



# For Those Who Give a Flying Buck... What Routes Give the Most Value per Dollar in Comfort?

November 2021

## **How to guarantee a comfortable and high-value getaway.**

Let's say you live in Los Angeles and you love the Monterey Peninsula. Sure, you've been to Monterey a bunch of times, but you've never been to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

You can go from Los Angeles to Monterey (532 flight miles round-trip) for \$270 in coach – 51 cents a mile. OR you can go from Los Angeles to San Juan (6,772 miles round-trip) for \$912 in First Class. That's 13 cents per flight mile, which is 75% less than Monterey, AND you get to fly in First Class.

This kind of math can be helpful when you're itching for a comfort-filled vacation but your spouse or travel mates are ho-hum about it. Or maybe they're thinking of another destination that doesn't represent good

value. That's because true value *can* be measured in more ways than the mere price of a ticket.

Our price-per-mile and cost-per-hour metrics offer an entirely different perspective on travel value. So your next question is undoubtedly, "okay, where might I go?". Well, I'm glad you asked. The following charts lay out a range of interesting examples...

## American Airlines Examples of How to Look at Cost By Distance

American Routes	Business Class Fare	Round-trip Flight Miles	Cents Per Mile	Cost Per Flight Hour
Charlotte - Boston	\$596	1,456	41	\$149
Chicago - Paris	\$3,918	8,304	47	\$230
Dallas - Amsterdam	\$2,430	9,840	25	\$125
Dallas - Hong Kong	\$5,881	16,246	36	\$184
Los Angeles - Cancun	\$875	4,238	21	\$97
Los Angeles - Honolulu	\$939	5,112	18	\$85
Los Angeles - London	\$2,543	10,912	23	\$113
Los Angeles - Sydney	\$8,195	14,976	55	\$278
Los Angeles - Tokyo	\$5,888	10,976	54	\$268
Miami - Quito	\$848	3,574	24	\$106
Miami - San Juan	\$719	2,090	34	\$144
Miami - St. Kitts	\$865	2,542	34	\$144
New York - Los Angeles	\$1,030	4,950	21	\$94
New York - Rio de Janeiro	\$1,821	9,572	19	\$96
New York - San Juan	\$625	3,196	20	\$89
New York - Tel Aviv	\$2,232	11,354	20	\$99

## Delta Examples of How to Look at Cost By Distance

Delta Routes	Business Class Fare	Round-trip Flight Miles	Cents Per Mile	Cost Per Flight Hour
Atlanta - Johannesburg	\$7,370	16,878	44	\$223

Delta Routes	Business Class Fare	Round-trip Flight Miles	Cents Per Mile	Cost Per Flight Hour
Atlanta - Montego Bay	\$1,003	2,234	45	\$201
Atlanta - San Jose, Costa Rica	\$1,352	3,254	42	\$193
Atlanta - Sao Paulo	\$2,292	9,306	25	\$124
Detroit - Paris	\$4,097	7,924	52	\$256
Los Angeles - Kauai	\$1,058	5,230	20	\$96
Los Angeles - Tokyo	\$6,956	10,976	63	\$316
Minneapolis - San Juan	\$857	4,808	18	\$86
New York - London	\$2,321	6,902	34	\$166
New York - Los Angeles	\$1,179	4,950	24	\$107
New York - Milan	\$2,427	7,990	30	\$152
New York - Sint Maarten	\$883	3,362	26	\$118
Salt Lake City - Cancun	\$1,058	4,010	26	\$124
Seattle - Boston	\$1,037	4,992	21	\$99
Seattle - Puerto Vallarta	\$769	4,156	19	\$85

## United Examples of How to Look at Cost By Distance

United Routes	Business Class Fare	Round-trip Flight Miles	Cents Per Mile	Cost Per Flight Hour
Chicago - Miami	\$588	2,394	25	\$107
Chicago - San Francisco	\$805	3,692	22	\$101
Houston - Amsterdam	\$3,359	10,024	34	\$168
Houston - Buenos Aires	\$6,857	10,124	68	\$343
Houston - Cancun	\$613	1,622	38	\$153
Newark - Aruba	\$866	3,914	22	\$102
Newark - Honolulu	\$2,235	9,924	23	\$112
Newark - Liberia	\$761	4,372	17	\$85
Newark - Los Angeles	\$1,179	4,908	24	\$118
Newark - Sao Paulo	\$2,377	9,516	25	\$125

United Routes	Business Class Fare	Round-trip Flight Miles	Cents Per Mile	Cost Per Flight Hour
Newark - Tel Aviv	\$2,264	11,384	20	\$101
San Francisco - London	\$3,621	10,736	34	\$172
San Francisco - Taipei	\$5,344	12,938	41	\$210
Washington, DC - Beijing	\$24,000	13,842	173	\$889
Washington, DC - Berlin	\$3,856	8,406	46	\$227

A professional wrestler in a yellow and white suit is captured mid-air, performing a move on a wrestling ring. The wrestler is holding a metal ring with both hands, and their body is arched over it. The background shows a dark arena with bright spotlights and the ropes of the wrestling ring.

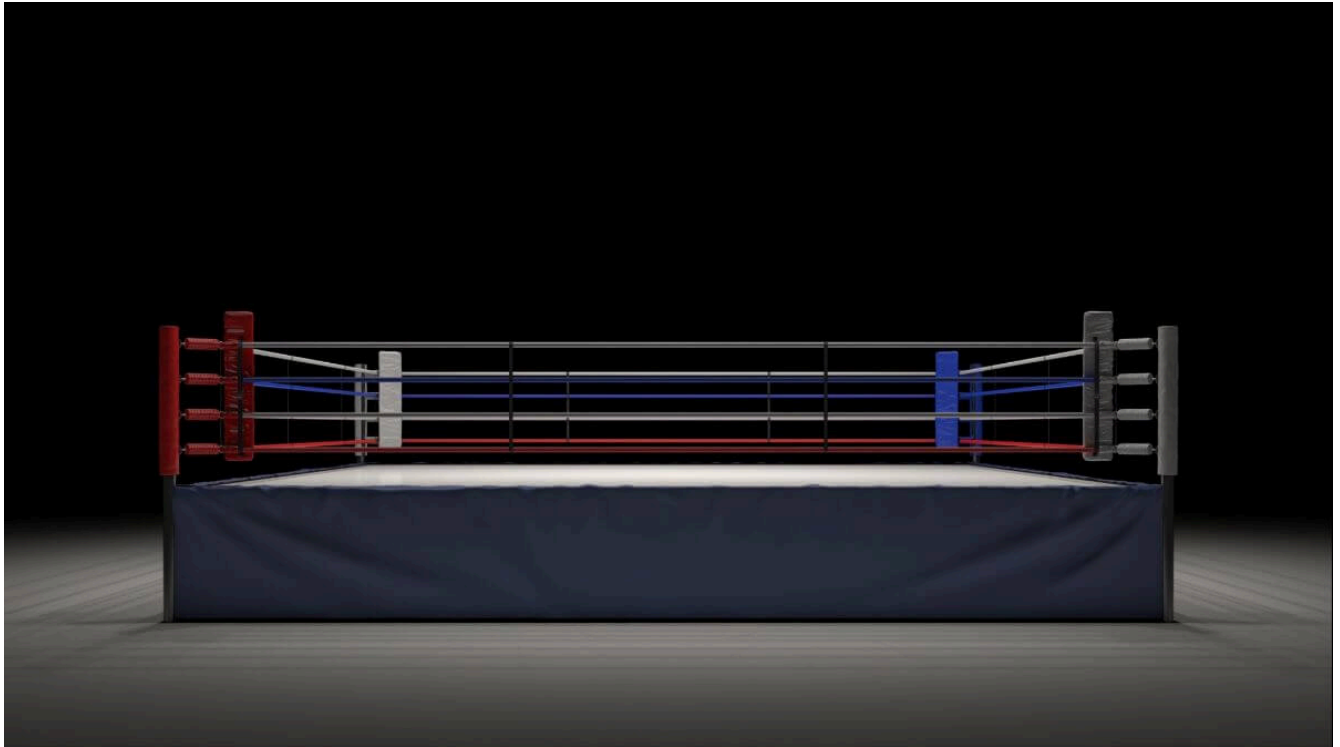
# FCF's Wrestling Move Pins Down \*Two\* Round-trips on \*One\* Ticket in an Epic Post-Lockdown Price Slam

November 2021

Ever see wrestlers do that thing where they bounce off the ropes and slam their opponents?

[Scientists marvel](#) at how, despite the laws of physics, wrestlers actually pick up speed as they bounce from rope to rope. It's called the *bounceback effect*.

At FCF, we have a physics-defying move of our own. It's called the **Leg Stretch Strategy**. And in the world of travel, it's undefeated in its awesomeness.



## COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE LEG STRETCH

Just as a wrestler bounces off the ropes to be propelled to amazing distances, so does our Leg Stretch Strategy – and for up to 60% off the normal Business Class cost it normally takes to cover the same ground.

We discovered it almost by accident, because at first glance it didn't seem to involve the U.S. But on closer inspection it does, so this is a move that's well worth learning. In a single booking body slam, you can use it to save thousands of dollars on travel across a 12-month period.

## THE LEG STRETCH STRATEGY: HOW IT WORKS

There are different ways to do the Leg Stretch, which we've covered in the past. They previously involved travel among three continents, with the connecting continent always being the U.S.

Today, the Leg Stretch involves South America and Europe. If, over a 12-month period, you can plan to visit South America twice and Europe once (**or would go if the price was dirt cheap**), you can connect the trips into **one airline ticket** and save yourself a heavyweight load of money. And keep in mind that you can spread the trips out within that 12-month timeframe, so you don't have to do it all at once.

It works like this. A "Leg Stretch" (our name) ticket includes four legs of a trip:

1. South America to the U.S.
2. The U.S. to Europe
3. Europe to The U.S.
4. The U.S. back to South America

The reason I say it doesn't seem to involve the U.S. at first glance is because it starts and ends in South America.

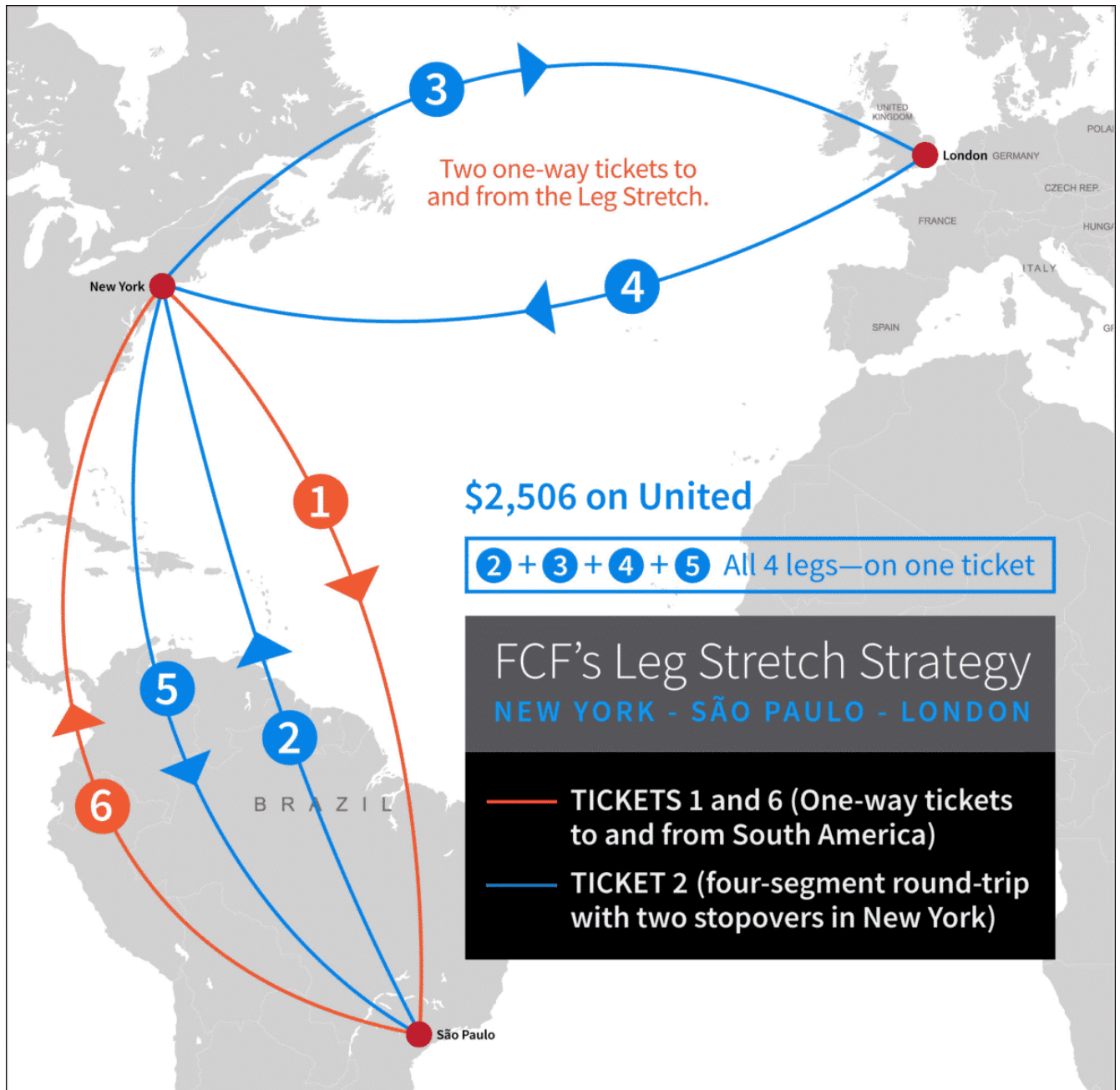
And it's **one** airline ticket!

But the savings are so crazy-great, that it more than covers a round-trip to and from South America (or two one-way flights) to take advantage of this Leg Stretch. You could even launch off the ropes into another Leg Stretch trip. WHACK! BAM!

And here's the thing, those stops in the U.S. (your homecoming visits) can be for as long as you like, as long as the total trip takes place within 12 months. Make sense? If you were to go to South America for a trip, then go to Europe on another trip, the combined cost is way more than combining it all into a Leg Stretch.

Here's how all the flight segments look on a map:





A Leg Stretch \*Sample\* Itinerary

Our example involves São Paulo, London and a range of U.S. cities. As outlined below, it involves four legs:

1. São Paulo to the U.S. (the stopover/home)
2. U.S. to London (your vacation or business destination)
3. London to the U.S. (the second stopover/ home)
4. U.S. to São Paulo (the start of your next trip)

Here's the Powerslam: that entire trip starts at just \$2,506 in Business Class on United Airlines (at the time of writing), a bit more on American at \$2,962, (and lots more on Delta at \$14,000, so forget I mentioned it.)

\$2,506 divided by four equals \$626 per long-haul flight in Business Class! I challenge you to match that.



## SOUTH AMERICA-U.S.-EUROPE LEG STRETCH IN DETAIL

This Leg Stretch is on **United** Airlines and connects São Paulo with London via (either) Chicago, Newark/New York, or Washington, D.C., and on **American** via (either) Charlotte, Dallas, Miami, Philadelphia, or Raleigh.

So, as you can see, there are plenty of options in the U.S., while São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and London, among others, are gateway cities to the rest of their respective continents. (Our chart below shows many different FCF-pre-baked itinerary options with both American and United.)

Here's how it plays out. As mentioned, you have to get to South America to "kick off" the Leg Stretch. But the savings received from this Leg Stretch are so high that the additional cost of getting to and returning from South America at the end still makes it well worth it.

### TICKET #1 (GETTING TO THE LEG STRETCH STARTER CITY)

One segment: New York (or other complying U.S. city) to São Paulo one-way. Use miles or book a great published fare. [Check out ideas on getting that initial one-way cheap.](#)

### TICKET #2 (THE LEG STRETCH)

São Paulo to London round-trip — four segments on one ticket — by stopping in the U.S., both coming and going

**Segment #1:** São Paulo to New York (the free stopover as part of the São Paulo-London Leg Stretch). Stay at home as long as you'd like before your trip to Europe — as long as you complete the entire itinerary in 12 months.

**Segment #2:** New York to London. Stay for a week or more and have an awesome time in Europe.

**Segment #3:** London to New York. Go home and relax.

**Segment #4:** New York to São Paulo (the final leg of the Leg Stretch).

### TICKET #3 (GETTING HOME FROM THE LEG STRETCH)

Now it's decision time. You can return home on another [one-way ticket](#) **OR** you can start the process over again, returning to the U.S. as Leg 1 of your next Leg Stretch ticket from São Paulo to another great destination (with stopovers in the U.S.).

# Comparing the Big 3 for Leg Stretches

Share

1 · Business Class

Multi-city trip

Total price from  
\$2,506

This airline may be offering additional flexibility for bookings. [More details](#)

Selected flights

Track prices ⓘ

	<b>Tue, Mar 15 · 8:30 PM – 5:15 AM<sup>*1</sup></b> United	9 hr 45 min GRU–EWR	Nonstop	2.25 t CO <sub>2</sub> Avg emissions ⓘ	▼
	<b>Tue, Mar 29 · 8:30 AM – 8:40 PM</b> United · Austrian, Lufthansa	7 hr 10 min EWR–LHR	Nonstop	1.85 t CO <sub>2</sub> +9% emissions ⓘ	▼
	<b>Wed, Apr 6 · 12:00 PM – 3:05 PM</b> United · Austrian, Lufthansa	8 hr 5 min LHR–EWR	Nonstop	1.85 t CO <sub>2</sub> +18% emissions ⓘ	▼
	<b>Wed, Apr 27 · 10:15 PM – 8:50 AM<sup>*1</sup></b> United	9 hr 35 min EWR–GRU	Nonstop	2.51 t CO <sub>2</sub> +13% emissions ⓘ	▼

And the winner is: United Airlines at \$2,506. That's an **Atomic Drop with a Double Knee Armbraker** at just \$626 per leg for Business Class! That's a deal you won't find anywhere else.

Share

1 · Business Class

Multi-city trip

Total price from  
\$2,962

This airline may be offering additional flexibility for bookings. [More details](#)

Selected flights

Track prices ⓘ

	<b>Wed, Mar 16 · 11:20 PM – 8:10 AM<sup>*1</sup></b> American	9 hr 50 min GRU–JFK	Nonstop	2.52 t CO <sub>2</sub> +21% emissions ⓘ	▼
	<b>Wed, Mar 30 · 11:05 AM – 10:45 PM</b> American · Finnair, British Airways, Iberia, JetBlue	6 hr 40 min JFK–LHR	Nonstop	1.80 t CO <sub>2</sub> +16% emissions ⓘ	▼
	<b>Wed, Apr 13 · 3:15 PM – 6:35 PM</b> American · Finnair, British Airways, Iberia	8 hr 20 min LHR–JFK	Nonstop	1.84 t CO <sub>2</sub> +21% emissions ⓘ	▼
	<b>Tue, Apr 26 · 7:50 PM – 6:40 AM<sup>*1</sup></b> American	9 hr 50 min JFK–GRU	Nonstop	2.52 t CO <sub>2</sub> +19% emissions ⓘ	▼

And Delta takes the...tin medal. Carried out of the ring in humiliating fashion, again.



Delta, you got slammed!

## COMPARING THE LEG STRETCH WITH ROUND-TRIP TICKETS

A Raleigh-London ticket in economy typically ranges from \$664 to \$1,629 round-trip. Raleigh-São Paulo in economy ranges from \$822 to \$1,347 on American. That's possibly \$2,976 to fly in economy — depending on your dates — while the Leg Stretch nets those same destinations in Business Class for as little as \$3,084. That's \$108 more than two round-trips in economy or \$2 per flight to upgrade to Business Class.

Another way to look at the savings is that a Miami-Rome ticket in Business Class typically ranges from \$3,773 to \$4,223 and a Miami-Rio de Janeiro return ticket in Business Class ranges from \$2,487 to \$3,169 on American. That's \$6,260 minimum to fly Business Class — and as much as \$7,392 depending on your dates. Meanwhile, the Leg Stretch can net those same destinations in Business Class for \$3,599.

That's a Business Class trip at better than two-for-one savings.

Here are SAMPLE itinerary options FCF has pre-baked for you, valid at the time of writing:

Start Your LSS Ticket In:	Your U.S. Stop (Both Going and Coming):	Your European Destination:	Fare for Four Legs (in effect, two round-trips)	Link to Pre-Baked Trip:	Total Two Round-Trips)	Savings
<b>American</b>						
São Paulo	Miami	London	\$3,062	<a href="#">Ready Baked Trip</a>	\$4,768	\$1,706 / 36%
São Paulo	Charlotte	London	\$3,081	<a href="#">Ready Baked Trip</a>	\$4,674	\$1,593 / 34%
Rio de Janeiro	Philadelphia	London	\$3,081	<a href="#">Ready Baked Trip</a>	\$4,724	\$1,643 / 35%
São Paulo	Raleigh	London	\$3,084	<a href="#">Ready Baked Trip</a>	\$4,603	\$1,519 / 33%

Start Your LSS Ticket In:	Your U.S. Stop (Both Going and Coming):	Your European Destination:	Fare for Four Legs (in effect, two round-trips)	Link to Pre-Baked Trip:	Total Two Round-Trips)	Savings
São Paulo	Miami	Edinburgh	\$3,099	<a href="#">Ready. Baked Trip</a>	\$4,893	\$1,794 / 37%
Rio de Janeiro	Dallas	London	\$3,346	<a href="#">Ready. Baked Trip</a>	\$5,041	\$1,695 / 34%
São Paulo	Miami	Rome	\$3,599	<a href="#">Ready. Baked Trip</a>	\$5,480	\$1,881 / 34%
<b>United</b>						
São Paulo	Newark	Madrid	\$2,270	<a href="#">Ready. Baked Trip</a>	\$3,842	\$1,572 / 41%
São Paulo	Newark	Amsterdam	\$2,286	<a href="#">Ready. Baked Trip</a>	\$4,389	\$2,103 / 48%
Rio de Janeiro	Washington, DC	Zurich	\$2,289	<a href="#">Ready. Baked Trip</a>	\$5,702	\$3,413 / 60%
Rio de Janeiro	Chicago	Frankfurt	\$2,371	<a href="#">Ready. Baked Trip</a>	\$3,762	\$1,391 / 37%
Rio de Janeiro	Chicago	Paris	\$2,382	<a href="#">Ready. Baked Trip</a>	\$5,550	\$3,168 / 57%
São Paulo	Newark	London	\$2,506	<a href="#">Ready. Baked Trip</a>	\$3,691	\$1,185 / 32%

# United We Fall: UA Elites Are Getting the Rough End of the Upgrade Stick to Europe

November 2021

**Plus, how you can go from 0.5% odds (i.e. 1 in 200) of getting mileage upgrade to Business Class seats to 100% odds**

Our team needs some cheering up. They've been searching for United Business Class mileage upgrade availability to Europe, only to find they're as scarce as a giggle in the Tower of London. We've also [surveyed American Airlines and found](#) similarly grim news.

Yes, in a post-lockdown world, the airlines are being very stingy. So, are we going to just take what United is giving us? Of course not. Giving up isn't in the FCF Upgrade DNA.

## AND THE SURVEY SAYS...

We looked at 45 United routes for mileage upgrades from economy to Business Class this month. The chart below sums up the data. It shows current award seat availability versus surveys we did in June, July, and [August](#). Talk about a steady decline over time...

Routes to Europe Surveyed for United Mileage Upgrades	Current Routes Available	Routes With Award Seats Available In		
June	July	August		
45	6	34	21	10

## FIGHTBACK TACTICS: DOS AND DON'TS

I don't like these numbers any more than you do, but it does ignite my fighting spirit. What are some smart tactics to keep your upgrade advantage when all the cards are stacked against you?

**DON'T** [book "backwards."](#) Instead of choosing your dates first, choose the upgrade opportunity and work backwards from there. We show great opportunities on our [alert pages](#). Start there and you're a long way towards winning the game.

**DO** book when there are coach fare sales in the \$400 range. Buy the coach ticket and upgrade to Business Class. Keep an eye out for coach sales, then pair up with upgrade availability. Easy to forget how that works.

**DO** think outside the cabin. Buy a coach return trip and upgrade the overnight flight to Business Class so you can have a good sleep on the lie-flat seat. Reference [Horses for Courses](#)

**DON'T** miss our [special report on fares to Europe this month](#).

**DO** check out our latest United Sweet Redeems surveys [here](#) when space is available.

## THE SIX ROUTES FCF DISCOVERED WITH UPGRADE AVAILABILITY YOU CAN CONFIRM NOW:

United Upgrade to Business Class From/To	Depart			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 - Amsterdam	Dec., March	Feb.	Feb.	Dec.	Jan., March	Feb.

United Upgrade to Business Class From/To	Depart			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Newark - Amsterdam	Dec.				Dec.	Dec.
Newark - Dublin	Dec., Feb.			Nov., Feb.		
Newark - London	Dec.				Dec.	
Newark - Zurich	Nov.				Nov.	
Washington, DC - Amsterdam	March, Feb.	Feb.		March, Feb.	Feb.	

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

**DO** use connecting flights and upgrade rules to link up the six routes above. More about that here [The Art of Skipping Stones](#) and here [Connecting flights](#) using miles to upgrade.

## SAMPLE COSTS TO UPGRADE...

Route	Upgradable Coach Fare R/T	Upgrade / Cost in Miles	Upgrade Co-Pay Cost	Total Cash Cost	Typical Business Class Fare	Savings	Value per mile
New York - Paris	\$702	40,000	\$1,100	\$1,802	\$2,757	\$955 / 35%	2.4 cents
Washington, DC - Amsterdam	\$628	40,000	\$1,100	\$1,728	\$3,259	\$1,531 / 46%	3.8 cents
San Francisco - London	\$825	40,000	\$1,100	\$1,925	\$3,571	\$1,646 / 46%	4.1 cents

**DO** be ready to act fast with the help of [FCF's fare alerts](#). Know when to pay with cash or miles. Find more on that [here](#).

**DON'T** give in **when fares are high**. FCF's fare fishing tips are [here](#) and [here](#).

**DO** know how to [hold fares](#). It can be a game-changer when a fleeting great fare appears.

**DO** purchase a refundable fare. More on that [here](#).



**DO** purchase a ticket you can cancel for free and use later. Many airlines are currently offering a “travel fee waiver,” including for award flights. That means it won’t cost you anything to cancel or change your ticket. Read more about it [here](#).

**DON’T** fall for the 10 common miles mistakes that many travelers make. See [10 Common Mistakes Most Travelers Make](#)

The background of the top section is a dark gray rectangle. Overlaid on this is the text 'American Airlines' in a large, dark blue, sans-serif font. Below it, the word 'VanTag' is written in a much larger, bold, dark blue, sans-serif font, with the 'V' and 'a' being particularly prominent. The main title of the report is written in white, sans-serif font, centered over the 'VanTag' text.

# AA Oddsmaker. Up Your Chances of a Mileage Award Ticket in a Tough Market to Europe

November 2021

## **Go from less than 2% odds to 100% odds for mileage award tickets by leveraging FCF's data and mindset**

Ever bet on a fifty-to-one longshot? Chances are the poor old nag barely made it to the finish line. So what if I told you you could flip that story to guarantee that you're betting on a winner?

It's all about your travel mindset. And in this special report, you'll learn why you might need to flip it. Especially now, when fares are high and mileage award upgrades are rarer than rocking horse do-do.

If you pick your dates first and you book your hotel, tour, and/or cruise without knowing where the mileage award space is, I can almost guarantee you will be an unhappy camper. At FCF we call this [booking backwards](#). Without the comfortable seat, the travel part is painful. And that doesn't have to be the case. We say, find the flight first, then plan your dates around it. Most people are way more flexible than they think they are with time, especially when it means the difference between paying in miles or dollars. That said...

## AIRLINES ARE GETTING STINGIER BY THE MONTH

Our team has been busy surveying award availability to Europe. We looked at 27 American Airlines Business Class routes and five First Class routes. And while it's not necessarily great news, there are opportunities to score, if you [don't book backwards](#).

The chart below sums up our findings. It shows current award seat availability versus surveys we did in [June](#), [July](#) and August on American Airlines to Europe.

Airline / Routes to Europe	Routes Surveyed	Current Routes with Availability	Previous Month's Routes with Award Seats Availability		
June	July	August			
American Business Class Award	27	10	24	23	13
American First Class Award	5	2	4	4	3

Given the number of dates in the year available for booking (27) Business Class routes, and severe lack of availability, your odds of finding seats are a measly 2% (i.e. 1 in 50).

However, if you use FCF's AA mileage [Sweet Redeems](#) surveys [here](#) and [here](#), you can pinpoint where the seats are and book accordingly. Remember, those are just the long-haul transatlantic routes. You can often get free connecting flights *to* the US hub and *from* the EU hub. Details on that are here: [The Art of Skipping Stones](#).

American Business Class From/To	Depart			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
Charlotte - Frankfurt	April	Feb.	Feb.	Feb.	Feb.	April
Charlotte - Munich	Sept.	April	Jan., Feb., April	March, Sept.		Jan., Feb., April
Chicago - London	Feb., July	Feb., July	April		Feb.	April, May

American Business Class From/To	Depart			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 - London	Oct., Feb.	Feb.		Oct.	Feb.	
New York - Paris	March		Jan., Feb.		March	Jan., Feb.
New York - London						
New York - Milan	March, April				April	March
Philadelphia - London	Nov., Jan., Feb.					Jan., Feb.
Raleigh - London	April	April				April
Seattle - London	Jan., Feb., March	Jan., March	Nov., March	Jan.	Nov.	Nov., Jan., Feb., March

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

## First Class Award Seat Availability

American First Class From/To	Depart			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
Dallas - London	March			Feb.	March, April	
New York - London	Dec., April	Jan, April, July	Jan., Feb., March		Dec.	Dec., Jan. to July

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

## OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND DURING LEAN TIMES

- Be ready for nibbles on the line with [FCF's fare alerts](#). When pickings are slim, it's more important than ever to be ready to pounce when the opportunity strikes.
- Fish in the right spots when fares are high. More on FCF fare fishing tips [here](#) and [here](#).
- Know when to pay with cash or miles. Find more on that [here](#).
- Know how to [hold fares](#) (because snap-frozen fish taste just as good when cooked).

- Purchase a refundable fare. More on that [here](#).
- Purchase a ticket you can [cancel for free](#) and use later. Many airlines are currently offering free cancellation, including for award flights. That means it won't cost you anything to cancel or change your ticket. Read more about it [here](#).
- Check for [vacation packages](#), they can be a surprisingly great value when fares are high.
- [Knock off hundreds of dollars \(and sometimes even thousands\)](#) on lots of premium fares on 26 airlines, thanks to Amex's International Airline Program (IAP).
- Break free from Mining for Miles Availability: [10 Common Mistakes Most Travelers Make](#)
- Learn about [the Art of Skipping Stone](#)



# Trade-off Think: FCF's One-Stop, Non-Stop Guide to Europe for Travel Through March and Beyond

November 2021

You've probably heard **the quality-fast-cheap rule**. It basically says you can't have all three. If you play your cards well, **you get to pick two**.

There's a similar paradigm with premium airfares, only with more levers. There's the number of stops, cheap, your preferred airline, route, and date. You're seldom going to get all those planets aligned.

For example, you might get a great price to the city you want on your favorite airline, but dang, it's going to have to be a week or month later. Or the dates fit and the price is higher than you'd like, there's another trade-off you'll have to consider. If you're lucky enough to live in a city that has lower fares, then you increase your odds.

## THINKING ABOUT BUSINESS CLASS PRICING DIMENSIONS TO EUROPE

This report is your one-stop guide to non-stop Business Class travel to Europe. It's only here (in the charts below) that you'll find the following comparisons:

- Non-stop routes that have **high fares all year round**
- Routes for travel through March that **charge more for non-stops**
- **Non-stop** fares for travel through **March** vs **non-stop** fares for travel in **April** and beyond
- The lowest one-stop fare routes for travel through March that have a **non-stop** and charge almost nothing more for it
- **Non-stop vs one-stop** fares for travel in **April** and beyond
- **One-stop** fares for travel through **March** vs **one-stop** fares for travel in **April** and beyond
- Routes You Should Go a Long Way to Avoid (say it like it is)

## EXAMPLES OF NON-STOP ROUTES WITH HIGH FARES ALL YEAR ROUND

Some non-stop routes have high fares all the way through August, which leads us to the following conclusion: **Don't book for next summer right now**; wait for the fares to drop to reasonable levels.

From / To		Airline	Non-stop Fare
Atlanta	Dublin	Delta	\$4,688
Boston	Frankfurt	United	\$3,585
Chicago	Amsterdam	United	\$3,935
	Frankfurt	United	\$3,359
	London	American	\$4,019
Dallas	Frankfurt	American	\$3,885
	Paris	American	\$3,896
Detroit	Munich	Delta	\$3,873
Houston	Amsterdam	KLM	\$3,359
	Frankfurt	United	\$3,935
Los Angeles	Frankfurt	United	\$4,235
Miami	Frankfurt	United	\$4,285
Minneapolis	London	Delta	\$4,026
New York	Venice	Delta	\$3,744
Philadelphia	Dublin	American	\$3,688



From / To		Airline	Non-stop Fare
	Frankfurt	United	\$3,885
	London	American	\$3,976
	Zurich	American	\$3,754
San Francisco	Frankfurt	United	\$4,135
Seattle	Frankfurt	United	\$4,135
	Paris	Delta	\$4,097
Washington, DC	Amsterdam	United	\$3,309
Washington, DC	Frankfurt	United	\$3,885

## EXAMPLE ROUTES FOR TRAVEL THROUGH MARCH THAT CHARGE MORE FOR NON-STOP

Comparing one-stop versus non-stop, these routes for travel through the end of March cost more for the convenience of flying non-stop.

From / To		Fares for Travel Through the End of March				Difference	
Airline	Non-stop	Airline	One-stop*				
Atlanta	Amsterdam	Delta	\$2,909	American	\$2,323	\$586	25%
Chicago	Frankfurt	United	\$3,935	American	\$2,686	\$1,249	47%
Houston	Amsterdam	KLM	\$3,359	American	\$2,341	\$1,018	43%
	Frankfurt	United	\$3,935	American	\$2,696	\$1,239	46%
Los Angeles	Frankfurt	United	\$4,235	United	\$3,331	\$904	27%
New York	Madrid	Delta	\$4,445	United	\$2,655	\$1,790	67%
Philadelphia	London	American	\$3,969	United	\$2,770	\$1,199	43%
Seattle	Amsterdam	Delta	\$3,109	American	\$2,323	\$786	34%
Washington, DC	Amsterdam	United	\$3,309	American	\$2,375	\$934	39%
	Frankfurt	United	\$3,885	American	\$2,646	\$1,239	47%

\*Most fares also available during Easter

## COMPARING NON-STOP FARES FOR TRAVEL THROUGH MARCH VS NON-STOP FARES FOR TRAVEL IN APRIL AND BEYOND

It's a different story towards the end of March when fares jump sharply. The price increase is 16% to 42% for the 15 Business Class non-stop routes shown, in addition to many others. That's like waking up to a nightmare.

From / To		Fares for Travel Through March		Fares for Travel in April and Beyond		Difference	
Airline	Non-stop*	Airline	Non-stop				
Chicago	Amsterdam	United	\$3,359	United	\$4,261	\$902	21%
	Madrid	Iberia	\$2,195	Iberia	\$3,795	\$1,600	42%
Dallas	Frankfurt	American, Lufthansa	\$2,485	American	\$3,885	\$1,400	36%
Houston	Amsterdam	KLM	\$3,359	United	\$4,011	\$652	16%
	London	British Airways	\$2,570	American	\$3,174	\$604	19%
Los Angeles	London	British Airways	\$2,520	American	\$3,777	\$1,257	33%
Miami	Barcelona	American	\$2,390	American	\$3,740	\$1,350	36%
	London	American	\$2,570	American	\$3,727	\$1,157	31%
	Madrid	Iberia	\$2,228	American	\$3,745	\$1,517	41%
New York	Barcelona	American	\$2,090	American	\$3,440	\$1,350	39%
	Madrid	United	\$2,150	American	\$3,445	\$1,295	38%
	Milan	American	\$2,097	American	\$3,447	\$1,350	39%
	Paris	American	\$2,196	American	\$3,546	\$1,350	38%
Seattle	London	American	\$2,369	American	\$4,077	\$1,708	42%
Washington, DC	Amsterdam	United	\$3,309	United	\$5,311	\$2,002	38%

\*Most fares also available during Easter

## EXAMPLES OF LOW-FARE ROUTES FOR TRAVEL THROUGH MARCH THAT HAVE A NON-STOP AND ALMOST CHARGE NOTHING MORE FOR IT

That said, here's the good news. The 12 best non-stop Business Class deals we dug out (for travel through the end of March, 2022) are outlined in the chart below. Deals and good fares aren't easy to come by these days, but most are under the \$2,500 mark and were particularly appealing. Here they are:

From / To		Fares for Travel Through March				Difference
Airline	Non-stop*	Airline	One-stop*			
Chicago	Madrid	Iberia	\$2,195	Iberia	\$2,195	\$0
Dallas	Frankfurt	American, Lufthansa	\$2,485	American, Lufthansa	\$2,485	\$0
Houston	London	British Airways	\$2,570	American	\$2,570	\$0
Los Angeles	London	British Airways	\$2,520	American	\$2,520	\$0
Miami	Barcelona	American	\$2,390	American	\$2,390	\$0
	London	American	\$2,570	American	\$2,562	-\$8
	Madrid	Iberia	\$2,228	American	\$2,395	\$167
New York	Barcelona	American	\$2,090	American	\$2,090	\$0
	London	American, United	\$2,270	American	\$2,270	\$0
	Milan	American	\$2,097	American	\$2,097	\$0
	Paris	American	\$2,196	American	\$2,196	\$0
Seattle	London	American	\$2,369	American	\$2,369	\$0

\*Most fares also available during Easter

## COMPARING NON-STOP VS ONE-STOP FARES FOR TRAVEL IN APRIL AND BEYOND

For travel in April and beyond when fares jump sharply, the fares are close to the same if not the same for routes whether you make a stop or not. Interesting right? In other words, if you're looking at a route that doesn't offer a non-stop, say Boise to Budapest, for travel later next year, there's no incentive to book now. Wait for fares to drop!

From / To		Fares for Travel in April and Beyond				Difference
Airline	Non-stop	One-stop				
Boston	Frankfurt	United	\$3,585	\$3,546	\$39	1%
Chicago	Frankfurt	United	\$3,935	\$3,896	\$39	1%
	Madrid	Iberia	\$3,795	\$3,795	\$0	0%

From / To		Fares for Travel in April and Beyond			Difference	
Dallas	Frankfurt	American	\$3,885	\$3,885	\$0	0%
	Paris	American	\$3,896	\$3,896	\$0	0%
Houston	Amsterdam	United	\$4,011	\$3,867	\$144	4%
	London	American	\$3,174	\$3,174	\$0	0%
Los Angeles	Frankfurt	United	\$3,786	\$3,835	-\$49	-1%
	London	American	\$3,777	\$3,777	\$0	0%
Miami	Barcelona	American	\$3,740	\$3,740	\$0	0%
	London	American	\$3,727	\$3,727	\$0	0%
	Madrid	American	\$3,745	\$3,748	-\$3	0%
New York	Barcelona	American	\$3,440	\$3,440	\$0	0%
	London	American	\$1,977	\$1,977	\$0	0%
	Milan	American	\$3,447	\$3,447	\$0	0%
	Paris	American	\$3,546	\$3,546	\$0	0%
Philadelphia	Frankfurt	United	\$3,885	\$3,846	\$39	1%
San Francisco	Frankfurt	United	\$4,135	\$4,096	\$39	1%
Seattle	Frankfurt	United	\$4,135	\$4,129	\$6	0%
	London	American	\$4,077	\$4,077	\$0	0%

## COMPARING ONE-STOP FARES FOR TRAVEL THROUGH MARCH VS ONE-STOP FARES FOR TRAVEL IN APRIL AND BEYOND

Again, near the end of March fares jump sharply on these one-stop routes. The price increase is 19% to 42% for the 20 Business Class one-stop routes shown, in addition to many others.

From / To		Fares for Travel Through March		Fares for Travel in April and Beyond		Difference
Airline	One-stop*	One-stop				
Atlanta	Madrid	Delta	\$2,940	\$4,284	\$1,344	31%
Chicago	Milan	United	\$1,826	\$3,815	\$1,989	52%
	Porto	United	\$2,459	\$3,829	\$1,370	36%

From / To		Fares for Travel Through March		Fares for Travel in April and Beyond	Difference	
Houston	Paris	American	\$2,323	\$3,877	\$1,554	40%
	Amsterdam	American	\$2,341	\$3,867	\$1,526	39%
	Frankfurt	American	\$2,696	\$3,396	\$700	21%
	London	American	\$2,570	\$3,174	\$604	19%
Los Angeles	London	American	\$2,520	\$3,777	\$1,257	33%
Miami	Barcelona	American	\$2,390	\$3,740	\$1,350	36%
	London	American	\$2,562	\$3,727	\$1,165	31%
	Madrid	American	\$2,395	\$3,748	\$1,353	36%
New York	Barcelona	American	\$2,090	\$3,440	\$1,350	39%
	Lisbon	Delta	\$2,698	\$3,479	\$781	22%
	Madrid	Delta	\$2,690	\$4,586	\$1,896	41%
	Milan	American	\$2,097	\$3,447	\$1,350	39%
	Paris	American	\$2,196	\$3,546	\$1,350	38%
Seattle	London	American	\$2,369	\$4,077	\$1,708	42%
	Paris	Delta	\$3,197	\$4,783	\$1,586	33%
Washington, DC	Amsterdam	American	\$2,375	\$3,827	\$1,452	38%
	Frankfurt	American	\$2,646	\$3,396	\$750	22%

\*Most fares also available during Easter

## EXAMPLES OF NON-STOP ROUTES TO AVOID

Athens is great, but not at these prices on non-stop routes. Save the Acropolis for another time – it'll still be there. Same goes for Munich: \$6,573 sure doesn't float my boat at this time. And the gladiatorial cost to get to Rome from Atlanta? That's a sacrifice I'm not willing to make.

From / To		Ultra High Non-stop Summer Fares		
Airline	Dates	Non-stop Fare		
Atlanta	Athens	Delta	April to July	\$6,512

From / To		Ultra High Non-stop Summer Fares		
	Barcelona	Delta	May to September	\$4,740
	Munich	Delta	June to September	\$6,573
	Rome	Delta	April to September	\$6,512
Chicago	Athens	American	May to August	\$5,204
Los Angeles	Munich	United	April to September	\$5,515
Newark	Edinburgh	United	April to September	\$4,933
Philadelphia	Athens	American	May to September	\$4,354
	Edinburgh	American	April to July	\$4,941
	Lisbon	American	May, June	\$6,001
	Paris	American	April to July	\$5,846
	Rome	American	March to June	\$6,512
Washington, DC	Rome	United	May to July	\$5,262

Now you're much more prepared to think through your next ticket to Europe, and what trade-offs to make.



# Can a Downgrade Result in an Upgrade?

November 2021

## **Cabinalysis: Sometimes a downgrade is a smart move (there, we said it)**

In 1992, on an EVA Air flight, something extraordinary occurred. Or was it a Virgin Atlantic flight?

For the first time, passengers took their seats in a cabin that was *in between* Business Class and economy. EVA called it Deluxe Economy. Virgin called it Mid Class. Now, 29 years later, we all know it as Premium Economy.



Yes, which airline got there first is an ongoing dispute. Success has many fathers, as they say. But it could have been an orphaned failure. I mean, if your Business Class flyers disembarked en masse to that cheaper new cabin, it would be a disaster.

But something else happened. Economy sufferers moved up instead, and the rest is history. These days, the big three U.S. airlines alone have more than 90 flights with Premium Economy seats to Europe.

## BUSINESS ONE WAY, PREMIUM ECONOMY THE OTHER

In February we wrote about the strategy of **mixing up cabins** ([Horses for Courses](#)) each way on a round-trip flight, and we got a lot of positive feedback about it. In our May report, [Mixed Cabin Part II: The One Step Above Cattle Class](#), we looked at doing the “cabin shuffle,” meaning using the extra legroom seat for the day flight and Business Class or Premium Economy for the overnight flight. This is ideal for elite status members with American, Delta, and United, who get the extra legroom benefit for free.

Here’s the gist of it: Why fork over money for a Business Class seat during a daytime flight? Sure there are many other added comforts of being in Business Class, but the biggest benefit is a lie-flat seat for an overnight flight. We argued that budget-conscious travelers should save that luxury for the night leg of the trip, and fly Premium Economy during the day. Sure, this doesn’t apply to everyone, but if your budget is very tight and not arriving disheveled is a priority, then this is for you.

It’s all about being smart with your money. Why buy an expensive 4WD vehicle when you only drive in the city? Why pay for an all-you-can-eat buffet when you’re not that hungry?

In other words, we’re defining an upgrade as...

***An improvement in the overall value of an opportunity whereby its benefits exceed any drawbacks.***

## WHEN A DOWNGRADE (IN COMFORT) RESULTS IN AN UPGRADE (IN OVERALL VALUE)

Some think a move from Business Class to Premium Economy is a downgrade, and it is if you only look at it from the comfort perspective. But that’s a one-dimensional view, and I’ll show you why – with an example.

On April 12, a round-trip between **Charlotte and Frankfurt** in Premium Economy costs \$1,653 (at time of writing), while a round-trip in Business Class is \$2,383. The mixed-class fare is \$2,018.

**Good deal:** Upgrade from a round-trip in Premium Economy to a mixed-class fare with Premium Economy one way and Business Class (and a comfy bed) the other for just \$365, and arrive the next morning well-rested.

**Bad deal:** Downgrading from Business Class round-trip to the mixed-cabin trip and only saving \$365.

On March 7, on the other hand, a round-trip in Premium Economy is \$1,543, while a round-trip in Business Class is \$3,983. The mixed class fare is \$2,763.

**Bad deal:** Upgrading from a round-trip in Premium Economy fare to the mixed cabin round-trip and paying \$1,220. Ouch.

**Good deal:** SAVING \$1,220 for “downgrading” from Business round-trip to Premium Economy for the return trip leg that’s during the day (when you don’t even sleep) if you’re budget-conscious. See the screenshot below.

**Depart Charlotte, NC to Frankfurt, Germany**  
Tuesday, April 12, 2022

Lowest Fare	Flexible	Sun, Apr 10	Mon, Apr 11	Tue, Apr 12	Wed, Apr 13	Thu, Apr 14
		\$ 1,161	\$ 1,143	\$ 1,143	\$ 1,239	\$ 1,418

Sort by: Relevance

Basic Economy	Main Cabin	Premium Economy	Business
Round trip \$ 1,143	Round trip \$ 1,293	Round trip \$ 1,653 High	FLAGSHIP* Round trip \$ 2,383 Low

CLT 4:50 PM → FRA 7:30 AM 8h 40m Nonstop  
AA 704 772-Boeing 777

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**Depart Charlotte, NC to Frankfurt, Germany**  
Monday, March 7, 2022

Lowest Fare	Flexible	Sat, Mar 05	Sun, Mar 06	Mon, Mar 07	Tue, Mar 08	Wed, Mar 09
		\$ 1,083	\$ 1,051	\$ 1,033	\$ 1,075	\$ 1,218

Sort by: Relevance

Basic Economy	Main Cabin	Premium Economy	Business
Round trip \$ 1,033	Round trip \$ 1,183	Round trip \$ 1,543 Low	FLAGSHIP* Round trip \$ 3,983 High

CLT 4:45 PM → FRA 7:15 AM 8h 30m Nonstop  
AA 704 772-Boeing 777

**FCF TALKS ABOUT *DOWNGRADING*? IS THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN?!**

Yes, I think

A big mistake any traveler can make is not thinking outside the cabin when an opportunity arises.

## MIXING CABINS. A SIMPLE FARE FORMULA

To determine the cost for mixing cabins, simply add the Business Class seat cost to the Premium Economy seat cost and divide by two. While this is , it will be close, sometimes within a hundred dollars or so.

**So, taking this mixed-class idea a step further**, Business Class flyers have the option of saving a lot when fares are high, and conversely, Premium Economy flyers can get a smart upgrade to Business Class when fares are low.

Let's look at another example: **Dallas to London versus Dallas to Paris** for travel in April on American Airlines.

### Dallas to London Example

UPGRADE DEAL: A round-trip in Premium Economy is \$1,817, but if you travel outbound in Business Class and return in Premium Economy, the fare is \$2,150. That's a reasonable **\$333 to upgrade one-way** to Business Class.

NO DEAL: A round-trip in Business Class is \$2,575, but if you travel outbound in Business and return in Premium Economy, the fare is \$2,150. I mean, talking me out of a comfy Business Class seat across the Atlantic to save all of \$425? Er, no thanks.

Divide and conquer.

### Dallas to Paris Example

NO DEAL: A round-trip in Premium Economy costs \$1,817, but travel outbound in Business and return in Premium Economy and the fare is \$3,287. That means an upgrade to Business, one-way costs \$1,470.

NO DEAL: Round-trip in Business is \$3,646, but if you downgrade and travel outbound in Business and return in Premium Economy, the fare is \$3,287, a savings of only \$359.

There you have it... more ways to think about squeezing more value from your next trip.