



# And the Award for Best Value Booking to Europe Goes to... First Class Horses for Courses

March 2023

## **How to win the competition for best value across the pond**

We love award season here at FCF. Except for the long speeches, weird outfits, and people pretending to be happy for those who beat them for an award.

So we thought we'd cut to the chase on this one and simply say that the Best Premium Value Booking to Europe is...(drumroll)... TWO bookings in two different cabins!

Yes, I can hear shocked gasps in the audience.

The winners are **First Class** on your night flight out and **Business Class** on your return flight on two different airlines.

We call it Horses for Courses and wrote about it [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for **published fares**. Critics gave it five stars.

So let's talk about using **miles** for this glittering mixed-cabin strategy.

## TO EUROPE AND BACK WITH MILES USING THE HORSES STRATEGY

The airlines that have First Class mileage award availability are American Airlines to London, Lufthansa to Germany and beyond, Emirates to Athens and Milan and Singapore to Frankfurt.

And you can return in Business Class — where you don't really need to worry about getting the best seats because they are day flights — on Iberia for just 34,000 miles, American for around 72,000, Singapore for 56,700 (KrisFlyer Spontaneous Escapes promo award) and United for around 60,000.

Of course not all of you are flying to England, Germany, Italy, or Greece, and returning home from England, Germany, or Spain (also known as an “open-jaw strategy” because you return from a different location than the one you arrived in, thus making an open-jaw shape. I always envision a hippo). But I hope it gets you thinking about the [Horses for Courses](#) strategy, especially since European cities are so close to each other and easy to get to with a short flight, or even a scenic train journey. Plus, most itineraries require a connection anyway.

Comfort-wise, the Horses strategy pays off, as it means investing more on your overnight flight and less on your return flight where sleep and jet lag don't factor as much.



**EXAMPLE #1**  
**FLY EMIRATES FIRST CLASS OVERNIGHT,**  
**IBERIA BUSINESS CLASS DAYTIME**

Here, you can get to Milan or Athens in Emirates' First Class luxurious shower flight (a lifetime bucket-list buster), and return from Madrid in Business Class on Iberia to save enough miles to offset the splurge in First on Emirates.

Operating Airline	Class	Route	Mileage Program	Miles	Taxes
Emirates	First Class	New York - Milan / Newark-Athens	Emirates Skywards (Amex, Capital One, Chase and Citi Partner)	102,000	\$105
Iberia	Business Class	Madrid - New York	Iberia Avios (Amex and Chase Partner)	34,000	\$148
Total Cost				136,000	\$253

**As you can see, the net cost of the two isn't any more expensive — if not less — than your typical American or United round-trip in Business Class (and way less than Delta Biz). Love it!**

## EXAMPLE #2

### FLY AMERICAN FIRST CLASS OVERNIGHT, SINGAPORE BUSINESS CLASS DAYTIME

Here, you get to London in First Class spaciousness. You do your *veddy* British thing before flying (or connecting) to Frankfurt and heading home on a day flight in Business Class.

Operating Airline	Class	Route	Mileage Program	Miles	Taxes
American	First Class	New York - London	American AAdvantage (Citi Partner)	84,000	\$6
Singapore	Business Class	Frankfurt - New York	Singapore KrisFlyer (Amex, Capital One, Chase and Citi Partner)	56,700	\$130
Total Cost				140,700	\$136

## EXAMPLE #3

### FLY LUFTHANSA FIRST CLASS OVERNIGHT, AMERICAN BUSINESS CLASS DAYTIME

This example shows a Lufthansa First Class flight to Frankfurt or Munich (or beyond), before taking a return flight on American in Business Class from London. In case you're wondering, the Frankfurt-to-London flight is just under 2 hours, around the length of *The Godfather*.

Operating Airline	Class	Route	Mileage Program	Miles	Taxes
Lufthansa	First Class	New York - Frankfurt or Munich	Lufthansa	91,000	\$952
American	Business Class	London - New York	American AAdvantage (Citi Partner)	72,000	\$316
Total Cost				163,000	\$1,268

## EXAMPLE #4

### FLY SINGAPORE FIRST CLASS OVERNIGHT, UNITED BUSINESS CLASS DAYTIME

This example shows a Singapore First Class flight to Frankfurt (or you can catch a connection beyond) before you return in Business Class on United from London. Again, the Frankfurt-London flight takes just 160 minutes — according to ChatGPT, that's a leisurely hike, a roast dinner, or playing nine holes — so easy you could do it in your sleep. Plus, most itineraries require a connection anyway.

Operating Airline	Class	Route	Mileage Program	Miles	Taxes
Singapore	First Class	New York - Frankfurt	Singapore KrisFlyer (Amex, Capital One, Chase and Citi Partner)	97,000	\$6
United	Business Class	London - New York	United MileagePlus (Chase Partner)	60,000	\$316
Total Cost				157,000	\$322

## And the Best Picture Award Goes To...

If you're stuck on availability and wondering what the best value purchase with miles to Europe is, I'd have to say Emirates from New York to Milan in First Class. And if you're short on miles, you would return on Iberia Airlines in Business Class.

### RUNNERS UP

**First Class Overnight Flight:** If Emirates doesn't work for you, know that you can find availability First Class on American's Dallas or New York-London route for 84,000 one way and Lufthansa's Chicago-Frankfurt, Boston-Munich, Chicago-Munich, New York-Munich, and Washington, DC-Munich routes for 91,000 one way or Singapore's New York-Frankfurt route for 97,000 miles one-way.

**Business Class Daylight Flight:** If Iberia doesn't work for you, know that you can find decent availability returning in Business Class on United's London-New York route for 60,000 one way and American's London-Los Angeles route for about 72,000 one way or use Singapore's Business Class promo award from Frankfurt to New York for 56,700 miles one-way.

### BOX OFFICE FLOP

When returning in Business Class on American, Delta, or United on **routes other than the aforementioned**, there's little to no low-cost availability from most European destinations to the U.S. on the day flight.

### FIRST CLASS AVAILABILITY

Refer to [FCF'S Worldwide Roundup of First Class Price Trends](#) for availability on American, Emirates, Lufthansa, and Singapore.

### BUSINESS CLASS AVAILABILITY

#### Iberia

You can find availability for up to two travelers on Iberia's Chicago, Dallas, and Miami routes. Los Angeles also has a handful of days with single-seat availability searching far out in December and January.

Washington, DC, has a handful of days with single-seat availability in both directions in August.

When looking for more than one award seat, it's best not to use their partner American as lately we have only seen single-seat availability there, plus the cost is lower using Iberia.

To Madrid From:	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Chicago		Nov., Dec.	Jan., Feb.	March, April, Nov., Dec.		Jan., Feb.
Dallas	July to Sept., Nov., Dec.	Oct., Dec.	Jan.	March, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.	Sept., Dec., Jan.	Aug., Dec.
Los Angeles	Dec., Jan.			Dec., Jan.		
Miami	Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.	July, Oct., Dec.	Nov., Dec., Jan.	July, Sept., Nov.	Nov.	Aug., Nov., Dec., Jan.
Washington, DC	July	Aug.		Sept.		Aug.

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

I love the Horses for Courses strategy because it's not default thinking, it's smart thinking. You get to arrive at your First Class destination well-rested and in the most comfortable way possible, where sleep really matters. If you're on Emirates you can even take a shower at 30,000 feet to arrive most refreshed. On the way home, the day flight is best for catching up on emails or movie binging.

*Either way*, you're maximizing value, and that's definitely worthy of an award.

#### Related FCF Reads:

[Spanish Fly: One of the Cheapest Ways to Get to Europe in Business Class With Miles, Points, or Dollars](#)

[Spanish Fly Part 2: How to Get Even More Value From Iberia's Cheap Business Class Strategy to Europe](#)

[Opportunity Travel: How to Stretch Your Budget Into a Higher Class of Service](#)

[Positioning Flights: FCF's Mindset on Getting Where the Getting is Good](#)

[The Art of Skipping Stones & What We Can All Learn from the Boise to Budapest Premium Traveler](#)

[Stop “Booking Backwards”: Use FCF’s Forward-Thinking Deals to Book Dream Trips Every Time](#)

[Revisited for 2023: Horses for Courses \(and Cabins\). How Mixed-Class Fares Can Make for a Much Better Value](#)

[Is the Value of a Mile the Same on Overnight Flights as on Daytime Flights?](#)

[Classy Moves. How Changing Cabins Can Change the Way You Fly First Class to Europe.](#)

[Solo Yolo Fomo: Single Travelers to Asia Rejoice That the First Class World Was Made For You](#)



# All In One Place: FCF'S Worldwide Roundup of First Class Price Trends

March 2023

## **What's good? What's changed with published First Class fares? Mileage award tickets? And what are the workarounds?**

We don't call ourselves First Class Flyer for nothing. So, it's time for FCF's semi-regular roundup of trends up front.

Sure, lockdown took its toll on First Class with a lot of airlines closing those cabins. But now that travel's back on the menu First Class cabins are making a comeback. While published fares and miles pricing are in flux, **low-tier mileage award space is available to a number of regions at various times**. For two people,

look to American, Cathay Pacific, and Lufthansa. If you're a solo traveler, add Emirates, Japan Airlines, and Singapore Airlines, to your list.

We took a First Class deep dive, along with other opportunities **by region, airline, and miles and points** that you can redeem for big savings. Head through the air bridge and TURN LEFT!



Time to round 'em up!

## A COUPLE FIRST CLASS SERVICE UPDATES FIRST

### Asia

- **All Nippon** is pulling First Class from its Los Angeles-Tokyo service starting at the end of March, as it moves from operating B777s with First Class to B787s that don't offer the cabin. This leaves only Chicago, New York, and San Francisco with First Class on All Nippon's B777s, which currently do not show any award space at the moment.
- **Japan Airlines** is pulling First Class from its Chicago-Tokyo service starting at the end of March, as it moves from operating B777s with First Class to B787s that don't offer the cabin. This leaves only Los

Angeles, New York, and San Francisco with First Class on Japan's B777s. More on where the availability is in a moment.

## Latest First Class Availability & Trends With Miles & Points

### ASIA

#### ALL NIPPON AWARD TRAVEL

All Nippon has resumed First Class on three of five routes since pre-lockdown, specifically Chicago, New York, and San Francisco to Tokyo. We are keeping an eye out for First Class returning to Houston and Washington, DC.

Best of luck finding free First Class award seats on those three routes. Other than a handful of single seats on Chicago-Tokyo's return flight back in January, we haven't seen seats available on these routes since December 2021, so don't plan on this approach.

#### CATHAY PACIFIC AWARD TRAVEL

[Two-seat availability](#) has been pretty easy to find lately, but it's now decreasing as you can see below in **blue**. The bulk of availability is for single seats as you can see in **black**.

**Workaround:** Don't have any Cathay Pacific miles? [Buy the miles to save big](#) or transfer Amex, Citi, or Capitol One points to Cathay miles.

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

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

#### JAPAN AIRLINES AWARD TRAVEL

Japan consistently offers single-seat First Class award space close in — within 30 days of departure — and for far-out availability, 11 to 12 months in advance of departure. We have occasionally seen two-seat availability close in for spontaneous travelers and last-minute upgraders.

**Workaround:** Don't have any Japan Airline miles? [Buy American miles redeemable for Japan Air to save big.](#)

To Tokyo From:	Outbound		Return
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month
New York	Feb.		Feb.
San Francisco		Feb.	Feb.

Months in black at least one seat available. Remember to use the data as a guide since availability can be volatile...

## SINGAPORE AIRLINES AWARD TRAVEL

Singapore's Los Angeles-Tokyo route — the only route the airline flies from the U.S. to Asia with a First Class cabin — is showing a handful of days with one seat close in on the return only. Keep your eyes peeled because you can sometimes see two seats close-in too.

## Europe Mileage Awards Trends

We left British Airways out because of their high taxes. Here's a bit of a [workaround for BA's First Class](#) and [British Airways Business-to-First Class Mileage Upgrades to London](#).

## AMERICAN AWARD TRAVEL

Otherwise, as you see below, American Airlines to London from Dallas and New York, which ranges from 168,000 to 224,000 miles round-trip, is the cheapest First Class option available. American's Los Angeles and Miami routes do not show any free award seats at this time.

- **Dallas-London** has semi close in availability for two or more travelers, in both directions in April.
- **New York-London** October to January has seats for four or more travelers in both directions, making this route better to find space far out.

Details...

To London From:	Outbound		Return	
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Dallas	April	March, May, Dec., Jan.	May	April

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

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

## EMIRATES AWARD TRAVEL TO EUROPE

**New York-Milan** offers single-seat availability in January 2024 in both directions on its A380. October and December 2023 have a handful of dates with single seats on the return. We haven't seen two seats available since January, 2023, so this could change and is worth checking periodically.

**Newark-Athens** offers single-seat availability October to January 2024 in both directions on its B777. Single-seat availability can sometimes be found close in, but we haven't seen two seats available since July, 2021.

Route	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
New York - Milan		Jan.		Oct., Dec.	Jan.	
Newark - Athens	Dec., Jan.	Nov.	Oct.	March, Oct.,	Dec.	Nov., Jan.

Months in black at least one seat available. Remember to use the data as a guide since availability can be volatile...

## LUFTHANSA AWARD TRAVEL

- **Boston-Munich** availability has decreased from plentiful to a handful most months. You can find up to four seats, on a few dates outbound if you search close in. There are a few months with a handful of days with one- and two-seat availability for travel through the fall. So it's best to book now if this route is on your radar.
- **Chicago-Frankfurt** has a handful of days with one- and two-seat availability outbound only in December and January. Single-seat availability is looking pretty slim, so it's best close in for spontaneous travelers and last-minute upgraders.
- **Chicago-Munich** availability has decreased from a lot to a few most months. One to two seats can be found on a handful of dates in April, July, and August, in both directions. The opportunity of booking two seats is less now, so it's best to **book now**

while the getting is good.

- **New York-Munich** shows decent availability for one to two travelers in both directions in August.
- **Washington, DC-Munich** has the best availability of all routes for one to two travelers from May to October.

Currently, we're not seeing free award seats available on a number of Lufthansa's routes including Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, as well as the Washington, DC-Frankfurt and Miami-Munich routes.

**Workarounds:** Get free connecting flights to hubs with availability, check out our bridge route report [here](#).

And speaking of Lufthansa, the German carrier has a [new buy-miles sale opportunity](#) you should check out if you don't have any of its miles.

Route	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Chicago - Frankfurt	March, Nov., <a href="#">Dec.</a> , <a href="#">Jan.</a>	Dec., Jan.		March		
Boston - Munich	<a href="#">March</a> , <a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>			<a href="#">March</a> , <a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">June</a> , <a href="#">Aug. to Oct.</a>	<a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a>	April
Chicago - Munich	<a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a>	<a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>	<a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a>	<a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">June</a> , <a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>	April	
New York - Munich	March, <a href="#">Sept.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>	<a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>	<a href="#">Aug.</a>	<a href="#">June</a>	<a href="#">Aug.</a>	
Washington, DC - Munich	<a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">May</a>	June	<a href="#">July to Oct.</a>	<a href="#">April</a>	<a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">June</a>	<a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">July to Oct.</a>

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

## SINGAPORE AIRLINES AWARD TRAVEL

Singapore Airlines' New York-Frankfurt route isn't very consistent as back in January we only saw a couple random days across all months outbound only in First Class. Then in February, we saw quite a few days with single seats, for a few months, on the return only. Currently, you can find single-seat availability in January and February 2024 outbound and October to February on the return. We have not seen two seats on this route since lockdown in November, 2021.

Route	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
New York - Frankfurt	Feb.	Jan.		Oct.	Nov.	Dec. to Feb.

Months in black at least one seat available. Remember to use the data as a guide since availability can be volatile...

## Middle East Mileage Awards

### EMIRATES AWARD TRAVEL

To Dubai, there is plenty of single-seat availability in both directions on the following routes in the following months. (If you want the [shower flight, book the A380 routes](#)).

**Boston (B777)** in October

**Chicago (B787)** in October and November

**Houston (A380)** in April and September to November

**Los Angeles (A380)** in September and October

**Orlando (B777)** in September to November and January

**San Francisco (A380)** in October and November

**Washington, DC (A380)** in November

On all routes, other months have scattered availability, as you can see below.

**We haven't seen decent two-seat availability since the end of 2021 on Emirates.** Your best chance of **finding two seats is close in**, on their Houston, San Francisco, and Washington, DC, routes, but it'll likely only be for a handful of days.

**Workaround:** Compare the cost of [buying the miles needed through Amex](#) for these Emirates flights in First Class versus forking out the cash for the typical published airfare, to [save nothing less than five figures](#).

To Dubai From:	Outbound			Outbound		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Boston	March	Sept.	April, Oct., Nov., Jan.	April, May, Sept., Dec., Jan.	Nov.	Oct.
Chicago	April, Feb.	Nov.	Sept., Oct., Jan.	April, Sept., Dec. to Feb.	Nov.	Oct.
Houston		March	April, July to Nov., Jan.	June, Jan., Feb.	April, Dec.	May, Sept. to Nov.
Los Angeles	Aug., Sept., Nov., Feb.	Oct.	Jan.	Sept., Oct.		
Orlando	March, May, July		April, Aug. to Nov., Jan.	April, June, Dec., Feb.	Jan.	May, Sept. to Nov.
San Francisco	March, May, July	April, Aug. to Nov., Jan.		Jan.	Oct.	Nov., Dec.
Washington, DC	March, May		April, Aug. to Nov., Jan.	April, June, Sept., Oct., Dec., Jan.	Nov.	May

Months in black at least one seat available. Remember to use the data as a guide since availability can be volatile...

## South America Mileage Awards

### AMERICAN AWARD TRAVEL

Although First Class award seat availability is sparse on most routes, there are seats for up to four travelers on American's **Miami-São Paulo** route. Keep an eye out as we've seen one to two days a month with as many as four seats outbound in March, May, and September through November, which don't make it on the chart but it's a trend worth checking if South America is on your radar. On the return, March, May, and January have one to two days a month with one seat. [Don't book backwards](#) and you can score.

**Workaround:** Don't have any American miles? [Buy them to save big](#), or transfer them. More on that [here](#). Don't live in Miami? Remember you can [get free connections](#), when available.

Route	Outbound		Return
	4 to 8 Days Per Month		4 to 8 Days Per Month
Miami - São Paulo	Dec.		Sept., Oct.

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

## Published Fare Scene

### ASIA FARES

**High & Largely Unchanged:** As we said in our [January Crystal Ball report](#), fares are about the same as they were in 2019 pre-lockdown when First Class was in full swing, ranging from \$19,000 to 23,000 to Asia for All Nippon and Japan Airlines. On Singapore Airlines, Los Angeles-Tokyo costs between \$13,600 and \$15,700.

### EUROPE FARES

**Decent & Holding Steady:** American and British Airways from the East Coast starts at \$4,400 to London and beyond. From the West Coast, fares start in the high \$6,000 range to London and up.

**Fares Double:** On Emirates, New York-Milan round-trip goes for \$15,500 to \$19,500 at the moment, whereas back in January 2022, they were just \$6,192. Newark-Athens typically ranges from \$16,300 to \$20,300 now, whereas back in January 2022, they were just \$7,478.

**Trending Lower:** On Lufthansa, if you fly from the East Coast to their Frankfurt hub you'll pay \$7,281+, and to Munich, \$9,514+ at time of publication. It's much less to fly beyond their hubs to other European cities, such as Belfast, London, Madrid, Palma, and Valencia, Barcelona, Florence, Malta, Milan, Naples, Rome, and Seville, prices are in the low \$6K range — not bad for First Class.

If you fly from the West Coast to Frankfurt, you'll pay \$10,700+, and to Munich, \$9,514+. Other cities start in the low \$8,200s.

### MIDDLE EAST FARES

**Fares Slashed:** Etihad's Washington, DC-Abu Dhabi route, which was going for \$23,100 in August of 2019, now ranges from \$9,799 to \$10,700 through mid-June then jumps to \$15,900 to \$21,800.

**Trending Higher:** Emirates fares are up 27% to 36% when compared to May 2020, New York-Dubai was \$28,100 and now is \$21,572 for example.

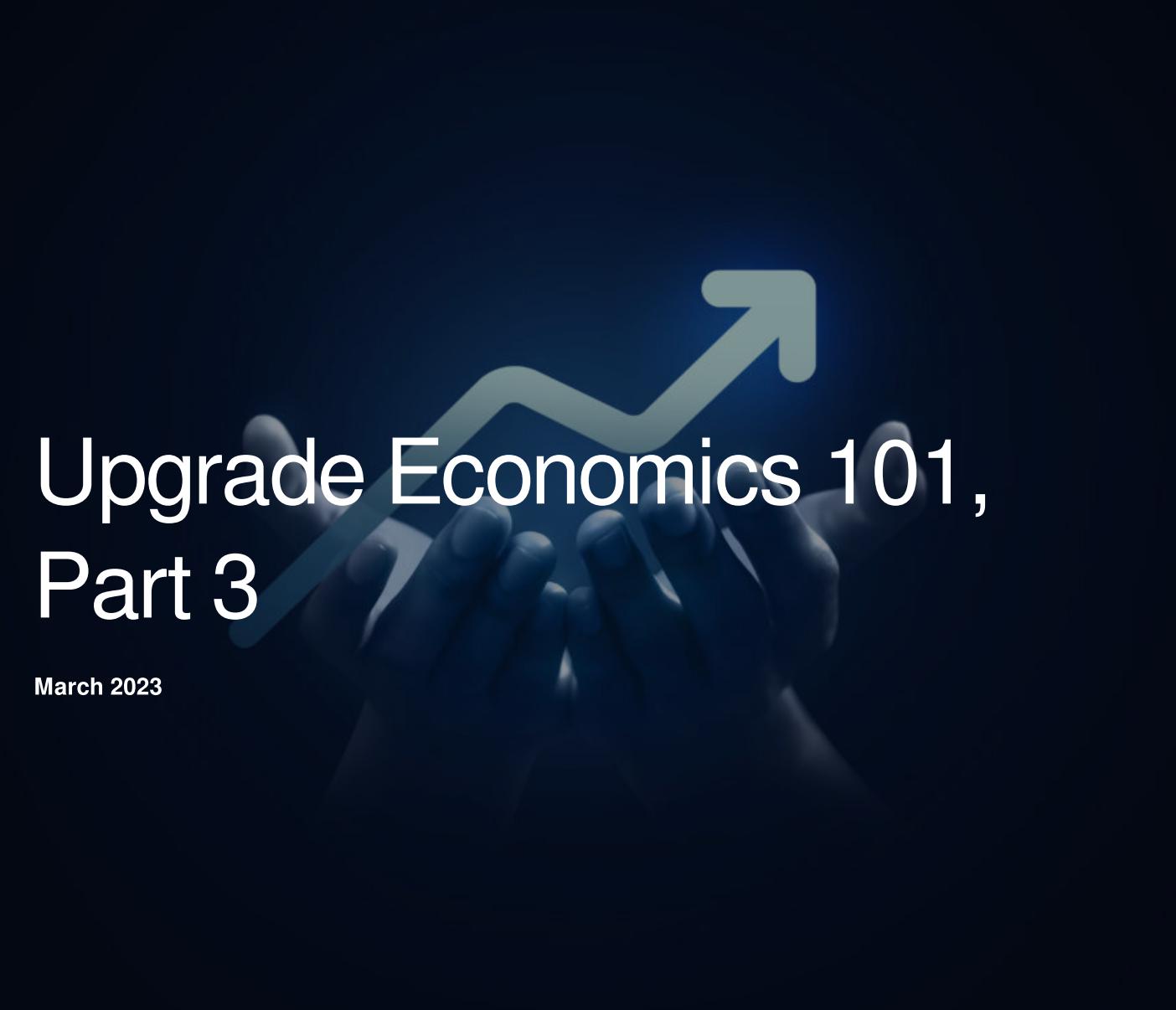
### SOUTH AMERICA FARES

**Trending High:** American's only First Class route to South America from Miami to São Paulo ranges from \$12,820 to \$14,800, compared to \$10,800 back in November 2020.

### LAST THOUGHTS

Mileage availability is dynamic and always changing, so use this as a guide. And remember, First Class award availability shown in the charts above reflects publication time or just prior. But don't let that prevent you from dreaming — and dreaming big. While the pickings may be slim at times, there are plenty of First Class seats to snap up if you're [flexible with your](#) destination and booking dates.

Now that you've got a clear picture of the First Class landscape with miles and cash, get your bags packed and ready to go. That inviting First Class seat is just waiting for you in 2023 and beyond.



# Upgrade Economics 101, Part 3

March 2023

## Avoid in-flight buyer's remorse with the Cost-to-Upgrade-per-Flight-Hour Perspective

Attention class. I trust you've been putting some of our teachings from [UE 101, Part 1](#) and [UE 101, Part 2](#) to practical use over the last few months. Cecilia, I saw your Instagram pics from Tokyo – nice work from you. And Joe, I loved the TikTok routine you and your friends put together in Madrid – and sorry to hear about the hamstring by the way. But at least the flight savings will help with the physio bills.

Now, today, we're going to talk about a very helpful way to determine the value of an upgrade, and that is using the **Cost-to-Upgrade-per-Flight-Hour Mindset** formula.

People tend to **look at lump sums and make hasty decisions based on that**. But when you break costs down to hourly segments, you might start to think differently. An extra \$40 an hour to fly in Business Class? An extra 1,200 miles or points per hour to upgrade? Heck yeah, that's actually great value. Yes, it's purely a mindset thing, but it's one that makes perfect sense.

## INFLIGHT BUYER'S REMORSE

Which brings me to a bit of Psychology 101: "Inflight Buyer's Remorse." People often are kind of short-sighted when booking travel on the ground. Before they get on the flight, they congratulate themselves on the money saved by buying a cheap ticket for an okay seat. And then when actually in the air, regret the comfort they're missing out on! Every kick from the kid behind, every armrest elbow tussle, every stringy bit of chicken, every "sorry I gotta go to the bathroom," and every flimsy fork is a reminder that a wrong decision was made.

So it's worth thinking about whether those inconveniences, er, ANNOYANCES, are worth \$40 an hour. For me, being in Business Class is the best extra \$40 an hour I could spend when it's that low, or why not \$85 for First Class when possible?

With all that in mind, let's get those books open and look at some examples.

### MARCH UPGRADE ECONOMICS EXAMPLE #1 FLY IN BUSINESS CLASS ON UNITED INSTEAD OF PREMIUM ECONOMY FOR JUST \$40 PER FLIGHT HOUR R/T

In this example, flying United on a round-trip NYC/Newark-London in Business Class costs \$2,567 on average at time of publication for July and August travel, while Premium Economy is going for \$1,987. Now there's a lot of psychology built into those numbers. My guess is that the Premium Economy price computes to a nice round \$2,000 in the flyers brain, while the Business Class price is rounded to \$2,500. That extra \$500 will deter many people. In fact, most people won't even bother to compare fares in multiple cabins! So the cost of upgrading is \$40 per flight hour to actually *enjoy* those hours in the air. Hour, after hour, after hour.

### COMPARING PREMIUM ECONOMY & BUSINESS ON UNITED

Operating Airline	Route / Season	Class	Fare R/T
United	Newark - London / July - August	Premium Economy	\$1,987
		Business Class	\$2,567
<b>Upgrade Cost</b>		\$580	

Operating Airline	Route / Season	Class	Fare R/T
<b>Upgrade Cost Per Flight Hour</b>			\$40
<b>Benefit</b>		One-Class Upgrade	

## **MARCH UPGRADE ECONOMICS EXAMPLE #2**

### **FLY IN BUSINESS CLASS TO TAHITI INSTEAD OF ECONOMY FOR JUST 1,200 MILES OR POINTS MORE PER FLIGHT HOUR**

I can see the class is getting distracted by their smartphones, so let's take a moment to focus on this nuanced perspective example. This one takes the per-hour value idea and translates it to mileage award tickets where the getting is good.

If you can find free award seats on Delta to Tahiti, the cost *in economy* is 140,000 miles round-trip versus [160,000 miles round-trip in Business Class on Air Tahiti Nui](#) (using American miles).

If you apply our value economics to this equation, you'd end up paying less than 1,200 miles per flight hour to upgrade to Business Class to kick off your South Pacific vacation. That's some volcanic value.

Operating Airline	Mileage Program	Class	Mileage R/T
Delta	Delta SkyMiles	Economy	140,000
Air Tahiti Nui	American AAdvantage	Business Class	160,000
<b>Upgrade Cost</b>			<b>20,000 miles</b>
<b>Upgrade Cost Per Flight Hour</b>			<b>1,200</b>
<b>Benefit</b>		One-Class Upgrade	

FCF has been monitoring this route for free award seat availability, and is typically found close in as seen in our [Sweet Redeems alerts](#).



### **MARCH UPGRADE ECONOMICS EXAMPLE #3**

#### **FLY ON AMERICAN IN FIRST CLASS TO EUROPE ON YOUR NIGHT FLIGHT FOR JUST \$85 MORE PER FLIGHT HOUR R/T**

And now for this month's final example. The default mode for most people is to fly from A to B, and B to A in the same cabin. For example, flying Business Class the whole way. But using the logic we've been discussing, you shouldn't overlook the cost-per-flight-hour-to-upgrade ONE OF THOSE LEGS to First Class. We call this the [Horses for Courses Strategy](#). Let's break it down.

American New York-London round-trip in Business Class costs \$3,259 (on average) at time of publication for fall flights. However, if you flew in First Class to London and Business Class on the way back, it costs \$3,859, a difference of \$600. Breaking that down even further, we get a cost of \$85 per hour for the seven-ish-hour overnight flight. Now imagine that you're heading to London for a special birthday, or anniversary, or to personally meet with Ringo Starr. On special occasions such as these, \$85 per hour to arrive most refreshed and ready to go can be well worth it on a red-eye flight.

Operating Airline	Route	Class	Typical Fare
American	New York - London	Business / Business	\$3,259
		First / Business	\$3,859
<b>Upgrade Cost</b>			\$600
<b>Upgrade Cost Per Flight Hour</b>			\$85
<b>Benefit</b>		One-Class Upgrade	

Thank you, class, today's notes are above. Please review them before booking your next flights. I trust the idea of the **Cost-to-Upgrade-per-Flight-Hour Perspective** is well entrenched after today.

Just think about how valuable this data point might be when you're **haggling with your travel companions** who don't want to spring for a better seat. A subtle shift in perspective can make all the difference, and prevent having **Inflight Buyer's Remorse** on the way to your otherwise exciting vacation.

We're Upgrade [Open-Minded, are you?](#)



**Fares have dropped 20%+ on American since last month, while Delta and United are holding steady, and you can still get to Hawaii and the Caribbean for free with a smart strategy**

As we predicted in our [2023 Crystal Ball report](#) published in January, due to layoffs and recession-grabbing headlines, transcon fares have now decreased in altitude by more than 20% in just the last month on American airlines for non-red-eye and 6 a.m. flights. What's more, current turbulent market dynamics mean that fares are dropping sooner than we predicted, so here's the latest.

## BUSINESS CLASS FARE CHANGES BETWEEN NEW YORK & LOS ANGELES NONSTOP

**American Airlines — dropping up to 20%:** Close in through the end of April, the lowest fare we've found is \$2,498, down from \$3,048. American has a handful of the lowest fares for travel in June and July with some days as low as \$1,398; otherwise it's between \$1,798 and \$2,198 on most days, down from \$2,498.

**Delta Airlines — largely unchanged:** Has a couple of random days in the \$1,798 to \$2,198 range for travel departing on Saturdays; otherwise fares range from \$2,198 to \$2,598.

**United Airlines — occasionally good, usually high:** United has the lowest fares for close in travel, with a couple of random days at \$1,573 through April 30. Beyond that the fares range from \$2,458 to \$3,408.

**JetBlue:** Close in fares range from \$1,898 to \$2,298. We've spotted a few days in June at \$1,348. Otherwise, JetBlue is gouging advance planners (especially for weekend travel) with fares ranging from \$2,048 to \$3,238. And then there are Saturdays, which are as high as \$3,698 from September to January.

### THE TRANSCON IS MORE THAN JUST BETWEEN NY & LA

There are some low-fare *non*-New York-Los Angeles nonstop transcon routes like Miami-Los Angeles for \$1,055 round-trip, and others for \$1,216 and less. This chart is good reading.

Airline	Between	Fare
Delta	Miami	Seattle
American	Orlando	Los Angeles
American, JetBlue	Boston	Seattle
Delta	Washington, DC	Seattle
American, JetBlue, United	New York	Seattle
American, JetBlue, United	Miami	Los Angeles
United	Washington, DC	Los Angeles
Delta	Orlando	Seattle
United	New York	Portland, OR
American, JetBlue	Boston	Los Angeles
Delta	Boston	San Diego
United	New York	San Diego
Delta	Boston	San Francisco

Airline	Between	Fare
United	Orlando San Francisco	\$1,216

## HAWAII FOR FREE. WHAT'S NOT TO LAVA?

The transcon – [Hula Loophole](#) update is still going strong with a *cheaper than free* trip to [Hawaii](#). The key is to find **a low-fare route to Hawaii that gives you a free stopover in a West Coast city** that you're already planning to visit. For example, when fares are high on the New York-Los Angeles transcon route, think about adding a stop in Honolulu, Kona, Lihue, or Maui to enjoy a bonus destination — **for free or just a little more**. Screenshots below.



**New York > Los Angeles > New York**

[PLAN TRAVEL](#)[TRAVEL INFORMATION](#)[AADVANTAGE®](#)[LOG IN](#)**DEPART****New York, NY to Los Angeles, CA****Tuesday, May 2, 2023****Flight****Depart****Arrive****Travel time****Class****Seats**

302 American Airlines

4:20 PM

JFK

7:36 PM

LAX

6h 16m

Business

[Choose seats](#)**RETURN****Los Angeles, CA to New York, NY****Tuesday, May 9, 2023****Flight****Depart****Arrive****Travel time****Class****Seats**

274 American Airlines

1:00 PM

LAX

9:32 PM

JFK

5h 32m

Business

[Choose seats](#)

### Cost summary

**Your trip total****\$2,497.80**Includes all taxes and carrier-imposed fees**Passenger**[Bag and optional fees](#)

Trip JFK / LAX

\$2,295.81

[Reservation and tickets FAQs](#)

Taxes

\$201.99

[Price and Tax Information](#)

Carrier-imposed fees

\$0.00

[Conditions of Carriage](#) **Total (all passengers)****\$2,497.80**

## EXAMPLE OF HAWAII FOR FREE: NEW YORK > KONA > LOS ANGELES > NEW YORK

**AmericanAirlines** [PLAN TRAVEL](#) [TRAVEL INFORMATION](#) [AADVANTAGE\\*](#) [LOG IN](#)

**DEPART**  
New York, NY to Los Angeles, CA  
Tuesday, May 2, 2023

Flight	Depart	Arrive	Travel time	Class	Seats
117 American Airlines	7:30 PM JFK	10:57 PM LAX	6h 27m	Business	<a href="#">Choose seats</a>

**DEPART**  
Los Angeles, CA to Kona, HI  
Tuesday, May 9, 2023

Flight	Depart	Arrive	Travel time	Class	Seats
59 American Airlines	1:20 PM LAX	4:03 PM KOA	5h 43m	First	<a href="#">Choose seats</a>

**DEPART**  
Kona, HI to New York, NY  
Tuesday, May 16, 2023 to Wednesday, May 17, 2023

Flight	Depart	Arrive	Travel time	Class	Seats
664 American Airlines	10:18 PM KOA	7:08 AM PHX	5h 50m	First	<a href="#">Choose seats</a>
2339 American Airlines	8:30 AM PHX	4:29 PM JFK	4h 59m	First	<a href="#">Choose seats</a>

**Cost summary**

Your trip total <b>\$2,397.89</b> <small>Includes all taxes and carrier-imposed fees</small>	<b>Passenger</b> Trip JFK / LAX Taxes Carrier-imposed fees	<a href="#">Bag and optional fees</a> \$2,242.31 <a href="#">Reservation and tickets FAQs</a> \$155.58 <a href="#">Price and Tax Information</a> \$0.00 <a href="#">Conditions of Carriage</a>
	<b>Total (all passengers)</b>	<b>\$2,397.89</b>

## PRE-BAKED TRIPS TO CALI THAT GET YOU TO HAWAII IN FIRST CLASS FOR FREE OR NEARLY FREE FROM NEW YORK

While fares are constantly changing and vary by date, here's what we recently found if you're at all flexible...

Start Your Ticket In	Your Hawaiian Destination	Your Stop	Fare	Compare to Transcon Round-Trip	Cost / Savings
New York	Maui	Los Angeles	\$2,396	\$2,497	-\$101

Start Your Ticket In	Your Hawaiian Destination	Your Stop	Fare	Compare to Transcon Round-Trip	Cost / Savings
New York	Kona	Los Angeles	\$2,397	\$2,497	-\$100
New York	Kauai	Los Angeles	\$2,437	\$2,497	-\$60
New York	Honolulu	Los Angeles	\$2,865	\$2,497	\$368



## SAN JUAN FOR FREE...

The key when you're already planning to visit. For example, when fares are high on the Los Angeles/San Francisco-New York transcon route, think about adding a stop in Aruba, Montego Bay, Nassau, or San Juan to enjoy a bonus destination — for free or just a little more.

## PRE-BAKED TRIPS TO NEW YORK THAT GET YOU TO CARIBBEAN IN FIRST CLASS FOR FREE OR NEARLY FREE

Start Your Ticket In	Your Stop	Your Free Destination	Fare	Compare to Transcon Round-Trip	Cost / Savings
Los Angeles*	New York	Montego Bay	\$2,018	\$2,497	-\$479
Los Angeles	New York	San Juan	\$2,391	\$2,497	-\$106
Los Angeles*	New York	Aruba	\$2,539	\$2,497	\$42
Los Angeles*	New York	Nassau	\$2,610	\$2,497	\$113
San Francisco	New York	San Juan	\$2,450	\$1,998	\$452

\*The 3 tickets in your itinerary must be booked individually



# First Class: How Anyone Can Save Up to 58% from 50+ U.S. Cities to 100+ Cities in Europe

March 2023

## **German precision: Lufthansa's buy-miles sale (available to anyone) makes for First Class March Madness**

Just last December we warmed you with the news that [Lufthansa had introduced a buy-miles option](#) for its Miles & More loyalty program — *the umbrella loyalty program for the airline and Austrian and SWISS* — where you can save big on First Class flights. That ended on January 31, but the sale is already back — available right now through March 31. And since we're First Class *airficionados* (see our name), we're very excited about another opportunity to add to our miles collection.

This month, we'll also take a deep dive into **getting connections from all over the U.S. to all over Europe** to get a broader sense of the opportunities.

## LUFT MY MILES UP WHERE THEY BELONG: LUFTHANSA'S BUNDLE&GO OFFER

Lufthansa calls it [Bundle&Go](#). You can do this and score a 20% to 60% bonus through March 31. There's a maximum purchase of 100,000 miles per transaction and up to 250,000 miles in a calendar year. Need more miles than that? Check out FCF's (timeless) [unlimited buy-miles strategy](#).

The Bundle&Go deal lets you purchase award miles in three increments of 10,000, 50,000, and 100,000 miles, and the 20% to 60% bonus comes on top of that. Lufthansa Miles & More members (**sign up in five minutes if you're not one**) can purchase one bundle per transaction and the bonus miles do not count towards the annual limit. So if you max out one account, you can get 310,000 miles for a total of \$4,880, or about **1.58 cents a mile**. That's great value as you'll see in a moment.

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

### **DON'T LIVE IN A LUFTHANSA U.S. HUB? NO PROBLEM! ~ GET FREE CONNECTING FLIGHTS TO LUFTHANSA'S HUBS WITHIN THE U.S. ~**

Lufthansa offers awards that allow for partner travel between its U.S. hubs and countless other U.S. cities, so you can get free domestic connecting flights with United.

*Sample Routes [United](#) Flies to Lufthansa's U.S. Hubs:*

**Chicago To/From:** Boston, Dallas, Denver, Ft. Lauderdale, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Raleigh

**Houston To/From:** Atlanta, Columbus, Denver, Las Vegas, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Memphis, Miami, Nashville, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle, Tulsa

**Los Angeles To/From:** Boston, Chicago, Denver, Las Vegas, Orlando, Phoenix, San Francisco, Seattle

**Newark To/From:** Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, Phoenix, San Francisco

**San Francisco To/From:** Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, Phoenix, San Diego, Seattle, Tampa, Toronto

**Washington, DC To/From:** Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, Phoenix, Seattle

*\*Connecting flights may not always offer a First Class cabin*

## NOT FLYING TO GERMANY?

NO PROBLEM!

### ~ GET CONNECTING FLIGHTS WITHIN EUROPE FROM FRANKFURT OR MUNICH ~

**Fly almost anywhere in Europe on one ticket:** Again, Lufthansa's offers awards that allow connections on flights it operates, and its partners, so feel free to tack on the following destinations as long as they're available beyond Germany with the airline or its partners: Aegean Airlines, Air Dolomiti, Air Malta, Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, Croatia Airlines, Eurowings, LOT Polish Airlines, Luxair, Olympic Air, Scandinavian Airlines, SWISS, TAP Portugal, and Turkish Airlines.

Remember the typical [Boise to Budapest connections allowance](#).

*Sample Routes from Frankfurt and Munich to All Over Europe:*

**Frankfurt To/From:** Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Bordeaux, Budapest, Copenhagen, Dublin, Dubrovnik, Edinburgh, Florence, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Malta, Milan, Munich, Mykonos, Naples, Nice, Paris, Rome, Santorini, Stockholm, Venice, Vienna, and Zürich

**Munich To/From:** Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Copenhagen, Dubrovnik, Edinburgh, Florence, Lisbon, London, Milan, Mykonos, Naples, Paris, Rome, Santorini, Venice, Vienna, and Zürich.

*\*Flights within Europe may be in Business Class or economy.*

### Sample Itinerary with Connecting Flights: Columbus to Copenhagen

**First Class for Just 91,000 Miles**

**(\$2,769 Total Cost)**

Select Outbound Flight

April 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
02.04.2023 Not available	03.04.2023 From: 91,000 M	04.04.2023 Not available <b>First Flex</b>

**Open fare conditions**

**Columbus, OH** →

CMH 14:53 → CPH 11:15 +1 day

**Copenhagen, Denmark** →

**Duration:** 14h22  
CMH - IAD **UA 6262**  
Operated by: MESA AIRLINES DBA UNITED EXPRESS Embraer 175 (Enhanced Winglets)  
IAD - FRA **LH 419**  
Operated by: Lufthansa Boeing 747-8  
FRA - CPH **LH 826**  
Operated by: Lufthansa Airbus A320 (Sharklets)

Oneway for 91,000 Miles + 962.30 USD taxes, fees and airline surcharges

## THE TWO DIFFERENT TYPES OF MILEAGE AWARDS

There are two award types you can book using Lufthansa miles. The airline offers a **First Flex** award (**fewer miles, more cash**) and **First Flex Plus** award (**more miles, less cash**). Depending on your itinerary, there are benefits to each.

## THE TWO PRINCIPLES TO KEEP IN MIND:

**Principle #1:** There's no limit to the number of miles you can buy with [FCF's unlimited buy-miles \(timeless\) strategy](#), so it doesn't matter much that it costs more in miles to pay less in total cash with **First Flex Plus awards**. That said, you should run the numbers on your particular itinerary.

**Principle #2:** In general, you want to go with Lufthansa's [Flex Plus award](#) because the total cash outlay (after buying miles and paying the taxes) usually works out to less total cash — **unless** your itinerary requires flying with an airline **other than** Lufthansa, Austrian, or SWISS — **like United** — in which case you **MUST** use a First Flex award.

## SAMPLE FIRST FLEX AWARD OPPORTUNITY

*On Routes that Include a **United Domestic Connection** to a Lufthansa U.S. Hub*

For example, the round-trip cost of a **First Flex** ticket between the U.S. and Europe on Lufthansa is 182,000 miles (91,000 each way). So the cost of buying those miles during this sale plus taxes on tickets between the U.S. and Europe is about \$1,337 if you book two one-ways (if booked as a round-trip, you'll pay an additional \$636-ish in taxes, who knows why!), which comes to a total cost of \$4,202.

Considering that published First Class round-trip fares from Columbus to Copenhagen in the aforementioned example goes for \$8,700+, **your savings can easily be \$4,960 (57%) round-trip.**

## **SAMPLE FIRST FLEX PLUS AWARD SAVINGS**

*On Miles & More Member Routes that ONLY Include Lufthansa, Austrian, and SWISS*

For example, the round-trip cost of a **First Flex Plus** ticket between the U.S. and Europe on Lufthansa and two of its Miles & More member airlines is 230,000 miles (115,000 each way). So the cost of buying those miles during this sale plus taxes on tickets between the U.S. and Europe is about \$120 if you book a round-trip, which comes to a total cost of \$3,740.

Considering that published First Class round-trip fares from New York to Venice in the aforementioned example goes for \$10,020+ round-trip, **your savings can easily be \$5,818 (58%).**

## **BEST LONG-HAUL ROUTES TO FIND FIRST CLASS AWARD AVAILABILITY**

**First, remember** the [opportunity travel mindset](#), the [positioning flight strategy](#), the [Boise to Budapest connections allowance](#), and why not to [Book Backwards](#), so you can have the proper perspective on these long-haul “bridge flights” opportunities—where First Class comfort matters most!

Below, find the best award seat availability at the time of publication, which will certainly change over time:

- **Chicago-Frankfurt** has a handful of days with one- and two-seat availability outbound only in December and January. Single-seat availability is looking pretty slim, so it's best to use this route for spontaneous travel, or close in upgrading.
- **Boston-Munich** availability has decreased from plentiful to a handful most months. You can find up to four seats on a handful of dates outbound for spontaneous travel, or close in upgrading. There are a few months with a handful of days with one and two available seats for travel through the fall. So it's best to **book now if this route is on your radar.**
- **Chicago-Munich** availability has decreased from a lot of seats to a few most months. One to two seats can be found on a handful of dates in April, July, and August in both directions. The opportunity of booking two seats is less now, so it's best to **book right away.**
- **New York-Munich** shows decent availability for one to two travelers in both directions in August.
- **Washington, DC-Munich** has the best availability of all routes for one to two travelers from May to October.

Currently we're not seeing free award seats available on a number of Lufthansa's routes from Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, as well as the Washington, DC-Frankfurt and Miami-Munich routes.

Route	Outbound			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Chicago - Frankfurt	March, Nov., <a href="#">Dec.</a> , <a href="#">Jan.</a>	Dec., Jan.		March		
Boston - Munich	<a href="#">March</a> , <a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>			March, May, <a href="#">June</a> , <a href="#">Aug. to Oct.</a>	<a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a>	April
Chicago - Munich	<a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a>	<a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>	<a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a>	<a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">June</a> , <a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>	April	
New York - Munich	March, <a href="#">Sept.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>	<a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>	<a href="#">Aug.</a>	<a href="#">June</a> .	<a href="#">Aug.</a>	
Washington, DC - Munich	<a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">May</a>	<a href="#">June</a>	<a href="#">July to Oct.</a>	<a href="#">April</a>	<a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">June</a>	<a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">July to Oct.</a>

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

## GOTTA LOVE THIS TICKETING STRATEGY

The world is your oyster and Lufthansa's buy-miles sale will get you there for MUCH less. Stock up on miles, keep your eyes on the charts, learn about all the possible departures (50+) and destinations (100+), and get ready to tick off your bucket list in comfort at 30,000 feet!



# Stretching Your Dollar in Argentina

March 2023

**Take advantage of the most favorable exchange rate in years — and use cash to save even more**

*By Ramsey Qubein*

Argentina is a beautiful country with lots to see, taste, sip, and explore. But what it offers in wonderful tourist experiences, it lacks in economic stability. The Argentine peso has fluctuated heavily over the years (it has lost nearly 90% of its value compared to the U.S. dollar in recent years). While this can make life difficult for those earning local wages, it represents a bonanza for international tourists. The U.S. dollar can give you pampa-size savings in this fascinating South American country, depending on how you spend your money.

**If you get the best exchange rate and pay in the local currency in cash (more on this in a moment), you can save...wait for it...more than 43%!** Yes, you read that right. That's how strong your dollar is in Argentina right now.

Here's how to score a heck of a deal in Argentina.

## GO BLUE (AS IN BLUE MARKET)

Since the currency devaluation has led to a mistrust in banks, locals prefer cash, which is more reliable. The first tip is to carry cash so that you can get the best peso rate rather than the bank exchange rates.

How? By using the local exchange rate known as the "blue market," which provides a far more favorable exchange value than what you will get from a bank or an ATM. It is said to have gotten its name from the blue strip that now appears in newer \$100 bills.

How much better is the blue market rate? Consider that the bank exchange rate, at press time, is equal to about 200 Argentine pesos per dollar. On the blue market, however, you can get as much as 372 pesos per dollar — or a whopping 86% more!

To get the most value from your dollars, bring large, crisp U.S. currency bills (\$100 bills will yield more than smaller bills) to exchange locally and skip the airport money exchange. Be sure to use the latest edition of the \$100 bill, too (with the big, not small, Ben Franklin portrait), if you want to get the most pesos in exchange. Bizarre as it sounds, it actually matters.

While not officially sanctioned, the blue market exchange houses operate in the open. To find a trustworthy one, ask your hotel or Airbnb host.

Another way to access the blue dollar rate is via Western Union. It offers a rate at or slightly above the blue rate. Keep in mind that Western Union charges a fee, but typically, your first transfer is fee-free, so go big. Otherwise, you can try to find a promo code to remove the fees.

**Try to avoid ATMs for foreign exchange at all costs.** They give you pesos at the official government exchange rate and charge withdrawal commissions on top of that.

Here are some top ideas for getting the most Argentinian bang for your American buck.

## CREDIT CARD WINDFALL

In an effort to boost tourism dollars in Argentina, the government recently allowed MasterCard and Visa to offer travelers an exchange rate that vastly increases their purchasing power. This rate fluctuates but can be just 5%-10% short of the blue dollar rate and far better than the government's official exchange rate. This rate went into effect in December 2022.

So if you don't have enough cash to pay for something, whip out your U.S. MasterCard or Visa credit card instead.

## SAVE A BUNDLE ON HOTEL EXPENSES

Hotels in Argentina can vary in their pricing. Many of the finest luxury hotels straddle the line between bargain and traditional prices so as not to box out the local market. But it all comes down to how you pay if you want to score big deals.

If you don't have enough cash, you'll want to pay for your hotel stay with a U.S. MasterCard or Visa card but in Argentine pesos (never select to pay in U.S. dollars). Using your U.S. credit card will also save you the 21% value added tax, since foreigners do not pay the local tax on hotel stays. (You may be asked to fill out a form at the hotel.)

You can also pay in cash — yes, some travelers actually hand over hefty stacks of pesos to pay their hotel bill — and save even more. That \$800 hotel stay at the Palacio Duhau Park Hyatt Buenos Aires or Four Seasons Buenos Aires could be less than half after the local tax and blue rate comes into play. **While your hotel may advertise the room rate in U.S. dollars, if you pay in local currency, you can score a major discount.**

Never pre-pay for a hotel room in Argentina as these rates can be charged in U.S. dollars and forego the tremendous in-country savings.

## EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY — FOR LESS

If dining out is a favorite pastime, this is the country where wining and dining can become an Olympic sport for American tourists. Just don't forget to ask for the bill in Argentine pesos. Many local restaurants are happy to charge you in local currency but accept the equivalent of the cost in (more stable) U.S. currency, effectively halving your expense.

## HAVE AN AFFORDABLE ADVENTURE

Argentina is home to a significant part of the Andes Mountains, which offer world-class hiking, skiing, bungee jumping, and more. You can even visit the Argentine side of the magnificent Iguazu Falls at half the cost (or less) of what you might pay if you pre-booked in the U.S. Just remember to pay the bill while in Argentina (never pre-pay) and ask for the bill in pesos to pay with a U.S. Visa or Mastercard. Even better, ask for the blue exchange rate in U.S. dollars, and pay in cash.



Iguazu National Park in Brazil and the National Park of Iguazu in Argentina has one of the most impressive landscapes in the world

## PICK UP LOCAL GOODS

While most luxury goods typically have an international base price, it is possible to tap into deals on local goods like artwork and chic leather goods, such as handbags and shoes. Since many of these items are priced for the local market, be sure to shop in stores where the locals shop, away from tourist areas. When paying in U.S. dollars, ask for the blue exchange rate to take advantage of the best deals.

## BUSINESS CLASS FARES

Buenos Aires is famous for low flash Business Class fares. You can see previous fare alerts [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Keep an eye on FCF fare alerts for flash deals to Buenos Aires; in the meantime here's what fares were at time of press [here](#) and [here](#) and below.

From	Airline	Fare R/T
Toronto	Air Canada	\$2,142
Miami	LATAM	\$2,577
Vancouver	Air Canada	\$2,673
Los Angeles	Delta	\$2,695
Montreal	Air Canada	\$2,771
New York	LATAM	\$2,787
Atlanta	Delta	\$2,997
Orlando	American	\$3,031
San Francisco	American	\$3,362

From	Airline	Fare R/T
Philadelphia	American	\$3,499
Washington, DC	American	\$3,601
Charlotte	American	\$3,694
Chicago	Delta	\$3,761
Detroit	Delta	\$3,777
Raleigh	American	\$3,861



*Ramsey Qubein is a freelance travel journalist whose work has appeared in Conde Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, Robb Report, Afar, Forbes.com, and CNBC.com, among others. He flies about 450,000 miles per year, has traveled to 166 countries, and completed a Master's Degree with a thesis on the evolution of brands in the airline industry.*



# March Top 44 Mileage Awards & Special Fares Greatest Hits (Still Available)

March 2023

Don't think of March as a month (or a noun), think of it as a verb! I'm telling you to march your patootie to your nearest 'puter and book some of the amazing fares and mileage award deals we've found. Talk about "march madness," some of these numbers are totally insane.

## Special Published Fares

### ASIA

[Seoul Biz Class from Canada from \\$3,077 to \\$3,772 USD R/T](#)

[Osaka and Tokyo Biz Class from Canada from \\$2,817 to \\$3,795 USD R/T](#)

## CARIBBEAN

[East Coast to St. Thomas Biz Class from \\$1,006 to \\$1,184 R/T](#)

[Grand Cayman Biz Class from \\$868 to \\$1,181 R/T](#)

[Aruba Biz Class from \\$949 to \\$1,190 R/T](#)

[St. Croix Biz Class from \\$1,014 to \\$1,179 R/T](#)

[Grand Cayman Biz Class from \\$902 to \\$1,164 R/T](#)

## EUROPE

[East & West Coast Departures: Geneva and Zurich Biz Class from \\$2,403 to \\$2,551 R/T](#)

[Stockholm Biz Class from \\$2,425 to \\$3,029 R/T](#)

[London Biz Class from \\$2,221 to \\$2,931 R/T – With Major Airlines](#)

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[Kona Biz Class from \\$1,119 to \\$1,543 R/T](#)

[Maui Biz Class from \\$1,080 to \\$1,523 R/T](#)

## MEXICO

[Cancun Biz Class from \\$644 to \\$873 R/T](#)

[Acapulco Biz Class from \\$761 to \\$892 R/T](#)

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## MID-PACIFIC

[Tahiti Biz Class from \\$2,878 to \\$4,146 R/T](#)

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[Hot: Lima Biz Class from \\$1,150 to \\$1,551 R/T / from East & West Coast](#)

[Sao Paulo Biz Class from \\$2,514 to \\$3,198 R/T](#)

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