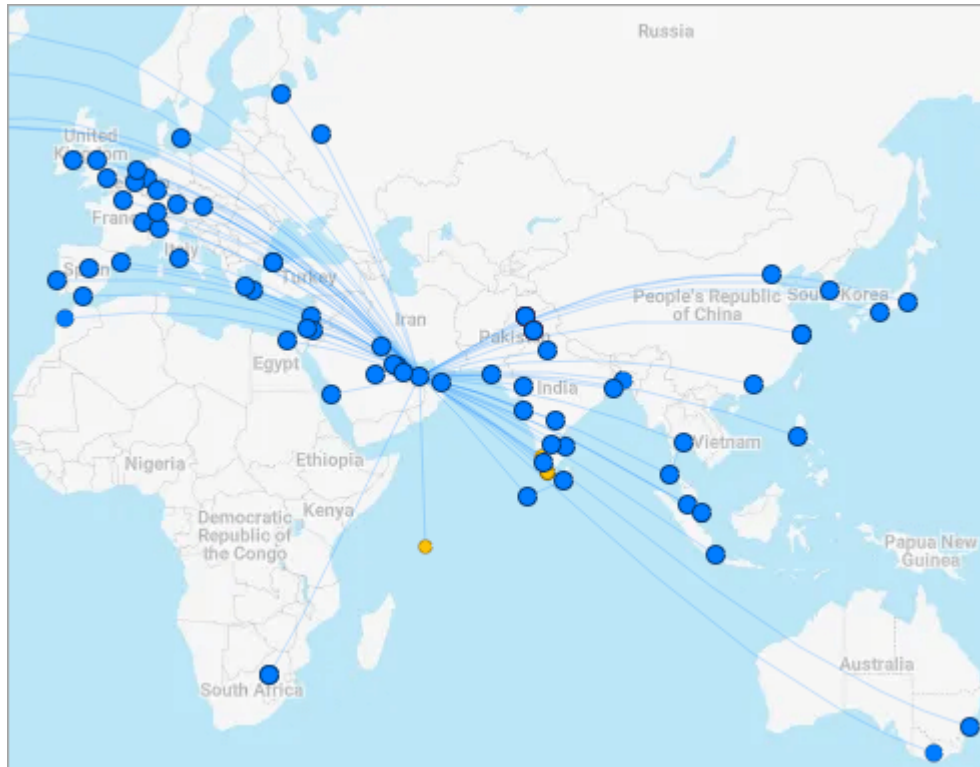
- The “sweet spot” is **1 to 15 days** from departure.
- American offers more days with First Class seats than All Nippon.
- American offers award availability for up to four travelers.
- You are most likely to find that All Nippon has award-seat availability for two to three travelers, four seats is not typical.
- Air Canada recently did not have any award-seat availability.
- There are more days with First Class seats than there are in Business Class. In general, there are very few days with Business Class award-seat availability using partner American miles.
- We found no Business Class award seats using All Nippon miles.

First Class From Abu Dhabi

- The “sweet spot” is **1 to 30 days** from departure.
- American offers award availability for up to four travelers.
- You are most likely to find that All Nippon has award-seat availability for two to three travelers, four seats is not typical.
- Air Canada recently did not have any award-seat availability.

NOT FLYING TO THE MIDDLE EAST? NO PROBLEM...

Etihad flies to over 70 destinations across
[Asia, Australia, Europe, and the Middle East](#)



Etihad spreads their net wide

BUSINESS CLASS BEYOND ABU DHABI

We found close-in availability for as many as four seats using All Nippon in both directions to Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur.

We found close in availability for as many as two seats using American in both directions to the Seychelles.

DON'T LIVE IN WASHINGTON, DC?

If [you don't live in Washington, DC](#), you can travel from the U.S. hub city coming and/or going for 5,000 miles from any of Oneworld's (American) U.S. departure cities based on availability or buy a [positioning flight](#).

FOUR THINGS TO KNOW

- Booking Washington, DC, to Abu Dhabi in First Class is straightforward and very easy using both American and All Nippon.
- American adds 10,000 to 30,000 miles to the booking when you travel beyond Abu Dhabi, depending on the destination.
- With American, it is recommended to check each segment separately (IAD>AUH & AUH>SEZ) then book as one a one-way. If you can't get their online system to price as one-way you'll have to call AA and make the booking over the phone. If you book as a multi-city, AA adds another 35,000 miles to the booking.
- All Nippon is a bit tricky to book beyond Abu Dhabi. If you book with All Nippon, it's best to call and make the reservation as the IAD-AUH segment in First Class and the AUH-SEZ segment in Business Class since their online system can't price it.

So how 'bout it, Bob? Ready to collect some Seychelles seashells? Or dive in the Maldives? This is a fantastic time to do some Etihad-enabled spontaneously combusting escapism in First Class comfort.

I say this with your well-being in mind: see you up front.



The Two Things Inflexible Travelers (and Others) Should Know About Scoring Qsuits for Up to 80% Off

September 2023

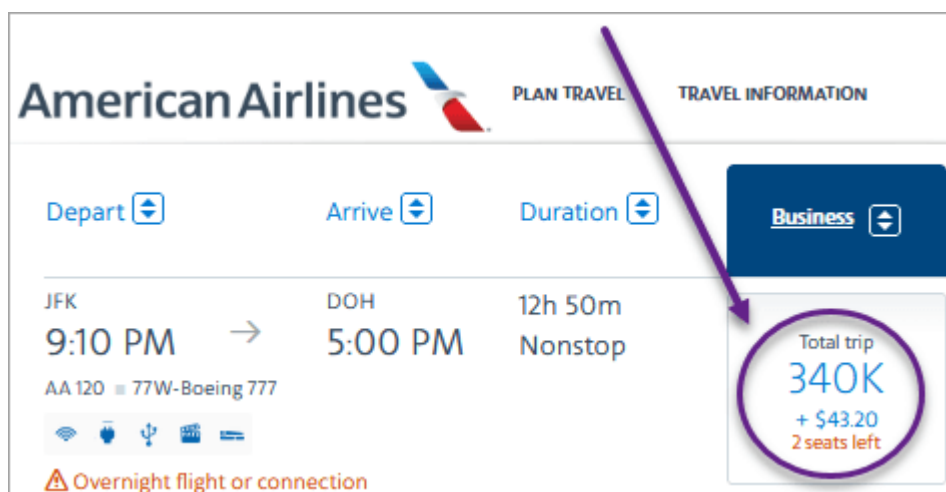
While not cheap, Qatar Airways "Flexi" awards can save you up to 80% off a top Business Class seat, with point transfer bonuses or buying miles direct

REMEMBER ANYTIME AWARDS?

Readers over 40 may remember that airlines used to have “
” which essentially cost you about twice as many miles to fly on any date you wanted. If you were totally inflexible on dates back then, the airlines had you over a Niagara Falls barrel. But hey, you gotta do what you gotta do. These days, “dynamic awards” have replaced them. For inflexible flyers, they’re generally

ridiculously high in price. Let's take a look at what's replaced anytime awards on American, also known as "dynamic pricing."

AMERICAN'S TYPICAL FLEXIBLE TRAVELER COST: 340,000 ONE WAY!



American Airlines PLAN TRAVEL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Depart Arrive Duration Business

JFK 9:10 PM → DOH 5:00 PM 12h 50m Nonstop

AA 120 = 77W-Boeing 777

📶 📶 📶 📶 📶

⚠️ Overnight flight or connection

Total trip
340K
+ \$43.20
2 seats left

So, my interest was piqued recently when I was planning a flight from Berlin to Almaty, Kazakhstan, flying Qatar Qsuites (I know, I know, I'm collecting countries!). While searching for the lowest-cost award seat, it seemed that neither American Airlines nor British Airways had any award availability, but Iberia did (just not on my dates). Anyway, not one to be deterred, I investigated further.



Not flexible? We've got your back.

PAIN POINTS

First a note: Although I was traveling from Europe to Central Asia, most of you will want information about traveling from the U.S. to Doha and beyond, so I've got your back.

In a nutshell, the problem is that **Qatar has Qsuite award space, but availability from the U.S. is on and off on a flash basis.** Moreover, when it's on, it's not always at the lowest price, although close in there are more opportunities when you can find it. Qatar's pricing structure looks like this for New York-Doha:

- The lowest cost is 70,000 one-way and 140,000 round-trip when it's available.
- **The Flexi award** cost is 140,000 one-way and 280,000 round-trip, when it's available, which is more often.
- Occasionally, we see a mid-level price for 94,500 one-way and 189,000 round-trip.

QATAR FLEXI AWARDS 140,000 MILES ONE WAY (200,000 MILES LESS THAN AMERICAN!)

The screenshot displays the Qatar Airways website interface for a flight from New York (JFK) to Doha (DOH). The flight is scheduled for Tuesday, October 3, 2023, at 10:05 AM, arriving in Doha on Wednesday, October 4, 2023, at 05:45 AM. The total price is shown as 140,000 Avios + 98.75 USD. A purple arrow points to the price, and a purple circle highlights the 'Flexi' award type. The flight is operated by Qatar Airways using a Boeing 777-300ER.

Outbound flight	Departure	Arrival	Total price
Departure Tue, 03 Oct 2023 10:05 JFK New York, US	→	Arrival Wed, 04 Oct 2023 05:45 DOH Doha, QA	140000 Avios + 98.75 USD

Tue, 03 Oct 2023
20:05 JFK
New York, John F Kennedy Airport
United States of America

12h 40m
Wed, 04 Oct 2023
15:45 DOH +1day
Doha, Hamad International Airport
Qatar

QR 0702
Boeing 777-300ER
Operated by : Qatar Airways

Flexi ☒

NO MILES? NO PROBLEM.

Buy from Qatar for as little as 1.6 cents each during their latest 80% bonus promotion. Typical bonuses are in the 30-40% range.

Or transfer from Amex to British Airways or Iberia. **Or** buy from Amex and transfer for 2.5 cents each — **or** for what amounts to 2 cents each during their latest 30% transfer bonus promotion. Typical bonuses are in the 30-50% range.

A GREAT DEAL?

Considering the above, paying 140,000 miles (280,000 round-trip) to get into the Qsuite when you're inflexible and that's all the airline offers is better than nothing given that fares typically run up to \$10,116 to \$14,025 to the Middle East and beyond.

Especially when you're in the air for 12+ hours and given that Qatar Airways sometimes offers flash mileage purchase bonuses of 30%, 40%, 50% and even up to **80%** – **all of which knocks that 280K down to as low as 156K round-trip**. In other words, if you are an inflexible traveler with firm dates, this strategy makes sense when you can make it work with the purchase bonus or transfer bonus.

EXAMPLE QSUITE FLEXI AWARD SAVINGS WITH THE QATAR MILEAGE PURCHASE BONUS STRATEGY

New York - Doha	Saver	Mid-Tier	Flexi
Approx. Regular Miles Cost	2.8¢		
Approx. Miles Cost When on Sale	1.56¢		
Regular Mileage Required R/T	140,000	189,000	280,000
Mileage Required R/T When on Sale	78,000	105,000	156,000
Cost of Miles (less bonus 80%)	\$2,184	\$2,940	\$4,356
Taxes R/T	\$242		
Total Cost R/T	\$2,420	\$3,182	\$4,598
Typical Published Fare R/T	\$12,317		
Savings	\$9,897	\$9,135	\$7,719
	80%	74%	63%

STILL A GOOD DEAL?

American Express sometimes has transfer bonuses with British Airways and Iberia, which you can [combine with your Qatar Airways Avios](#) that'll save you 30%, 40%, or 50% – **which knocks that 280K down to 224K**. In other words, if you are an inflexible traveler with firm dates, this strategy makes sense when you can make it work with the transfer bonus.

EXAMPLE QSUITE FLEXI AWARD SAVINGS WITH THE AMEX POINTS PURCHASE STRATEGY

New York - Doha	Saver	Mid-Tier	Flexi
Buy Points Regular Cost	2.5¢		

New York - Doha	Saver	Mid-Tier	Flexi
Buy Points Cost When on Sale	2¢		
Regular Mileage Required R/T	140,000	189,000	280,000
Mileage Required When on Sale R/T	108,000	146,000	224,000
Cost of Points (less bonus 30%)	\$2,800	\$3,780	\$5,600
Taxes R/T	\$242		
Total Cost R/T	\$3,042	\$4,022	\$5,842
Typical Published Fare R/T	\$12,317		
Savings	\$9,275	\$8,295	\$6,475
	75%	67%	53%

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Let's break it down into steps.

1. First find a Qatar flight at the lowest award level for where you're going.
2. Check for available award seats using your lowest-cost partner loyalty program currency
 1. Cathay Pacific or British Airways and Iberia miles – because they're easier to come by with Amex transfers (BA and Iberia often offer a 30%-50% bonus transfer deal. That comes out to 2 cents each when buying from Amex).
 2. Capital One or Chase points (BA currently offers a 30% bonus transfer deal through September 22).
 3. American Airlines requires fewer miles for the award. I always buy the maximum amount each year when they're on sale.
3. **If those three options don't work for you**, check availability with Qatar Airways, which has another tier that can cost 30% to 100% more on some routes.

We don't usually recommend these kinds of options because you'd only do it if the rack-rate fare is really high, and you're not flexible with your dates. But Business Class fares to the Middle East can cost \$10,116+.

DEEP DIVE ON THE NUMBERS

Qatar has 13 U.S. hubs that connect Doha to/from Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC.

FLEXI QSUITE STRATEGY #1 QATAR MILEAGE PURCHASE BONUS

To/From Doha:	Mileage Required R/T	Cost Less Sale Bonus (80%)	Cost to Buy Miles When on Sale	Total Cost Including Award Ticket Taxes	Typical Published Fare	Savings	
Atlanta	280,000	156,000	\$4,368	\$4,610	\$11,128	\$6,518	59%
Boston					\$12,990	\$8,380	65%
Chicago					\$13,656	\$9,046	66%
Dallas					\$13,500	\$8,890	66%
Houston					\$13,431	\$8,821	66%
Los Angeles					\$11,239	\$6,629	59%
Miami					\$10,443	\$5,833	56%
Montreal					\$4,874	\$264	5%
New York					\$12,317	\$7,707	63%
Philadelphia*					\$14,025	\$9,415	67%
San Francisco					\$10,116	\$5,506	54%
Seattle					\$10,268	\$5,658	55%
Washington, DC					\$13,098	\$8,488	65%

*Service through October 28, 2023.

FLEXI QSUITE STRATEGY #2 AMEX POINTS PURCHASE

To/From Doha:	Mileage Required R/T	Amex Cost Less Transfer Bonus (30%)	Cost to Buy Amex Points	Total Cost Including Award Ticket Taxes	Typical Published Fare	Savings	
Atlanta	280,000	224,000	\$5,600	\$5,842	\$11,128	\$5,286	48%
Boston					\$12,990	\$7,148	55%
Chicago					\$13,656	\$7,814	57%

To/From Doha:	Mileage Required R/T	Amex Cost Less Transfer Bonus (30%)	Cost to Buy Amex Points	Total Cost Including Award Ticket Taxes	Typical Published Fare	Savings	
Dallas					\$13,500	\$7,658	57%
Houston					\$13,431	\$7,589	57%
Los Angeles					\$11,239	\$5,397	48%
Miami					\$10,443	\$4,601	44%
Montreal					\$4,874	-\$968	-20%
New York					\$12,317	\$6,475	53%
Philadelphia*					\$14,025	\$8,183	58%
San Francisco					\$10,116	\$4,274	42%
Seattle					\$10,268	\$4,426	43%
Washington, DC					\$13,098	\$7,256	55%

*Service through October 28, 2023.

DON'T LIVE IN A QATAR HUB?

Keep in mind our [Skipping Stones report](#). Check with the airlines to add a connecting flight from the U.S. hub city coming and/or going from any of Oneworld's (American or Alaska) U.S. departure cities based on availability or buy a [positioning flight](#).

NOT FLYING TO DOHA? TAKE QATAR'S DEAL EVEN FURTHER

For 20,000 to 50,000 more miles, depending on the destination, you can explore other awesome destinations in Africa, Asia, or the Middle East.

Africa:

Egypt: Alexandria, Cairo

Ethiopia: Addis Ababa

Ghana: Accra

Kenya: Nairobi

Marrakesh: Casablanca

Nigeria: Abuja, Lagos

Rwanda: Kigali

Seychelles

South Africa: Cape Town, Johannesburg

Tanzania: Dar es Salaam, Mount Kilimanjaro

Tunisia: Tunis

Asia:

Indonesia: Bali, Jakarta

Kazakhstan: Almaty

Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur

Maldives: Male

Nepal: Kathmandu

Singapore

Thailand: Bangkok, Phuket

Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City

India: Bengaluru, Chennai, Goa, Kochi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and New Delhi

Middle East:

Bahrain

Jordan: Amman

Oman: Muscat

Saudi Arabia: Jeddah, Riyadh

U.A.E. Abu Dhabi, Dubai

The Route Network MAP



Although these aircraft move around and flight numbers may change, here's the trick to finding the Qsuite:

- All A350-1000s have Qsuits.
- The A350-900 can be tricky as both layouts have nine rows in Business Class. The Qsuite aircraft has row 2 A/D/G/J, while the non-Qsuite configuration has row 2 A/E/F/K.
- B777-200 and B777-300 aircraft with 11 rows in Business Class have Qsuits.
- B787-800s do NOT have Qsuits.

Where to find flights with Qsuits at the moment:

To/From Doha:	Flight Number****
Atlanta	756/755
Boston	744/743
Chicago	726/725
Dallas	730/729, 732/731
Houston	714/713
Los Angeles	742*/741*, 740/739
Miami	778/777
Montreal	764/763
New York	701/702, 703/704, 705**/706**
Philadelphia***	728/727
San Francisco	738/737
Seattle	720/719
Washington, DC	708/707, 710/709

*Qsuite service Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday from March 17, 2023. ** Qsuite service from Oct. 29, 2023. ***No Qsuite service as of Oct. 29, 2023. ****Aircraft subject to change.

So if you don't have any flexibility on your dates, don't despair. You can still save up to 80% off in Qatar's coveted Qsuite by using point transfer bonuses or buying miles directly.

Not bad.