



Bennett Bookings: How and Why I Scored Three First Class Tickets on the Same Trip

June 2022

An upgrade-along-the-way approach is how I secure great deals I'd never get otherwise.

Hold on tight: This report is designed to expand your mind and get you out of your comfort zone.

My style of booking and flying is probably not like yours. There's no accounting for taste. My goal here is to be provocative, not to convert you; hopefully it will trigger something that you can use for your own travel booking, even if only indirectly. Oh, and **don't worry if your head starts to spin a little**, you're going to get a window into my thought process.

A MR. UPGRADE CASE STUDY: FIRST CLASS TO EUROPE

Let's say I'm planning a trip to the Balkans. Countries such as Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. My preferred dates are about two months out, and there are no nonstops available. So, what am I to do?

Start with blue sky. Always start with blue sky.

BLUE SKY MEANS FIRST CLASS

Let's begin.

If I didn't mind taking the short transatlantic flight from New York to London where I would get minimal sleep and an average First Class seat I might have considered British Airways. But naaaah. One thing I hate about East Coast flights to London is that they're so short, at less than seven hours in the air, so you're guaranteed a poor night's sleep (if you're lucky). It's the worst quality sleep on the planet and not a great way to start your trip.

Next up to consider is Lufthansa, but the only deal to be had with them is 14 days prior to departure, so that is ruled out unless I want to pay \$8,000+. That said, [my close-in upgrade strategy](#) might come back into play 14 days prior to departure.

Air France and SWISS offer a First Class cabin, but they don't have any strategies to get it at a very low price. So I don't consider them because I want a deal for much less than the going rates of \$10,000+.

THAT LEAVES EMIRATES

Savvy travelers will know that Singapore Airlines is also an option, but hold that thought for a moment. I turn to Emirates because it's one of my favorite First Class seats, as regular readers will know. But it's often not considered on travel to Europe due to its Dubai hub. But I'm not overlooking it.

My first thought is that Emirates' New York/Newark-Athens route puts me closer to my final destinations. Hate to disappoint you, but my first thoughts usually don't last long. That grey matter needs some stirring before it's cooked. **But having a ticket in hand** — an Emirates First Class ticket, at that — **does take the pressure off.**

BE MINDFUL OF THE LONG FLIGHT FIRST

Now's the time to point out that you should focus on your long flights more than the short flights. You want to optimize your comfort for the longest time you'll be in the air; sounds obvious but most overlook this key detail. And to that point, I often decouple flights too, by booking the segments separately. Most travelers want the "protection" of all the segments on one ticket, so if there's any schedule disruption, a single airline will have your back. But not me, if a great opportunity exists.

Call me lucky, but I generally don't have a lot of problems when flying, so I don't worry about late arrival misconnections. Plus, I typically don't book tight connections to begin with because I'm happy to spend time in an airport lounge getting caught up with a good book or email. Tight connections are for plumbers, not travelers.

WHY AM I TRIGGER HAPPY WHEN I SPOT A DEAL?

Some might call me impulsive, but hot deals often disappear as quickly as they come. It's why I'm always telling you to **book a hot deal the moment you see it**, whether it's via cash or miles. That's because it gives you "insurance." [You can freeze opportunities](#) if you are paying with cash, and free redeposit policies are generally the norm nowadays with miles.

While most people hold their breath and feel like they're taking a plunge without a safety net when they make a booking, I do it 100% stress-free. So, **if I see a deal, I lock it in. Every time. It takes the pressure off** and I'm not concerned about getting all the details right the first time. More on that in a moment.

NIGHT OWL OR NIGHT SCOWL?

New York/Newark-Athens is just over nine hours for a flight that departs at midnight on Emirates. I'm a night owl, so the last thing I want is the Delta and United flights that depart at 5:30 p.m. That's a ticket for insomnia because I know I'm going to be awake most of the flight. No thanks. If you're an early-to-bed person, perhaps you think differently, but your hotel room is likely not going to be ready for your early morning arrival anyway.

Plus, it seems like everybody forgets that the last thing you want to do is eat a big meal before you go to sleep. But what does everyone do on long night flights? Right! Nuts!

I like to eat before I board — I don't fly for the food — and pop a melatonin right before I step on the plane to get some good shut-eye during the flight. Yeah, I know many of you like to indulge in Champagne onboard... but don't forget, it doesn't taste as good at high altitude (and you can get it on the ground).

Call me a snob to pass on the Champagne. Fine. But give me a Michelin-starred restaurant at my destination in a foreign land, and you have my attention.

Okay. So far, so good. Emirates, check. First Class, check. Late departure, check. My favorite New York airport, Newark, check. I book it using 85,000 miles that I transfer from Amex for the one-way flight, which otherwise goes for \$11,479 (13.5 cents of value per mile), check. Ah, I almost forgot to say, this particular flight that was available with miles departed two days *later* than my ideal date, but that's okay. I'm pretty flexible so it isn't a big deal.

AND THEN A NAGGING THOUGHT

I'm almost happy it wasn't better or I wouldn't have thought to improve on it.

Improve on it, you say, Bennett?

Two minutes after that occurred to me, I remembered that the New York/JFK-Milan Emirates route offers the A380, *the one with the shower*.

How can you not take a Shower Flight? Taking a shower before you land and leaving the airport not feeling grimy is much more meaningful than it sounds — at least to me.

So, what do you think I did next? I booked the Milan flight one-way, my second booking of the evening. And I **slept well that night with two Emirates First Class tickets to Europe in hand.**

Yes, duplicate bookings can be detected and canceled automatically by the airline. So I took a chance, and Emirates didn't cancel it for the month I held both tickets. (That said, United recently canceled one of my flights that was double booked, so keep in mind that this can be a risky approach.)

If possible, better to have two horses in a race than one.

MY UPGRADE MINDSET

Move quickly. Process and book a flight that's OK, [then improve \(aka upgrade\) it later](#) as more opportunities become available. Don't try to be a perfectionist from the get-go. I looked at the available dates online and my perfect date was there, so I grabbed it. The Emirates flight to Milan on the A380 out of JFK was an improvement over the Emirates flight I had originally booked to Athens in some ways, so I secured it.

MY TRADE-OFF DILEMMA

So I had a dilemma: Take the longer Athens flight that offered more sleep out of Newark or the Milan flight that offered a shower out of JFK? If you have to choose between multiple flights, *sleep on it* and you'll figure it out. Another dilemma was that there was more availability for connecting flights to the Balkans from Athens.

What did I do when I woke up the next morning? I checked for better routing.

IT'S ALWAYS UPGRADE TIME

The next thing I did may have you scratching your head, considering that I had already booked two First Class Emirates flights. In my enthusiasm, I went back to the drawing board, because another option came to mind: Singapore Airlines. Ahhh, New York-Frankfurt... with [Singapore's new First Class suites](#). Dah.

You know what I'm always saying: [People are most happy](#) when they have a trip to look forward to. My thought is that people with a variety of options are twice as happy. So I booked the ticket on Singapore Airlines from New York to Frankfurt before the seat disappeared.

Yes, that's right, on this night I went to bed with three First Class tickets, as it's much better to have three horses in a race than one or two.

HOW DO I GET SUCH LUCKY TICKETS?

I make my own luck. Availability changes all the time and I don't mind spending five minutes here and there in order to get a long flight that will make a huge difference to how my journey starts out, which ultimately sets the tone for the whole trip.

EPILOGUE

Which flight did I take? In the end, none of them. I had a family emergency that took priority so I deferred this trip. Am I disappointed? Only at having to postpone the trip. But I certainly don't regret the effort because I'm now a mini expert on getting to Southeast Europe, which I plan to do in a couple of months. And that is so well worth it.

Also, you should know that I typically book three times more trips than I take for a variety of reasons.

Opportunities are fluid.

This is exactly what I'll do again when the time comes. When you're a born traveler, as I suspect you are, it's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when.

See you up front.

100 Club

In January, I hit 100 countries visited. I've played with the idea of getting to every country over the years, but I wind up being lazy and returning to my favorites for the 7th or 12th time. But recently, the idea has come up again (just in case you were wondering about Bosnia and Kosovo). There was a nice little opportunity to pick off five with ease, so I figured what the heck. I love talking to locals and learning about their version of reality, which is often so different from what you read in the media. It's just one of the countless reasons I love to travel. That reminds me, I need to join the [Travelers' Century Club](#).



Some of the extreme things that go through my head when I see ridiculously high transcon fares...

Here at FCF, we like to call them Spite Flights. They're the journeys that everyone is taking after being locked down and out for two years. So now people are flying to spite the lockdown so to speak.

But then the sad reality hits: Oh my gosh... the price of some of these tickets. When demand goes up, supply gets tight and prices rise. It's a perfect inflationary storm — especially if you're looking at America's iconic transcontinental journey.

It plays out like this. The Delta fare for a New York-Los Angeles or -San Francisco nonstop flight in Business Class (and not a redeye) is as high as \$3,800 right now if you're traveling before September. American and United fares are around \$2,200 (minus a few exceptions) and JetBlue is similar with fares ranging from \$3,201 to \$5,300+. Oh, and forget about using your American, Delta, or United miles on these routes as it'll cost you an astronomical 95,600 to 224,000 miles round-trip.

WORTHY OF AGATHA CHRISTIE

One reason I'm up in arms about transcon prices is because I'm booking many these days for myself. Like Hercule Poirot when he's stumped for answers, I feel boxed-in, paralyzed, and at the mercy of these killer fares. I just had to vent. So when you get sticker shock at the price of a transcon flight, know that you're not alone.

Agatha Christie liked to write murder mysteries about great journeys. I'm talking about classic stories like "Death on the Nile" and "Murder on the Orient Express."

Well here's one she might have written about traveling Stateside this year: "Homicide on the Transcon." Only a couple months ago, transcon Business Class fares were \$958 from San Francisco and \$998 from Los Angeles to New York, round-trip. It meant you could happily leave your miles simmering on low heat while you paid a reasonable cash price to cross the country. You didn't even have to plan far in advance either — it was incredibly easy to enjoy 11 or so hours of flying in a very comfortable (in many cases internationally configured) Business Class seat.

That was then. Now the story has taken a dark turn for us opportunity travelers. Transcon fares have more than doubled like many groceries and gas.



Let's go to the charts to see transcon Business Class fares compared across the big three U.S. carriers.

Route	American		Delta		United	
Before	Current	Before	Current	Before	Current	
New York - Los Angeles / Los Angeles - New York	\$1,078 to \$2,296	\$1,848 to \$3,426	\$1,738 to \$3,898	\$1,998 to \$2,598	\$1,180 and \$2,192	\$1,845 to \$4,196
New York - San Francisco / San Francisco - New York	\$1,098 to \$2,058	\$2,298 to \$3,548	\$1,739 to \$3,198	\$1,908 to \$2,418	\$1,180 and \$2,192	\$1,845 to \$3,352
Newark - Los Angeles / Los Angeles - Newark					\$1,180 and \$2,192	\$1,845 to \$2,292
Newark - San Francisco / Los Angeles - San Francisco					\$1,180 and \$2,192	\$1,848 to \$3,426

Here are the fares on the three major carriers and the approximate percentage of time you'll find them over the next 11 months, for context.

Airline	From / To	Under \$1,300	\$1,301 - \$1,800	\$1,801 - \$2,400	\$2,401+
American	Los Angeles - New York	0%	38%	48%	14%
	New York - Los Angeles	0%	21%	62%	17%
	San Francisco - New York	0%	25%	46%	29%
	New York (JFK) - San Francisco	0%	26%	41%	33%
Delta	Los Angeles - New York	0%	10%	26%	64%
	New York - Los Angeles	0%	4%	24%	72%
	San Francisco - New York	0%	10%	28%	62%
	New York (JFK) - San Francisco	0%	6%	39%	55%
United	Los Angeles - New York (JFK)	0%	0%	0%	0%
	New York (JFK) - Los Angeles	0%	0%	33%	67%
	San Francisco - New York (JFK)	0%	8%	79%	14%
	New York (JFK) - San Francisco	0%	5%	79%	16%
	Los Angeles - Newark	0%	0%	3%	5%
	Newark - Los Angeles	0%	0%	0%	0%
	San Francisco - Newark	0%	1%	45%	54%
	Newark - San Francisco	0%	2%	34%	65%

CROSS-COUNTRY VERSUS INTERNATIONAL FARES. IT'S A BLURRY LINE

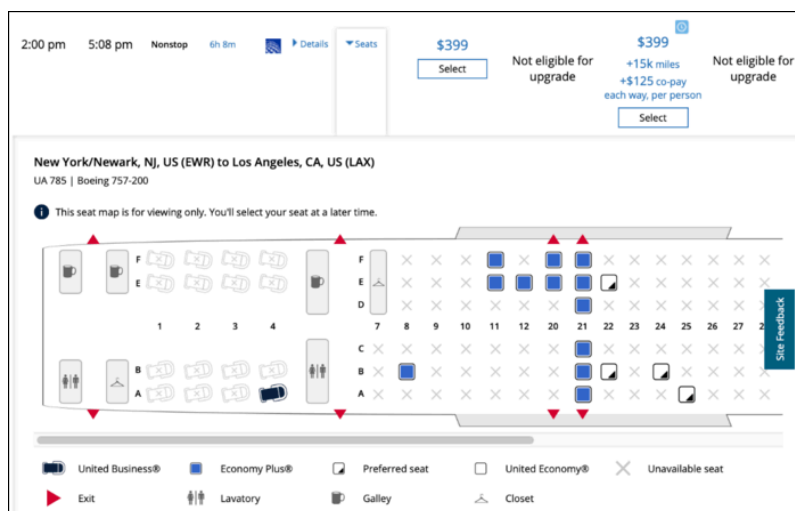
These domestic fares are now in the international long-haul realm. We often see deals to Brazil from many U.S. cities such as [Ft. Lauderdale, Houston, Boston, and Atlanta, for less than \\$2,200](#). And that's for 17+ hours of flying, so these transcon fares are of poor value, relatively speaking. You can also frequently find deals to Europe [here](#) and [here](#) in the same price range as a transcon flight. And many non-California-New York transcon fares are low, like [Miami-Los Angeles at just \\$727](#). So what's a premium traveler to do with all of this?

A CROSS-COUNTRY CASE WORTH CRACKING

"It is the brain, the little gray cells on which one must rely. One must seek the truth within — not without." ~ Hercule Poirot

Alright, it's time to put our brain cells to work to try and solve this one. We may not be able to lock the bad guys in the Tower of London, but we might be able to avoid their deeds. Here are some detective deductions to consider.

- Use your miles you say? Er, no. Unless you want to spend close to 100,000+ miles or more round-trip; 102,000-160,000 miles on Delta, 95,600-224,000 miles round-trip on United, and 105,000 to 130,000 miles on American, round-trip. Prices on those airlines have gone through the roof, too. It hurts my old-school mentality to pay 100,000 or more miles on a transcon unless I have no way out — like the poor victims in "Death on the Nile," or as we shall now call it: "Death on the Mile."
- Of course you can consider using your miles to upgrade. However, you'll unfortunately be on a waitlist to do that right now. And a very bad-looking waitlist at that. Check out this typical one below on United for a flight one day out. There's only one seat left for sale: 4A. Not good for those looking to make a foray into Business.



What does this seat map tell us?

1. Forget waitlists
2. Forget elite upgrades (aka loyalty)

3. Business is booming for the airlines

NINE STABS IN THE DARK TO BEAT HIGH TRANSCON PRICES

- If I have to fly Business Class or better, should I not consider going to [Africa](#), [South America](#) or [Europe](#) for a **leisure trip at a similar price point**?
- The next time you see fares drop, as they did back in [January](#) and [February](#), be ready to pull the trigger (as an Agatha Christie character might say). They may not last long, and you don't want to end up feeling like the great detective in *The Hollow*, "I, Hercule Poirot, am not amused."
- Compare airlines and see how far in advance you can book as they vary for low fares. In other words, don't be a slave to one airline.
- Fly at a time of day that's not your first preference. In other words, be flexible.
- Look at Newark versus JFK or vice versa.
- Be nimble enough to jump on last-minute opportunities. For example, I might hold a ticket I bought for more than I'd usually like to spend, and be ready to trade it for a better one if last-minute award availability opens up.
- With transcon awards ranging from 47,800 to 112,200 each way, check other mileage programs for last-minute award space. A cursory look at American Airlines revealed a diamond hiding in the haystack: a 27,500-mile trip in Business Class, one way, but rare.
- If you're going from New York (JFK or Newark) to California, tagging on an extra jump to Maui might sweeten the deal. In this case, your high fare is justified because you're getting a side trip at a great value. So if it's \$2,300+ from New York (EWR) to Los Angeles, but you can add on Maui in Business Class for \$470 (on many dates), making the total \$2,834, suddenly the big picture isn't as painful.
- If you're starting in California and going to New York, American's Los Angeles-Belize fare allows a free stopover in New York (which would be your transcon JFK-LAX flight). So you can vacation for a few days in Belize, do business in New York, and then fly home, all for \$1,917 (you better Belize it!).

In other words, when airlines give you lemons, try to make lemonade.



For Business Class Long Hauls Going for a Song, Play That Qatar

June 2022

Lock in great savings up to 75% on a wide range of routes around the world, with unusually good low-cost mileage availability.

Got a long flight coming up, or would like one?

Perhaps you're off to study ancient architecture in the Middle East, trekking to Base Camp after stopping to acclimatize in Kathmandu, hitting the veldt for a safari in Africa, or counting seashells in the Seychelles.

A long trip calls for a comfortable seat, right? And “comfortable” takes your mind straight to First Class. Bear with me here. The typical go-to carriers with a First Class cabin for your trip would often be via Europe: Air France via Paris, British Airways via London, Lufthansa via Frankfurt or Munich, or SWISS via Zurich. Yes, but here’s the pea under the lie-flat mattress: For many far away destinations, you have to make a *connection* in the middle of the trip — at about 7 or 9 hours into a 14+-hour trip. That’s not a fun way to let your fairy tale unfold.

To avoid the half-time break that you don’t want, you might think of Emirates First Class so your connecting flight can be much shorter. But it can be challenging to find more than one First Class seat on Emirates at low mileage rates.

The answer? **If you need more than one seat** then [Qatar Airways Business Class](#), offering its top *Qsuite* on many routes, might be the way to go. You think that’s too far for a seat in Business Class? Qatar has arguably the best Business Class seat in the air. But the airline also has many flights from all across the U.S. including Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC. That’s a well-connected carrier.

The Qsuite seat is 21.5 inches wide, and it reclines to a fully lie-flat 79-inch long bed. The center quad section on some aircraft are set close together and can conveniently become a double bed for couples or families traveling together, or a welcome place for a chat or business meeting. Check out the airline’s Qsuite site with video [here](#).



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

- All A350-1000s have Qsuites.
- The A350-900 can be tricky as both layouts have nine rows in Business Class. The Qsuite aircraft has row 2 D/G/J while the non-Qsuite configuration has row 2 A/E/K.

- B777-200 aircraft with 11 rows in Business Class have Qsuites.
- B777-300 aircraft with 11 rows in Business Class have Qsuites.
- B787-800s do NOT have Qsuites.

Where to find flights with Qsuites at the moment:

To Doha From	Flight Number***
Atlanta*	756/755
Boston**	744/743
Chicago*	724/723, 726/725
Dallas	730/729, 732/731
Houston	714/713
Los Angeles	742/741, 740/739
Miami	778/777
New York	702/701, 704/703
Philadelphia	728/727
San Francisco	738/737
Seattle	720/719
Washington, DC	710/709, 708/707

*Qsuite service starts Oct. 30, 2022. **Qsuite service starts Oct. 27, 2022. ***Aircraft subject to change.

FLY QATAR BEYOND DOHA

Africa: Accra, Addis Ababa, Alexandria, Cairo, Cape Town, Casablanca, Dar es Salaam, Johannesburg, Lagos, Luxor, Mahé, Nairobi, Tunis

Asia: Bangkok, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Kathmandu, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Phuket, Seoul, Singapore, Tokyo

India: Kochi, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi

Middle East: Abu Dhabi, Ahmedabad, Amman, Beirut, Dubai, Jeddah, Muscat, Riyadh



USING AMEX, CAPITAL ONE, CHASE, OR CITI POINTS

Points collectors who were formerly locked out of one of the world's top Business Class seats have now been invited to the soiree, as the chart demonstrates, from across the USA. Amex, Capital One and Chase cardholders can transfer to British Airways and Citi Cardholders can transfer to Qatar.

WHAT DOES IT COST IN MILES TO DOHA?

Qatar To Doha From:	Citi Transfer Partner Qatar	Using Alaska Miles	Using American Miles	Amex, Capital One and Chase Transfer Partner British Airways	Amex, Capital One and Citi Transfer Partner Cathay Pacific	Amex and Chase Transfer Partner Iberia
Atlanta	140,000	170,000	140,000	140,000	150,000	216,500
Boston						
Chicago						
Dallas					180,000	309,000
Houston						
Los Angeles						
Miami						
New York					150,000	216,500
Philadelphia						

Qatar To Doha From:	Citi Transfer Partner Qatar	Using Alaska Miles	Using American Miles	Amex, Capital One and Chase Transfer Partner British Airways	Amex, Capital One and Citi Transfer Partner Cathay Pacific	Amex and Chase Transfer Partner Iberia
San Francisco					180,000	309,000
Seattle						
Washington, DC					150,000	216,500

SAMPLE BUSINESS CLASS ROUND-TRIP ON QATAR AIRWAYS BEYOND DOHA FROM NEW YORK

From New York (via Doha) To:	Citi Transfer Partner Qatar Miles	Using Alaska Miles	Using American Miles	Amex, Capital One and Chase Transfer Partner British Airways	Amex, Capital One and Citi Transfer Partner Cathay Pacific	Amex and Chase Transfer Partner Iberia
Addis Ababa	160,000	240,000	150,000	192,000	180,000	260,500
Cape Town	190,000	240,000	150,000	230,000		371,000
Delhi	160,000	170,000	140,000	192,000		260,500
Johannesburg	190,000	240,000	150,000	230,000		402,000
Kathmandu	170,000	170,000	140,000	210,000		294,000
Maldives	170,000	170,000	140,000	210,000		294,000
Seychelles	170,000	240,000	150,000	226,000		294,000

SAMPLE BUSINESS CLASS ROUND-TRIP ON QATAR AIRWAYS BEYOND DOHA FROM LOS ANGELES

From Los Angeles (via Doha) To:	Citi Transfer Partner Qatar	Using Alaska Miles	Using American Miles	Amex, Capital One and Chase Transfer Partner British Airways	Amex, Capital One and Citi Transfer Partner Cathay Pacific	Amex and Chase Transfer Partner Iberia
Addis Ababa	160,000	240,000	150,000	192,000	180,000	353,000
Cape Town	190,000	240,000	150,000	230,000		463,500
Delhi	160,000	170,000	140,000	192,000		353,000
Johannesburg	190,000	240,000	150,000	230,000		494,500

From Los Angeles (via Doha) To:	Citi Transfer Partner Qatar	Using Alaska Miles	Using American Miles	Amex, Capital One and Chase Transfer Partner British Airways	Amex, Capital One and Citi Transfer Partner Cathay Pacific	Amex and Chase Transfer Partner Iberia
Kathmandu	170,000	170,000	140,000	210,000		386,500
Maldives	170,000	170,000	140,000	210,000		386,500
Seychelles	170,000	240,000	150,000	226,000		386,500

TAX FACTS

Qatar used to have high taxes running \$1,272 round-trip, so many travelers have eliminated it from consideration. However, during our recent survey we discovered that Qatar's and British Airways taxes are now \$242, on all routes from the U.S. to Doha, while Alaska and American are \$68 to \$89 for a round-trip flight.

NO MILES, NO POINTS? BUY THEM

How Anyone Can Buy American Miles and Save up to \$6,536 in Qsuite

With published fares high right now, what if you didn't want to spend between \$6,877 and \$9,124 for Qatar's Business Class, and you don't have hundreds of thousands of points either? There's a good option to consider through Qatar's partner American Airlines. It'll cost 140,000 AAdvantage miles if you have them, and about \$68 in taxes. If you don't have the miles, you can buy them from American for as low as 1.8¢ each when they're on sale. That makes a grand total of just \$2,588, saving you up to \$6,536 / 72% on most of Qatar's routes. See chart below.

SAVE UP TO 64% BY BUYING MILES FOR TRAVEL BEYOND DOHA

Round-Trip From New York (via Doha) To	American Partner Mileage Round-Trip	Cost per Mile When on Sale	Cost	Taxes	Regular Published Fare	Savings
Addis Ababa	150,000	1.8¢	\$2,700	\$125	\$5,353	\$2,528 47%
Cape Town	150,000		\$2,700		\$5,222	\$2,397 46%
Delhi	140,000		\$2,520		\$4,458	\$1,813 41%
Johannesburg	150,000		\$2,700		\$5,677	\$2,852 50%
Kathmandu	140,000		\$2,520		\$6,538	\$3,893 60%
Maldives	140,000		\$2,520		\$4,236	\$1,591 38%
Seychelles	150,000		\$2,700		\$7,911	\$5,086 64%

SAVE 75% TO THE MIDDLE EAST IN BUSINESS CLASS USING ALASKA MILES

Qatar Business Class from the U.S. to Doha costs 170,000 Alaska miles round-trip. The lowest published fare from Los Angeles to Doha is \$9,124 round-trip. So, booking a partner award through Alaska reduces the price to \$2,299 round-trip, a savings of \$6,825, or 75%, if you have to buy the miles. You can buy miles during Alaska's mileage-purchase promos for as little as ~1.3 cents each.

SAVE UP TO 64% BEYOND DOHA USING ALASKA MILES

Round-Trip From New York (via Doha) to	Partner Mileage Round-Trip	Cost per Mile When on Sale	Cost	Taxes	Regular Published Fare	Savings
Addis Ababa	240,000	1.3¢	\$3,120	\$160	\$5,353	\$2,073 39%
Cape Town	240,000		\$3,120		\$5,222	\$1,942 37%
Delhi	170,000		\$2,210		\$4,458	\$2,088 47%
Johannesburg	240,000		\$3,120		\$5,677	\$2,397 42%
Kathmandu	170,000		\$2,210		\$6,538	\$4,168 64%
Maldives	170,000		\$2,210		\$4,236	\$1,866 44%
Seychelles	240,000		\$3,120		\$7,911	\$4,631 59%

QATAR AVAILABILITY FROM THE U.S. TO DOHA USING QATAR MILES (AT TIME OF PUBLICATION)

Qatar To Doha 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
Atlanta			July to Nov., Jan. to May	Nov.	Sept., Oct., Nov., Feb., March, April	Aug., Sept., Oct., Feb.
Chicago	June	Dec.	July to Nov., Jan. to May	June	Dec.	Nov., Jan. to May

Qatar To Doha 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
Houston	June	Dec.	July to Nov., Jan. to May	July, Nov., Dec., Feb., March., April, June	Aug., Sept., Dec., Feb., March	Aug., Sept., Oct., Jan., Feb., April, May
Los Angeles	Sept., June		July, Aug., Oct., Nov., Jan. to May	Aug., Sept., Nov., Jan.	Oct., Feb., March, June	Feb., April, May
Miami	June	Dec.	July to Nov., Jan. to May	Sept., Nov., April, June	Nov., March	Oct., Jan., Feb., March, May
New York		Dec., May	July to Nov., Jan. to April		Sept., Dec., May	Sept., Oct., Nov., Jan. to April
Philadelphia		Dec.	July to Nov., Jan. to May		July, Nov., Dec.	Aug. to Oct., Jan. to May
San Francisco	June		July to Nov., Jan. to May	Oct., Nov., Jan.	Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., June	Aug., Sept., Feb. to May
Seattle	June		July to Nov., Jan. to May	Nov., Jan.	Sept., Oct., Nov., June	Aug., Sept., Oct., Feb. to May
Washington, DC	June	Dec.	July to Nov., Jan. to May	Oct., Dec., Jan., Feb., March, April, June	Feb., April	Jan., Feb., May

*Months in black at least one seat available; in blue at least two seats; in green at least four seats.

FCF found approximate partner availability as follows:

For those of you who have or will purchase Alaska miles there's good news as Alaska has comparable availability to Qatar.

Not such good news for free award seats on Qatar using American, British Airways and Cathay Pacific miles which shows about 10% availability of what Qatar has (which I would have never guessed, given BA is a much tighter partner now with Qatar than anyone) **except if you are booking 10 to 11 months out then British Airways is just as amazing as Qatar and Alaska.**

Moreover, what makes BA exceptional is the 40% transfer bonus which runs every few months with Amex for points transfers.

Fascinating what FCF truffle hounds come up with!

QATAR AVAILABILITY USING LOWEST COST AMEX PARTNER QATAR MILES FROM NEW YORK BEYOND DOHA

Qatar From New York To:	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
Addis Ababa	July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., May	July, Oct., Feb., March, April	Jan., April, May	Sept., Oct., Nov., Jan., Feb. to April	Oct., Feb., April, May	March, April
Delhi	Aug., Sept., Nov., June	Aug., Oct., Nov.	July, Sept., Oct., Jan. to May		Sept., Nov., Jan., June	Oct., Nov., Feb. to May
Kathmandu	June	Nov., May	July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Jan. to May		Sept., Jan., June	Oct., Nov., Feb. to May
Maldives	May			May		
Seychelles	Aug., Sept., March., June	July	July, May		June	July, Aug., Sept., March, May

*Months in black at least one seat available; in blue at least two seats; in green at least four seats.

QATAR AVAILABILITY USING PARTNER ALASKA MILES FROM NEW YORK BEYOND DOHA

Qatar From New York (via Doha) To:	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
Cape Town	April, May			Jan., Feb., March, April	March, April, May	
Delhi	Dec.		July to Nov., Jan. to May	Sept.	Sept., Jan.	Oct., Nov., Feb. to May
Johannesburg	Oct.	Oct., Nov., May	Nov., Jan. to April	Nov.	Nov.	Oct., Jan. to May

Qatar From New York (via Doha) To:	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
Kathmandu	Feb., March , May			Nov., Jan.	April , May	Oct., Feb. , March , April
Maldives	May			May		
Seychelles	March, May			May		

*Months in [black](#) at least one seat available; in [blue](#) at least two seats; in [green](#) at least four seats.

QATAR AVAILABILITY USING PARTNER AMERICAN MILES FROM NEW YORK BEYOND DOHA

Qatar From New York (via Doha) To:	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
Cape Town	April , May				May	
Delhi	Feb., March to May			Feb., March, April	May	May
Maldives	May			April , May	May	
Seychelles	March, May			March	May	

*Months in [black](#) at least one seat available; in [blue](#) at least two seats; in [green](#) at least four seats.

Keen to read more about buying miles to upgrade? Be our guest:

[Beginner's Guide to Playing the "Buy Miles to Fly In Style" Strategy](#)

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

A photograph of the interior of a British Airways Business-to-First Class cabin. The seats are dark with a quilted pattern and are arranged in a 1-2-1 configuration. The overhead bins are closed, and the cabin is dimly lit. The British Airways logo is visible on the wall at the end of the cabin.

Flight of Fancy: British Airways Business-to-First Class Mileage Upgrades to London

June 2022

How valuable are American and BA miles for High Flyers these days?

For all the stories we hear of people jumping on “spite flights” (where folks expend all their locked-up lockdown frustration 40,000 feet in the sky), there are many choosing to stay more cautious and close to home.

For every watercooler yarn you hear about the Amalfi Coast, there’s one about that trip to Home Depot where “I can’t believe I ran into my podiatrist again.” Okay team, let’s bring it in close: Now’s a good time to break those shackles and gettheheckouttahere. You’re hearing it straight from me: **Book while the bookings are**

still good. Deals are only going to be harder to find from now on, as travel restrictions are being lifted by the day, and demand is ever-increasing.

BRITISH AIRWAYS AND MILES: SUDDENLY THE TWAIN SHALL MEET

We don't talk much about using miles for British Airways flights. That's because **taxes on free award tickets can be ridiculously high** — and BA's First Class fares are often low.



Cabin crew, prepare for landing a nice fat upgrade to First Class

But now that fares are climbing, and Business Class fares sales are frequent, mileage upgrades on BA are worth a second look. In other words, the bigger the gap between Business and First Class fares, the more valuable mileage upgrades are.

Before we dig into the few sweet spots of availability (scarce in some places, but richer in others), we first need to ask ourselves...

WHY MILEAGE UPGRADES?

Few talk about these techniques. But there are many reasons to think about British Airways for a mileage upgrade. Here are a few:

1 – If you're a oneworld elite status member and want to keep climbing that ladder, then booking free tickets won't do you any good. Go ahead and book those free tickets for your companions who don't aspire to elite status, since you won't earn elite credit on free tickets.

2 – Consider mileage upgrades on British Airways if you're an American Airlines traveler because BA doesn't have the \$700 or \$1,100 co-pay that American charges for its own flights and AA does NOT allow mileage upgrades on its partner's lowest Business Class fares (aka the ones you want to buy).

American Airlines		PLAN TRAVEL	TRAVEL INFORMATION	AADVANTAGE*	LOG IN
Upgrade with miles					
Enjoy a higher cabin of service					
Use your AAdvantage® miles to upgrade on flights marketed and operated by American Airlines or American Eagle for yourself or anyone you designate. Upgrades are valid to the next cabin of service and are valid for a single one-way trip with a maximum of three segments. Upgrades are subject to capacity controls. Excluding award tickets and Basic Economy fare tickets, the following eligible fare types can be upgraded:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discount Economy with published fares booked in H,K,M,L,V,G,Q,N,O,S and Military or Government fares booked in Y ■ Full-Fare Economy with published fares booked in Y ■ Discount Premium Economy with published fares booked in P ■ Full-Fare Premium Economy with published fares booked in W ■ Discount Business with published fares booked in I ■ Full-Fare Business with published fares booked in J, D or R 					
To / From	To / From	From Discount Economy / Premium Economy	From Full-Fare Economy / Premium Economy	From Discount Business	From Full-Fare Business
North America**	Europe, Middle East, Africa	25,000 + \$350	15,000	25,000 + \$550	25,000

A few times over the last few months there have been periods where Business Class flash fares have appeared from New York to London for \$1,900 and \$2,496 from the West Coast. This is a volatile fare market for a variety of reasons, but when First Class fares are high AND Business Class fares are on sale, and you’re looking to splurge a little, this is one way to do it.

Forget about American because it requires you to buy a “full Business Class fare” to upgrade (R/D/C/J) when you use American Miles to upgrade partner flights operated by British Airways.

That’s big. While American requires you to upgrade to First from a full Business Class fare, with British Airways you can do it from a discounted Business Class fare, which can be half as much. I’m calling that an AA gouge – inflated fares PLUS the AA co-pay. Pass the Band-aids, please.

Mileage availability is dynamic and always changing. British Airways upgrade availability shown below is as of the time of publication approximately...

British Airways To London 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
Atlanta	July, Aug., Nov., Feb.	Aug., Nov., Dec., March	July, Dec.	July, Aug., Nov., Dec., March	Nov.	Aug., Dec. to Feb., March
Boston	July, Dec., Jan.	March, April, May	Jan., Feb., March	Dec., Jan., April, June	Jan.	May
Chicago	July, Aug.	Aug.	July, Aug.	Aug.	Aug.	
Dallas	Jan., Feb., March			Jan., Feb., March	Feb.	
Houston	Jan., Feb., April, May	July	July, Dec.	Dec., Jan.		Dec.
Newark	July, Aug.	July		Aug., Dec., March		

British Airways To London 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
New York	July, Aug.	July		Aug., Dec., March		
Philadelphia	July, Aug., Jan., Feb., March	July, Aug., Feb.		July, Jan., Feb., April, May	Aug., March, May	Aug.
San Francisco	Jan., Feb., March			Jan., Feb., March	Feb.	
Washington, DC	Aug.	July, Aug.		Aug., Dec.	Aug.	

*Months in black at least one seat available; in blue at least two seats; in green at least four seats.

AARP AND CHASE DISCOUNTS

Oh, and another reason to consider using British Airways Avios for upgrading to First Class is that BA offers the AARP \$200 discount off many Business Class fares. [British Airways' \\$200 AARP discount per flight](#) can be yours for an AARP membership fee of only \$16 a year—and it's **available to anyone of any age**. Plus, you can save even more with [British Airways Visa Card discount](#) (current promo code is CHASEBA10).

IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY AVIOS HERE HOW TO GET THEM

- Transfer from Amex, Capital One, and Chase
- Buy up to 500,000 British Airways Avios annually [via Amex @ 2.5 cents each](#), plus Amex and British Airways often have offers with up to a 40% transfer bonus.

If you don't have an Amex card or need more than 500,000 annually, buy up to 200,000 miles annually from British Airways @ 2.8 cents each.



Upgrade Your Hotel Stay — the Legal Way

June 2022

Apply the upgrade mindset to the ABA five-star hotel strategy

I love to stay in nice hotels and resorts. I'm obviously not the Lone Ranger on this point, but there's also nothing quite like being in a gorgeous suite, overlooking a beach, and enjoying the facilities of a top-notch hotel or resort.

In our related [special report last month](#), we revealed the American Bar Association (ABA) membership's latest opportunities and how they can unlock great discounts for high-end hotels.

I'm going to double down on that awesome strategy again this month with some added perspective — that of The Upgrade Mindset (TUM) and the three ways that it can deliver a superior hotel experience.

But first, a quick reminder about the ABA discount. For just \$150 per year, you can become a member of the [American Bar Association](#). And no, you don't have to be a lawyer, wear a wig, or say things like "Objection – he's badgering the witness!" Instead, this membership lets you stay at some hotels (and great ones at that) for very tasty discounts that'll dwarf that \$150 fee in the time it takes to bring a gavel down. Yes, those smart legal types negotiate with luxury hotels up front to lock in good prices. "Sustained!"

Now let's get back to how this helps you lock in those upgrades.


VIEW UPGRADES, FOR FREE

What image does the phrase “ocean view upgrade” conjure up in your mind? Good things, right? Maybe a yacht on the horizon, seashells revealed from a retreating tide, happy people frolicking on the beach, maybe even dolphins bobbing along the shoreline.

Regardless, it sure beats “garden view” or “neighbors view” or “brick-wall view.” So imagine flipping the script on those less exciting phrases, turning off all notifications, and staring out at the calming ocean — an upgrade any way you say it — without paying any more. That, my friends, is the very definition of a “free view upgrade.”

So, what if I told you that The Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman has a “Garden View” room for \$653 if you book it at marriott.com with an AAA discount. BUT, if you book the same hotel on the same website — marriott.com — and you enter in the magic promo code... voilà, you get an “Oceanfront” room for \$649. For 4 bucks less. I'd call that a free view upgrade. That's perspective number one. Screenshot below.

Garden View, Guest room, 2 Queen, Resort Tower, Balcony



AAA CAA Rate


- Membership card required

[Rate Details](#)

653USD / night

Select

Oceanfront, Guest room, 1 King, Sofa bed, Ocean Tower, Balcony




American Bar Assoc. Rate[Rate Details](#)

649USD / night

Select

SUITE UPGRADE, FOR FREE

Views are one thing, nice big rooms are another. So the idea of a free suite upgrade kind of explains itself. If you don't have the magic American Bar Association promo code, you'd get a regular "Guest Room" for \$391 at The Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove, Miami (see screenshot below). Meanwhile, you can get a "1 Bedroom Executive Suite with 1 King and Balcony" room for \$299 with the ABA membership.


**The Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove, Miami**
3300 SW 27th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33133 USA +1 305-644-4680 4.0 357 Reviews Currency Calculator
EXCLUSIVE AMENITIES Mobile Key Digital Check-In Service Request Spa Fitness

Dates
Mon, Aug 8, 2022 – Tue, Aug 9, 2022

Rooms & Guests
1 Room : 2 Adults

EDIT


Guest room, 1 King, City view, Balcony [Room Details](#)



Member Rate Flexible [Rate Details](#)

~~399~~
391 USD / night

SELECT


**The Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove, Miami**
3300 SW 27th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33133 USA +1 305-644-4680 4.0 357 Reviews Currency Calculator
EXCLUSIVE AMENITIES Mobile Key Digital Check-In Service Request Spa Fitness

Dates
Mon, Aug 8, 2022 – Tue, Aug 9, 2022

Rooms & Guests
1 Room : 2 Adults

EDIT

1 Bedroom Executive Suite, 1 King, Sofa bed, City view, Balcony [Room Details](#)



American Bar Assoc. Rate
• Valid ID required
[Rate Details](#)


299 USD / night

SELECT

In two words, I call this "cheaper better."

SUITE AND VIEW UPGRADE, FOR \$33

What's better than a nice big hotel room in San Francisco? A nice big hotel room with a view of San Francisco. At The St. Regis San Francisco, a non-ABA member can get a "Grand Deluxe, Guest room, with Garden view" for \$882. On the other hand, an ABA member can get an "Astor Suite, 1 King, Floor to Ceiling view, Corner room" for \$915. That's just an extra \$33 for a much better hotel experience, AKA an upgrade. Check out the screenshots below.



The St. Regis San Francisco

125 Third Street, San Francisco, California 94103 USA +1 415-284-4000 4.3 779 Reviews Currency Calculator

EXCLUSIVE AMENITIES Mobile Key Digital Check-In Service Request Fitness Internet


Dates
Tue, Aug 9, 2022 – Wed, Aug 10, 2022

Rooms & Guests
1 Room : 2 Adults

EDIT

Grand Deluxe, Guest room, 2 Double, Garden view

Room Details



Member Rate Flexible

Rate Details


900
882 USD / night

SELECT

Get a \$250 eGiftCard + 50K points

THIS STAY COULD BE \$632.

See Details.



The St. Regis San Francisco

125 Third Street, San Francisco, California 94103 USA +1 415-284-4000 4.3 779 Reviews Currency Calculator

EXCLUSIVE AMENITIES Mobile Key Digital Check-In Service Request Fitness Internet


Dates
Tue, Aug 9, 2022 – Wed, Aug 10, 2022

Rooms & Guests
1 Room : 2 Adults

EDIT

Astor Suite, 1 Bedroom Suite, 1 King, Floor to Ceiling view, Corner room

Room Details



American Bar Assoc. Rate

Rate Details


1,500
915 USD / night

SELECT

HOTEL UPGRADES FOR FREE

What about a free hotel upgrade? The 4-Star Clift Royal Sonesta Hotel downtown, San Francisco, costs \$308 with the ABA membership. Compare that to the 3-Star Holiday Inn Express & Suites at Fisherman’s Wharf for \$321. Again, for \$13 less for a much better hotel experience.

Page 4 of 8


ROYAL SONESTA

The Clift Royal Sonesta Hotel

Jul 18 → Jul 19

1 Room, 1 Guest

The Clift Royal Sonesta Hotel

495 Geary Street, San Francisco, CA 94102
415.775.4700

OverviewRoomsGalleryOffersThings to doHotel Details



 Junior Suite - King
Change

 Jul 18 - Jul 19 (1 Night)

 1 Adult

Total For Stay

1 Night : \$265.00
Taxes & Fees: \$43.58

\$308.58

EXPAND PRICE DETAILS


Holiday Inn
AN IHG® HOTEL


Holiday Inn Express & Suites : San Francisco Fishermans Wharf
550 North Point Street San Francisco, California 94133 United States
Check in: 3:00 PM | Check out: 12:00 PM

06/13/2022 - 06/14/2022 | 1 Night | 1 Guest | 1 Room


1 King Bed Standard
Best Flexible Rate

Total Price for Stay:

321.98 USD

MEGA UPGRADE

That's what we call the Triple Threat Mega Upgrade. Let's say the La Concha Renaissance San Juan is \$404 for a 1 Bedroom Suite with King bed and balcony at the ABA membership rate. That's a room that normally runs \$640. When we looked at the Sheraton Puerto Rico it was \$346 a night for a superior room with King bed. So what the heck. Do you want to book the standard everyday Sheraton hotel room for \$346 a night, or in a suite at the La Concha for \$404 with the ABA membership? That's what we call an upgrade no-brainer.




4.3/5 Excellent (982 reviews)
 Guests rated this property 4.4/5 for cleanliness

1 Room: Superior Room, 1 King Bed, Non Smoking, Bay View

Non-refundable ⓘ

Check-in: Mon, Jul 18
 Check-out: Tue, Jul 19
 1-night stay




LA CONCHA RENAISSANCE SAN JUAN RESORT

1077 Ashford Avenue, San Juan 00907 Puerto Rico +1787-721-7500 4.1 2872 Reviews Currency Calculator

EXCLUSIVE AMENITIES Digital Check-In Service Request Fitness Internet

Stay Dates
 Mon, Jul 18, 2022 - Tue, Jul 19, 2022

Total for Stay
 404.73 USD



1 Bedroom Suite, 1 King, Sofa bed, City view, The Suite Tower, Balcony

ROOM DETAILS

Check in: Monday, July 18, 2022
 Check out: Tuesday, July 19, 2022

Room(s): 1
 Guest(s) per room: 2

Price details

1 room x 1 night	\$264.60
Taxes	\$29.11
Destination fee Payable at property	\$52.87
Total	\$346.58
Pay now	\$293.71
Pay at property	\$52.87



“In closing, you should consider getting an ABA membership.”

SAMPLE SAVINGS 7 NIGHTS DURING THANKSGIVING, CHRISTMAS, AND NEW YEAR’S

Hotel	Room Type	Sample Dates	Normal Cost	ABA Member Cost	Savings
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JW Marriott Essex House	Essex Room King	December 28 - January 1	\$5,344.00	\$3,038.00	\$2,306 / 43%
JW Marriott Houston Downtown	Poet, Guest room	January 19 - January 23	\$2,986.00	\$1,474.00	\$1,512 / 51%
The Luxury Collection Hotel Manhattan Midtown	1 Bedroom Suite	December 28 - January 1	\$7,186.00	\$3,092.00	\$4,094 / 57%
The Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove, Miami	City View King	December 14 - December 16	\$1,654.00	\$976.00	\$678 / 41%
The Ritz-Carlton New York, Central Park	Avenue View Room	December 28 - January 1	\$9,968.00	\$4,948.00	\$5,020 / 50%
The Ritz-Carlton New York, NoMad	Superior Guest Room	December 29 - January 1	\$5,729.00	\$3,091.00	\$2, 638 / 46%
The Ritz-Carlton, Dallas	1 King Bed, Deluxe Guest Room	December 28 - January 1	\$4,464.00	\$2,081.00	\$2,383 / 53%
The Ritz-Carlton, Philadelphia		December 29 - January 2	\$1,831.00	\$1,338.00	\$493 / 27%
The Ritz-Carlton, St. Louis	1 King Bed, Standard Room	December 28 - January 1	\$2,679.00	\$1,375.00	\$1,304 / 49%
The Ritz-Carlton, Toronto	Lake Ontario View Room	December 28 - January 2	\$4,337.00	\$2,964.00	\$1,373 / 28%
The St. Regis Atlanta	Superior Guest Room	December 23 - December 26	\$2,266.00	\$1,519.00	\$747 / 33%
The St. Regis Chicago	Superior Guest Room	December 29 - January 1	\$2,076.00	\$1,496.00	\$580 / 28%
The St. Regis New York	Grand Luxe- Butler Service	February 9 - February 12	\$4,215.00	\$2,936.00	\$1279 / 30%
W Miami	Spectacular, Guest room	December 28 - January 1	\$2,965.00	\$1,532.00	\$1,433 / 48%