

Business Class It to the Caribbean with Amex and Beat AA in Coach

March 2021

If you haven't already, be ready to strike when Amex's next bonus promo hits and you'll score the best premium mileage deal to the Caribbean ever.

Last month we reported that many and that Business Class prices were dropping like coconuts. Well, we've got more sunny Caribbean news for you: instead of using American Airlines miles to get to these turquoise waters, consider transferring Amex points to BA miles (redeemable on AA) to snag a 40% bonus deal. It brings British Airways' Business Class cabin into the realm of American Airlines' coach price.

Or even less.

BUSINESS CLASS FOR LESS THAN COACH

I'm talking about a free, nearly-free, or *less-than-free* upgrade from coach to Business Class on some routes. That's right. Once you apply this points transfer discount, coach costs more than Business Class if you use everyday American miles to fly on American.

Example: A Miami-Montego Bay round-trip costs 30,000 British Airways miles — which comes down to just 22,000 Amex points (\$550 value at 2.5 cents each) when you transfer during Amex's intermittent 40% bonus promos — for Business Class on American. Compare that to spending American AAdvantage miles where you'd pay 25,000 (\$900 value at 3.6 cents each) to fly coach or 40,000 (\$1,440 value at 3.6 cents each) in Business .

Or this route: Philadelphia-Nassau costs 33,000 BA miles round-trip for Business Class — or just 24,000 Amex points (\$600 value at 2.5 cents each) when you transfer during Amex's 40% bonus promos versus American's 25,000 (\$900 value at 3.6 cents each) to fly coach or 40,000 (\$1,440 value at 3.6 cents each) in Business . That's a hammock-swinging difference.

U.S. Departure Cities	Destinations	American Miles Round-Trip in Coach	British Airways Miles Round-Trip in Business Class	Cost after Amex 40% Discount
Charlotte	Montego Bay	25,000	44,000	32,000
Chicago	Montego Bay	25,000	44,000	32,000
Miami	Montego Bay	25,000	30,000	22,000
	Punta Cana	25,000	33,000	24,000
New York	Montego Bay	25,000	44,000	32,000
Philadelphia	Aruba	25,000	44,000	32,000
	Montego Bay	25,000	44,000	32,000
	Nassau	25,000	33,000	24,000
	San Juan	25,000	44,000	32,000

MORE GOOD NEWS

As we've reported before, British Airways has hefty fuel surcharges on award tickets to London and many other destinations operated by its own flights. But happily, when you're booking a trip to the Caribbean on American flights, British Airways only imposes modest taxes, sometimes less than American does. Icing on the rum cake of an awesome opportunity.



Hold This, Dear: A Way to Have Your Deal and Fly It Too

March 2021

Hold a ticket, not your breath with these airline hold policies in 2021.

Booking an airline ticket always comes with a level of anxiety.

The stats bear this out in plain sight for all to see. The “look to book” ratio – i.e. the number of fare searches made per flight booking – is a staggering [1000 to 1 according to Amadeus](#). If it’s taking you even a fraction of 1,000 searches to book your next trip, it’s bound to cause some headaches.

Let's face it – pulling the trigger and clicking "buy" on an airline ticket never comes with assurances that the fare won't drop tomorrow or next week making you feel like you just got duped.

Again.

There are also the non-financial reasons. Many people, for this reason and others, feel like they have an adversarial relationship with the airlines. All it takes is a bad experience like a lost bag to kill a person's trust. Maybe that "free" elite upgrade you've been waiting for still hasn't arrived. Maybe the airline launches a sale on the route you're flying, right after you commit to the ticket.

All frustrating situations that make it harder to click "buy"...

WAIT A MINUTE!

Last year we published a [special report about how to lock-in or freeze](#) great premium "flash fares" (really low ones) long enough to make sure you'd actually be able to use them. Yes, I can cancel that meeting in September. Yes, I can get the kids out of school a week early. Yes, cousin Pierre is cool if his visit happens in June, not July.

I'm talking about the Fare Hold Option. Today, more airlines have jumped on board and others have started to make theirs much more attractive. They range from a 24-hour grace period to up to seven days, and now even 14 days with United. When we're talking about booking anxiety, it's a total game-changer. We liken it to that scene in *The Matrix* film where a bullet fired from a gun could be slowed down in incredible detail and viewed from different angles.

So it's time to slow down your booking and revisit hold options a year later and see where the airlines stand in 2021.

WHY PUT OFF TODAY WHAT YOU CAN DO TOMORROW?

Yes, you read that right (though generally, it's said the other way round). My rationale is this: why make a decision today when you can make a better one tomorrow with more intel? The airlines are making this possible with fare holds. And not just for tomorrow, or even next week. That's a lot more information to consider and benefit from when you're booking.

This is a principle at the heart of what we call The Upgrade Mindset, in other words, not accepting the "travel status quo" that airlines want you to.

Let's spend a few minutes on that thought, or if you'd like to get straight to current airline hold policies, you can scroll down to the table further below.

Average Mindset: All you really want right now is a price for the flight you have in mind so you can buy now and get it over with. You'd happily take a potential fare hit to avoid any added stress.

Better Mindset: Locking-in (for one to 14 days) the fare for the flights you want without committing not only takes the edge off, but also actually increases your odds of getting a better deal tomorrow, should airfare volatility shift in your favor. Then, you can just book the new one and cancel your fare freeze. Either way, you feel good about it. Less stress.

Ultimate Mindset: Imagine if you could **lock in a bunch of different flights** today, more tomorrow, and more the day after that—perhaps on different dates or airlines? You don't have to imagine because that's exactly what's possible. You can always hold an airline ticket, locking in whatever the prevailing rate is at any given time. While that's cool on the surface, **knowing you can repeat the process is amazing**. Let's see where Fare Holds currently are.

AIRLINE FARE HOLD POLICIES IN 2021

Airline	Name for Hold Option	Hold Time	Cost	Comments
Air France	Time to Think	Up to 72 hours	\$15 EUR (about \$17 USD) per ticket	Non-refundable; not offered for First Class.
Air New Zealand	Fare Hold	Up to 72 hours	\$45 per ticket	Non-refundable.
All Nippon Airways	Keep My Fare	Up to 72 hours	\$10 per ticket	Non-refundable.
American Airlines	Hold Your Reservation	Up to 24 hours	Free	Non-refundable.
British Airways	Hold Booking	Up to 24 hours	\$10 per ticket	A fee will be charged only if the reservation has been canceled. If the booking is completed before 72 hours, the holding fee will be waived.
Cathay Pacific	Hold Fare	Up to 72 hours	\$15 per ticket	A fee will be charged only if the reservation has been canceled. If the booking is completed before 72 hours, the holding fee will be waived.
Eva Air	Keep Your Fare	Up to 72 hours	\$16 per ticket	Non-refundable.
Hawaiian Airlines	Fare Hold	Up to 7 days	3 day hold \$9.99; 7 day hold \$12.99; per	Non-refundable.

Airline	Name for Hold Option	Hold Time	Cost	Comments
			ticket	
Iberia	Need More Time	Up to 72 hours	\$10 per ticket	The first 24 hours are free. The booking window can be extended from \$10.00. The price will be deducted from the final price.
KLM	Time to Think	Up to 72 hours	\$18 per ticket	Non-refundable.
LATAM	Hold Reservation	24 hours	Free	LATAM will allow reservations to be held at the quoted fare without payment, or if purchased, cancelled without penalty, for at least 24 hours after the reservation is made if the reservation is made one week or more prior to the flight's scheduled departure.
LOT Airlines	Time 2 Think	Up to 72 hours	24 hour hold \$11; 48 hour hold \$13; 72 hour hold \$15; per ticket	Non-refundable. Hold option will be shown after selecting flights (if applicable).
Lufthansa	Secure Your Fare	Up to 48 hours	\$39 per ticket	Fee will be charged only if you cancel your reservation or take no action within the time limit.
Qatar Airways	Hold My Booking	Up to 72 hours	First 24 hours free; 48 hour hold \$15; 72 hour hold \$20; per booking	Non-refundable.
Singapore Airlines	Secure My Fare	Up to 72 hours	Varies	Available for Premium Economy and Economy Class only; non-refundable.
SWISS	Hold The Booking	Up to 72 hours	\$27 per booking	Cancel free of charge within 72 hours, non-refundable.
TAP Air Portugal	Time to Think	Up to 48 hours	\$10 per ticket	Non-refundable.
United	FareLock	3, 7 or 14 days	3 day hold \$11; 7 day hold \$15; 14 day hold \$22; per reservation	Non-refundable.



A Low Ha! Lockdown Fare Trends Hawaiian Style, From \$677 Round-Trip

March 2021

And how elites can get an even better deal with all the miles and cheap status-qualifying credit earned.

How does Hawaii sound for your next relaxing vacation to get away from it all? Great, I'm sure, but to get to the point, how does it *look* when comparing airlines across a number of factors? We've been watching fare trends as closely as ever thanks to the Lockout, and like other parts of the world, Hawaii is [now open to travelers](#).

In this report, we take a deep dive into the rumbling volcano of Hawaiian travel possibility, comparing the big three airlines on:

- **Fare Perspective:** Latest trends (and fares versus this time last year)
- **Elite Perspective:** Easy earning power
- **Net Cost Perspective:** After miles earned
 - *By airline and route*
 - *By elite status level*

This report will arm elites and non-elites with a comprehensive Hawaiian attack plan before you hit the hammock and hula.

Let's get to it, that luau isn't going to cook itself.

BUSINESS CLASS TREND PERSPECTIVE: HAWAIIAN FARE COMPARISON IN 2021 VS. 2020

When compared with this time last year (pre-lockdown, no less), the winners are American and United. American had four out of five lower fares to Hawaiian destinations (up to \$452 lower) and United had lower fares across all five – up to \$384 cheaper. Delta let the team down with three of the five routes showing higher fares. One route, from Delta's hub Atlanta to Honolulu was a whopping \$1,215 increase. You can check out the charts below, but here are some tropical hotties buried in the chart.

American Hawaiian Hottie: The Los Angeles-Honolulu nonstop route is \$747 (love that number) in Business Class. Given that coach costs \$318, and it's more than 11 hours round-trip, the upgrade to Business costs just \$39 per hour.

What's more, an [AAdvantage](#) Executive Platinum Elite member can get it down to a *net* of \$593, because you earn 7,678 miles, if you value them at just two cents each. That offsets your net cost between \$70 and \$154, depending on your status level.

Delta Hawaiian Hottie: You can fly from nonstop Los Angeles-Honolulu on Delta for \$1,079 but Delta's Atlanta-Honolulu nonstop route costs a relatively high \$3,207 (up from last year as mentioned above). That's the price YOU pay for Atlanta being Delta's main hub, where competition is scarce. Delta's nonstop Atlanta-Honolulu in Economy costs \$1,318.

United Hawaiian Hottie: The New York-Honolulu nonstop roundtrip costs \$1,898 (last year was \$3,000+) in First Class on United. Coach costs \$1,015. So applying the math from above, the upgrade from coach to First Class for this 22+-hour round-trip is just \$39 per hour.

[MileagePlus](#) Premier 1K members are looking at a net \$1,475 as they earn 19,492 miles at two cents each, offsetting between \$177 and \$390, depending on your status level.

AMERICAN AIRLINES DEEP DIVE

American 2021 vs 2020 Fares

Route	2020 Fares	2021 Fares	Difference
Los Angeles - Honolulu	\$1,199	\$747	-\$452
Chicago - Honolulu	\$1,919	\$1,867	-\$52
Dallas - Maui	\$1,973	\$2,072	+\$99
Phoenix - Kona	\$1,506	\$1,079	-\$427
Los Angeles - Lihue	\$1,206	\$1,091	-\$115

American Elite Earning Examples

Route	EQDs	EQSs	EQMs
Los Angeles - Honolulu	\$698	2	10,224
Chicago - Honolulu	\$1,761	2	16,972
Dallas - Maui	\$1,978	2	14,844
Phoenix - Kona	\$1,024	2	11,444
Los Angeles - Lihue	\$1,044	2	10,460

Examples of American Net Cost by Status Level

Level	Route	Spendable Miles Earned*	Value of Spendable Miles Earned @ 2 Cents Each	NET Cost
AAdvantage Member	Los Angeles-Honolulu / Published Fare \$747	3,490	\$70	\$677
AAdvantage Gold Member		4,886	\$98	\$649
AAdvantage Platinum Member		5,584	\$112	\$635
AAdvantage Platinum Pro Member		6,282	\$126	\$621
AAdvantage Executive Platinum Member		7,678	\$154	\$593

*Based on [AAdvantage](#) non-elite member at 5 award miles per dollar spent; Gold members earn 7 miles/U.S. dollar (40% bonus); Platinum members earn 8 miles/U.S. dollar (60% bonus); Platinum Pro members earn 9 miles/U.S. dollar (80% bonus); Executive Platinum members earn 11 miles/U.S. dollar (110% bonus).

DELTA AIRLINES DEEP DIVE

Route	2020 Fares	2021 Fares	Difference
Atlanta - Honolulu	\$1,992	\$3,207	+\$1,215
Minneapolis - Honolulu	\$1,622	\$1,965	+\$343
Salt Lake City - Maui	\$1,233	\$1,730	+\$497
Seattle - Kona	\$1,289	\$1,006	-\$283
Los Angeles - Lihue	\$1,088	\$1,068	-\$20

Delta Elite Earning Examples

Route	MQDs	MQMs
Atlanta - Honolulu	\$3,062	13,506
Minneapolis - Honolulu	\$1,861	11,916
Salt Lake City - Maui	\$1,647	8,808
Seattle - Kona	\$956	8,076
Los Angeles - Lihue	\$1,020	7,846

UNITED AIRLINES DEEP DIVE

United 2021 vs 2020 Fares

Route	2020 Fares	2021 Fares	Difference
Newark - Honolulu	\$2,247	\$1,898	-\$349
Chicago - Honolulu	\$2,029	\$1,912	-\$117
Los Angeles - Kona	\$1,319	\$1,102	-\$217
Denver - Maui	\$1,774	\$1,728	-\$46

Route	2020 Fares	2021 Fares	Difference
San Francisco - Lihue	\$1,241	\$1,058	-\$183

United Elite Earning Examples

Route	PQPs	PQFs
Newark - Honolulu	1,748	2
Chicago - Honolulu	1,806	2
Los Angeles - Kona	1,054	2
Denver - Maui	1,646	2
San Francisco - Lihue	1,010	2

Example United Net Cost by Status Level

Status Level	Route	Spendable Miles Earned*	Value of Spendable Miles Earned @ 2 Cents Each	NET Cost
MileagePlus Member	Newark-Honolulu / Published Fare \$1,898	8,860	\$177	\$1,688
MileagePlus Silver Member		12,404	\$248	\$1,617
MileagePlus Gold Member		14,176	\$284	\$1,581
MileagePlus Platinum Member		15,948	\$319	\$1,546
MileagePlus 1K Member		19,492	\$390	\$1,475

*Based on [MileagePlus](#) member at 5 award miles per dollar spend; Premier Silver members earn 27 miles/U.S. dollar (40% bonus); Premier Gold members earn 8 miles/U.S. dollar (60% bonus); Premier Platinum members earn 9 miles/U.S. dollar (80% bonus); Premier 1K members earn 11 miles/U.S. dollar (110% bonus).



Kona is calling.



Delta Devalue-lution. Amex Whips SkyMiles, and Whips Them Good

March 2021

Beatdown of epic proportions

Remember that 80s band Devo? Maybe not, but bear with me. They wore red “energy dome” hats and sang songs like “Whip It.” Anyway, Devo stood for ‘de-evolution.’ And while I hum a song or two, I’m beginning to think Delta stands for ‘de-value-lution.’

Yes, it’s happened again. A few recent changes have plunged SkyMiles-related cards into an even worse place than before.

So, just in case you needed to be reminded of our thinking, we thought we’d present our air-tight case for going with Amex cards instead of SkyMiles cards. Because that’s what we do.

DELTA: BOTTOM OF THE POPS

The charts below are sobering. They show the Delta partner costs, before and after the miles devaluation. For a range of U.S.-to-Europe routes, you'd have to fork out another 90,000 SkyMiles, a 60% increase.

Compare Delta Partner Old and New Award Costs to Europe

Delta Partner	Sample Route	Former SkyMiles Cost R/T	New SkyMiles Cost R/T	Difference	Increase
Air France	Atlanta - Paris				
KLM	New York - Amsterdam	150,000	240,000	90,000	60%
Alitalia	New York - Rome				
Virgin Atlantic	New York - London				

*off-peak rates

Now take a peek-a-boo at this chart. It compares those lofty SkyMiles prices for the same flights with Amex points, which also partners with those airlines. New York-Rome on Alitalia is just 80,000 miles versus 240,000 SkyMiles. A 3X difference.

Compare Delta's New Partner Cost and Amex Points to Europe

Operating Airline	Sample Route	Business Class Using SkyMiles R/T	Amex Partner Cost R/T	Difference	Price Premium
Air France	Atlanta - Paris				
KLM	New York - Amsterdam	240,000	115,000	125,000	109%
Alitalia	New York - Rome		80,000	160,000	200%
Virgin Atlantic	New York - London		95,000	145,000	153%

*off-peak rates

Those charts are reason enough to use Amex cards over SkyMiles cards, especially for Europe-bound travelers. But there's more.

A FEW MORE REASONS TO SKIP SKYMILES CARDS AND PLAY AMEX CARDS INSTEAD

- Delta doesn't offer access to First Class seats to Asia. The best you can get is Business Class. So, its SkyTeam partners (Korean and China Eastern) reciprocate by not allowing Delta members to access their First Class. All Nippon, Cathay Pacific, and Singapore have a First Class cabin and partner with Amex.
- Hoping to fly to Europe in First Class? Try again. Delta doesn't offer a First Class redemption, only Business Class. On the other hand, British Airways, Emirates, and Singapore all have a First Class cabin to Europe, and are Amex points partners.
- With American Express Membership Rewards, you can transfer points to miles with 19 airlines — plus access those airlines' partners.
- Amex Rewards often runs transfer bonus promotions, frequently offering up to a 40% bonus with British Airways, Iberia, and Virgin Atlantic. The Delta co-branded credit card doesn't offer bonus deals remotely like that.
- Delta's co-branded cards won't multiply your earnings like other cards will. Get **5X** (American Express Platinum card) points for airline tickets and hotels or **4X** (American Express Gold card) points for dining or supermarkets, for example.
- Buying power. If you buy miles via Delta directly, you're limited to 60,000 per year at a cost of 3.5¢. You can buy up to 500,000 Amex points at a cost of 2.5¢ and then transfer those points to any of its partner's miles.
- Unlike Delta, most Amex partners publish an award chart or calculator online, so you can budget properly or determine where you even stand.
- Air France opens bookings for award travel 361 days out, but Delta opens bookings for award travel 331 days out. That's a Delta disconnect.
- Loyalty-free travelers — those not shackled to one loyalty program — have the flexibility to shop around and fly the cheapest airline. Right now, that's not Delta in just about every market.
- Exotic destinations. Are you dreaming of going to Australia or New Zealand in comfort? You rarely can with Delta miles because the airline is so stingy to the South Pacific. Even partner Virgin Australia rarely has any free premium award space using Delta miles.

FCF'S NON-DISCLAIMER DISCLAIMER

Just a reassuring note that FCF receives nothing from credit card providers. No kickbacks. No cash under the table. Our perspective is 100% independent and researched by our in-house team. There are thousands upon thousands of credit card articles online, which will advise you to go out and get 10, 20, or 30 cards because they're paid up to \$300 each time you sign up for one on their site from the banks issuing these cards. They make thousands of dollars on you per year.

As they say, if you aren't paying for the product, you are the product.



Better than Free: Enjoy Stopover Vacation Loophole Happiness, San Juan Style

March 2021

How you can add Puerto Rico to a domestic round-trip on American Airlines and pay up to \$280 less.

Keen-eyed FCF readers will know we've discussed the Stopover Loophole Strategy (SLS) before. It's how we maximize the opportunity many airlines offer, called a "stopover allowance."

A stopover is a planned stop between flight segments on a trip. For international trips, a stop for 24 hours is usually allowed for free, but on domestic flights like those discussed here, it's usually just 4 hours.

The loophole part is that *longer stops are sometimes* allowed for free, or for a minimal fee – and **sometimes, adding a second destination to your trip can actually *lower* your original fare.**

Like magic.



Like magic.

So rather than thinking of the next trip in terms of a single destination, you can think of that destination as “the stopover,” such as the sandy beach one we’re highlighting this month.

That gives you a chance to score a side vacation (for days or longer) in a gorgeous destination for nothing, or next to it. And in some cases, you can get it for less than the cost of your single-destination trip.

To me, this is the airlines’ way of saying “feel free to stick around in an extra vacation location, and we’ll cover the tab.” But I’m sure they don’t think of it that way.

The San Juan Side-Track

This report features San Juan, Puerto Rico, as the warm, sunny, free, or low-cost stop-over you can add on to your next trip. What a great idea.



Puerto Rico

For example, you'd normally pay \$901 for a Business Class return trip between Los Angeles and Philadelphia to visit Grandma Grace. But with FCF's stopover loophole strategy, you could sneak in a relaxing few days or longer in the tropics on the way home. I mean, who wouldn't want to do that after the year that just passed? You can add San Juan, for example, at current fare levels for \$280 less. Like magic.

That's right, you can **add a vacation in San Juan and only pay a total of \$621 for the entire trip** in Business Class. FYI, not all of these add-on trips are "less than free" as we like to call it when you end up paying less and getting more. But in those cases, a couple hundred extra bucks isn't much to ask to add a great vacation in your life.

A nuance to note: you can stop in San Juan in either direction involving the same cities but the cost may differ. Still good, just different. For example, Cleveland-**San Juan**-Dallas-Cleveland is \$681. (Cleveland-Dallas round-trip is \$606), while Cleveland-Dallas-**San Juan**-Cleveland is \$538 .

And here are more:

Normal Trip	Normal Premium Fare R/T	Side Trip City	New Premium Fare w/Side Trip	Free Side-Trip Savings
Los Angeles - Philadelphia	\$901	San Juan	\$621	-\$280

Normal Trip	Normal Premium Fare R/T	Side Trip City	New Premium Fare w/Side Trip	Free Side-Trip Savings
Los Angeles - Miami	\$954		\$709	-\$245
Phoenix - Philadelphia	\$829		\$716	-\$113
Las Vegas - Charlotte	\$938		\$858	-\$80
New York - Dallas	\$530		\$476	-\$54
Milwaukee - San Juan	\$552	Chicago	\$557	\$5
St. Louis - San Juan	\$573		\$567	-\$6
Oklahoma City - San Juan	\$626	Dallas	\$632	\$6
Tulsa - San Juan	\$555		\$593	\$38
Nashville - San Juan	\$496	Miami	\$587	\$91



Review and pay

[« New search](#)
DEPART
Los Angeles, CA to Philadelphia, PA

Tuesday, May 4, 2021 to Wednesday, May 5, 2021

Flight	Depart	Arrive	Travel time	Class	Seats
981 American Airlines  	11:11 PM LAX	7:19 AM PHL	5h 8m	First	Choose seats

DEPART
Philadelphia, PA to San Juan, Puerto Rico

Saturday, May 8, 2021

Flight	Depart	Arrive	Travel time	Class	Seats
2571 American Airlines  	3:40 PM PHL	6:55 PM MIA	3h 15m	First	Choose seats
	Stop: Miami (MIA)				
1570 American Airlines  	7:40 PM MIA	10:19 PM SJU	2h 39m	Business	Choose seats

DEPART
San Juan, Puerto Rico to Los Angeles, CA

Saturday, May 15, 2021

Flight	Depart	Arrive	Travel time	Class	Seats
1613 American Airlines  	3:19 PM SJU	6:00 PM MIA	2h 41m	Business	Choose seats
	Stop: Miami (MIA)				
314 American Airlines  	6:40 PM MIA	9:00 PM LAX	5h 20m	First	Choose seats

Cost summary

Your trip total	Passenger	Bag and optional fees 
\$621.22	Trip LAX / PHL	\$530.00 Reservation and tickets FAQs 
	Taxes	\$91.22 Price and Tax Information 
	Carrier-imposed fees	\$0.00 Conditions of Carriage 
	Total (all passengers)	\$621.22

San Juan Elevator Pitch

Blessed with a rich cultural heritage, golden palm-lined beaches, and a vibrant nightlife, San Juan is a unique Caribbean charmer. Its Spanish colonial history dates back to 1521 and comes alive along the narrow, cobblestone streets of Old San Juan, in the pastel-colored buildings, churches, and convents, and in the iconic centuries-old forts that guard the harbor: Castillo San Felipe del Morro and Castillo San Cristobal.

Beyond its historical authenticity is a modern pulsating city, packed with superb restaurants, cutting-edge galleries, and an exciting nightlife. And you won't want to miss such signature dishes as pernil (classic roasted pork), mofongo (mashed green plantains), and platanos maduros (fried ripe plantains), washed down with a splash of Bacardi rum, of course. Or better yet, visit the world-renowned Bacardi headquarters itself, the largest premium rum distillery in the world — just 20 minutes from Old San Juan.

For the perfect day trip, head to El Yunque, the only tropical rainforest in the U.S. National Forest Service and the pride of Puerto Rico. Keep your ears tuned for the singsong sounds of Puerto Rico's tiny coqui frogs, symbols of the island, as they fill the forest with their plaintive calls.



Add some color to your next trip, in San Juan.



Best FCF Fare & Miles Alerts Still Available

March 2021

We've put together a survey of the best airfares and unprecedented mileage availability (aka "Sweet Redemptions") that we've published in the last month—on major airlines—that are still live today. So in case you missed them the first time, here they are in all their glory.

***Don't see your origin and/or destination in an alert below? [This report was made for you.](#)

FCF Special Fares

Hawaii & Mexico

[Hawaii: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$968 R/T – Major Carriers](#)

[Hawaii: New Business Class Fares from \\$957 R/T With Alaskan Airways](#)

[Cozumel: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$537 R/T](#)

Africa

[Egypt: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$2,064 R/T](#)

[Kenya: New Business Class Fares from Canada and the U.S. from \\$2,302 R/T](#)

[Casablanca: New Premium Economy Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,004 R/T](#)

[Johannesburg: New Business Class Fares from Canada and the U.S. from \\$2,627 R/T](#)

[Morocco: New Business Class Fares from Canada from \\$2,033 R/T](#)

Asia

[Maldives: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$2,120 R/T](#)

[Hong Kong: New Premium Economy Fares from the U.S. from \\$958 R/T](#)

Europe

[Lisbon: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,735 R/T](#)

[Scotland: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$2,057 R/T](#)

[First Class: Athens from the U.S. from \\$3,350 R/T](#)

[Venice: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$1,936 R/T](#)

[First Class: Vienna from the U.S. from \\$2,977 R/T](#)

[Madrid: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,859 R/T](#)

[First Class: Belgium from the U.S. from \\$2,968 R/T](#)

[Sweden: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,895 R/T](#)

[Barcelona: New Premium Economy Fares from New York and Boston from \\$776 R/T](#)

[First Class: Zurich from the U.S from \\$2,969 R/T](#)

[Barcelona: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,854 R/T](#)

[Malaga: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,859 R/T](#)

[Barcelona: New First Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$3,153 R/T](#)

[First Class: Budapest from the U.S. from \\$2,968 R/T](#)

[Florence: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,872 R/T](#)

[Malta: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$2,049 R/T](#)

[Moscow: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$1,761 R/T](#)

[Seville: New Business Class Fares from Chicago, New York and Philadelphia from \\$1,999 R/T](#)

[Bologna: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,875 R/T](#)

[First Class Stockholm: New Fares from the U.S. from \\$2,981 R/T](#)

[London: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,934 R/T](#)

[Rome: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$1,873 R/T](#)

[First Class: Prague from the U.S from \\$2,962 R/T](#)

[Amalfi Coast: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$1,962 R/T](#)

[Mallorca: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,957 R/T](#)

[Milan: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada to Milan from \\$1,861 R/T](#)

[Valencia: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,978 R/T](#)

[Italy / Spain: New Business Class Flash Fares from the U.S. from \\$1,865 R/T](#)

[First Class to Switzerland from the U.S. from \\$2,960 R/T on BA](#)

Middle East

[Jordan: New Business Class Fares from Canada and the U.S. from \\$2,206 R/T](#)

[Dubai: New Business Class Fares from Canada and the U.S. from \\$2,437 R/T](#)

[Abu Dhabi: New Business Class Fares from Canada and the U.S. from \\$2,450 R/T](#)

South America

[Chile: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$1,348 R/T](#)

[Brazil: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$1,352 R/T](#)

[Rio: New Premium Economy Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$746 R/T](#)

[Peru: New Business Class Fares from the U.S. and Canada from \\$759 R/T](#)

[New Buenos Aires \\$1,660 R/Ts In Business Class Fares from Canada and the U.S.](#)

[First Class: Sao Paulo from the U.S. from \\$2,540 R/T](#)

[Chile: New Premium Economy Fares from the U.S. from \\$750 R/T](#)

[Rio de Janeiro: New Business Class Fares from Canada and the U.S. from *\\$1,391* R/T](#)

[Brazil: New Premium Economy Fares from the U.S. and Canada to Sao Paulo from \\$747 R/T](#)

FCF Sweet Redeems

Asia

[Handful of Cheap Amex *First Class* All Nippon Airways Seats from Chicago to Tokyo, 93,000 R/T](#)

[Handful of Cheap *First Class* All Nippon Airways from San Francisco to Tokyo, 85,000 R/T](#)

[Handful of Cheap *First Class* All Nippon Airways from New York to Tokyo, 93,000 R/T Next Month & August](#)

[First Class: Scattered All Nippon Single-Seat Discount Availability to Tokyo from Los Angeles, If you know Where to Look](#)

[Handful of Japan Airlines *First Class* Seats from Los Angeles to Tokyo, If You Know Where to Look](#)

Europe

[Very Rare: Treasure Map of 49,000 Amex Points Availability for Boston-Europe Business Class R/Ts](#)

[Europe: Business Class Flights for 61,000 Miles \(Or Amex / Chase Points\) R/T from Miami, Great Availability for Two Seats](#)

[Europe: Two Delta Routes Biz Class 77,000 Miles / Points R/T \(Four Seats\)](#)

[Three Delta Routes to Europe 77,000 Points Biz Class R/T... Think Getting 5- to 9-for-1s](#)

[Very Rare: Treasure Map of 49,000 Amex Point Availability for New York-Europe Business Class R/Ts](#)

[Handful of Dirt Cheap Europe Business Class Flights from Los Angeles 73,000 Amex Points R/T For Travel in 2022](#)

[Many United Discount Business Class Opportunities from Houston and Many Other U.S. Cities to Amsterdam](#)

[Many United Business Class Opportunities from Washington, DC and Many Other U.S. Cities to London](#)

[Many United Business Class Opportunities from Chicago and Many Other U.S. Cities to London](#)

[Unprecedented American Business Class Opportunities from Charlotte and Many Other U.S. Cities to Munich](#)

South America

[Unprecedented American *First Class* Opportunities from Miami and Many Other Cities to Brazil, for Travel in 2022](#)



Asia Bound Business Class Barons Can Brag by Using United (and Amex Points) Partner All Nippon Airways' Mileage Upgrades

March 2021

It may be the last place you think to save money, but there's potential for a \$5,936 / 75% savings in this special report.

In lockdown times, we've been experiencing a lot of change in the world of air travel, but you need to **stay open-minded**. What worked yesterday might not work today, and vice versa. People who are stuck doing things the old way will miss new opportunities, and believe me, they're out there waiting for anyone ready.

With that in mind, FCF's research team is on the case. We will be reviewing the best trends in premium air travel, turning over rocks, and looking behind the fridge to find the latest and greatest deals for you. And it all

starts with Mr. Upgrade's favorite travel tactic over the years: the [mileage upgrade](#).

There are [lots of ways mileage upgrades are special](#). Start with the fact that they are the most overlooked and underutilized premium air travel price-slashing tool on the planet. Ok, maybe our [Leg Stretch Strategy](#) is up there too.

So let's get specific – I'm talking to you, United loyalists.

PROBLEM: UNITED'S STINGY CONFIRMABLE UPGRADE AVAILABILITY

United travelers typically look to use miles to upgrade instead of a free award ticket, because they want to earn elite status credit. But here's the problem: United is famous for hanging its loyalty program members out to dry with expectations that a waitlisted mileage upgrade might become free, let alone the fantasy of having it confirmed at the time of ticketing. You "earn" miles, but good for what?

SOLUTION: MILEAGE UPGRADE OPPORTUNITIES WITH UNITED'S ELITE STATUS EARNING PARTNER, ALL NIPPON AIRWAYS

Forget about United mileage upgrades to Asia unless you want to roll the dice and play upgrade-waitlist roulette. If you're a United Elite and still want to upgrade and earn PQPs, use All Nippon Airways, an Amex transfer partner, to **confirm an upgrade at the time of booking**. You do earn fewer PQPs with this method (LAX-Tokyo earns only 16% less PQP's), but **being able to confirm an upgrade at the time of booking easily makes up for it, right?**

All Nippon Airways (ANA), an Amex points-to-miles transfer partner, allows upgrades from economy to both Premium Economy and Business Class with most low fares. Meanwhile, United charges 10,000 more miles and a \$900 co-pay.

SAMPLE SAVINGS WITH ALL NIPPON AIRWAYS / AMEX POINTS

New York-Tokyo R/T

Lowest Business Class fare: \$7,948

Lowest economy upgradeable fare: \$2,012

Number of All Nippon Airways (or Amex transferable points) miles: 56,000

Savings: \$5,936 / 75%

Value of Amex points you might use in this scenario is 56,000 divided by \$5,936 = 10.6 cents per mile of value. In other words, stop getting one or two cents or less of value for miles and points!

Los Angeles-Tokyo R/T

Lowest Business Class fare: \$5,602

Lowest economy upgradeable fare: \$1,944

Number of All Nippon Airways (or Amex transferable points) is 50,000 miles R/T

Savings: \$3,658 / 65%

United's Skimpy Upgrade Availability Compared With All Nippon Airways

Carrier	Economy to Business Class Upgrade to Tokyo From:	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
United		April, May		April	April, May		April
All Nippon	Chicago	Oct., Nov., Dec.	April, Aug., Sept.	July, Nov., Dec., Jan., Feb.	April, Aug., Nov., Dec.	July, Sept., Jan., Feb.	Oct., Dec. to Feb.
United							
All Nippon	Houston	April, July, Sept. to Nov.	Aug.	Dec. to Feb.	Jan.		Feb.
United		May, June	April	April, May		May	April, May
All Nippon	Los Angeles	April, Aug., Nov., Dec.	Jan., Feb.	Dec. to Feb.	April, Aug.		Nov., Dec., Jan., Feb.
United		May	April	April		May	April
All Nippon	New York	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.		Jan.	Feb.
United		April, May		April	April		April
All Nippon	Washington, DC	Aug. to Oct., Nov., Dec.	Nov., Feb.	Dec., Jan., Feb.	Aug., Oct., Nov.	Sept., Dec., Feb.	Jan.

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

YES! ANA FLIGHTS WILL EARN YOU UNITED ELITE CREDIT

- United upgradeable fares earn one PQP per every \$1 spent
- All Nippon upgradeable fares earn PQPs based on flight miles (divided by 5).

COMPARING ANA VS. UNITED MILEAGE UPGRADES

Comparing United.com Upgrading vs ANA.com Upgrading			
Los Angeles - Tokyo	Co-pay	Total Cost	Upgrade Mileage Cost
United Flight	\$1,150	\$2,270	60,000
ANA Flight	\$0	\$2,066	50,000

Comparing United.com vs ANA.com Elite Earning			
Los Angeles - Tokyo	PQF Earned	PQP Earned	PQP earn rate
United	2	870	1 PQP per every \$1 spend.
All Nippon	2	727	Miles earned divided by 5.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ANA UPGRADES

- Upgrade mileage cost is based on distance
- ANA's website is user-friendly and it's easy to check upgrade space online
- Transfer time from [Amex to ANA](#) is often instantaneous
- There's no co-pay on ANA
- Upgrades permitted on G, E, Y, B, M, U, and H fares
- Refunds: ANA exchange up to one year with no fee, refund \$300 penalty (waived if due to virus). ANA rules [based on the fare](#) purchased.
- Redeposit fees: [ANA will redeposit unexpired miles with no fee.](#)

DON'T LIVE IN AN ANA GATEWAY? NO PROBLEM

[ANA.co](#) allows you to book connecting flights on United from your departure city, but note that it will be in economy (these short-haul United flights are not eligible for the ANA mileage upgrade).

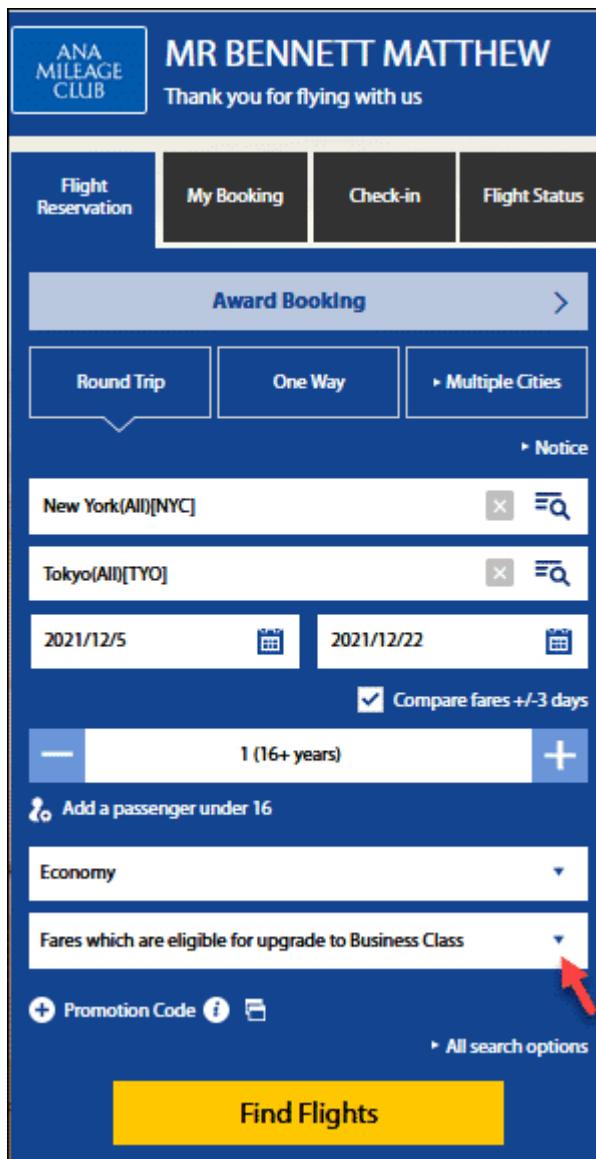
HOW TO BOOK IN 5 EASY STEPS

1. Go to [ANA's website](#), sign-in, enter your departure and arrival cities, travel dates, and number of passengers. Choose economy class and "Fares which are eligible for upgrade to Business Class." Click SEARCH.
2. Under each fare type, you will see "YES" if this fare is eligible for an upgrade, along with which cabin you can upgrade to. If "YES," scroll to mid-page and select "Reflect upgrade availability." To the left under "Upgrade" you can see if Business Class seats are available for your chosen flight. Do the same for the return flight.
3. Book and pay for your ticket.

4. Then go to your account and click “view reservation” and request the upgrade one segment at a time. Finally, go to your account and click “view reservation” to request seat assignments in Business Class.

Process the upgrade right after you book the economy seat in a matter of minutes. Note that upgrade space changes by the second and is not a guarantee until you actually confirm your reservation, so do it immediately. However, All Nippon does allow you to cancel your ticket within 24 hours with no penalty, so you're covered.

How to Book:





MR MATTHEW BENNETT

[1 Flight Search](#) [2 Passenger Information](#) [3 Seat Request](#) [4 Purchase](#) [5 Complete](#)Additional charges will apply for [baggage exceeding free allowance](#).Depart [i](#)[Previous day](#)

Dec 5 (Sun)

[Next day](#)

Lowest price on the screen

New York(All) Tokyo(All)

Change Display Order: Recommended | [Departure time](#) | [Arrival time](#) | [Flight duration](#)

Display rules	Economy			Premium Economy		
	Special	Basic	Full Flex	Special	Basic	Full Flex Plus
From New York(JFK) To Tokyo(Narita)	USD 985.20	<input type="radio"/> USD 1,085.20	<input type="radio"/> USD 3,867.20	<input type="radio"/> USD 1,713.20	<input type="radio"/> USD 1,813.20	<input type="radio"/> USD 4,730.20
10:45 - 15:00 +1day Nonstop 14h15min						
Details						
10:45 New York(JFK) Terminal: 7						
15:00+1 Tokyo(Narita)						
NH009						

[Reflect upgrade availability](#)

MR MATTHEW BENNETT

[1 Flight Search](#) [2 Passenger Information](#) [3 Seat Request](#) [4 Purchase](#) [5 Complete](#)Additional charges will apply for [baggage exceeding free allowance](#).Depart [i](#)[Previous day](#)

Dec 5 (Sun)

[Next day](#)

Lowest price on the screen

New York(All) Tokyo(All)

Change Display Order: Recommended | [Departure time](#) | [Arrival time](#) | [Flight duration](#)

Display rules	Economy			Premium Economy		
	Special	Basic	Full Flex	Special	Basic	Full Flex Plus
From New York(JFK) To Tokyo(Narita)	USD 985.20	<input type="radio"/> USD 1,085.20	<input type="radio"/> USD 3,867.20	<input type="radio"/> USD 1,713.20	<input type="radio"/> USD 1,813.20	<input type="radio"/> USD 4,730.20
10:45 - 15:00 +1day Nonstop 14h15min						
Details						
10:45 New York(JFK) Terminal: 7						
15:00+1 Tokyo(Narita)						
NH009						
Upgrade						
Premium Economy Seats available						
Business Seats available						

[Business Seats available](#)



MR MATTHEW BENNETT

Reservation Number

6YY50

Reservation / purchase status

Ticketed

[Display e-Ticket](#)

Flight	Passenger	Service
Itinerary / Payment / Applicable Fare	Passport/Passenger Information	Seat/In-flight Meal/Assistance

Itinerary

	Departure/Arrival	Flight	Seat	Class	Status	Service
Dec 5 Sunday 14h15min	10:45 New York(JFK) Terminal: 7 15:00 +1day Tokyo(Narita) Airport Access (from airport)	NH009 ANA 77W		Economy	OK	
Dec 22 Wednesday 12h30min	16:40 Tokyo(Narita) Terminal: 1 Airport Access (to airport) 15:10 New York(JFK)	NH010 ANA 77W		Economy	OK	

[Share](#)[Email](#)[Google Calendar](#)[Apple Calendar](#)[Outlook](#)[Request an upgrade](#)

Here's how I got a \$7,948 ticket for just \$2,012 and 56,000 miles.



MR MATTHEW BENNETT

Flight

Date	From	To	Flight	Class
Dec 5 (Sun)	New York(JFK)	Tokyo(Narita)	NH009	Economy

Upgrade Details

Class after Upgrade	Upgrade Seat Availability	Required mileage
Business	Seats available	28,000 Miles Adult x1

Flight

Date	From	To	Flight	Class
Dec 22 (Wed)	Tokyo(Narita)	New York(JFK)	NH010	Economy

Upgrade Details

Class after Upgrade	Upgrade Seat Availability	Required mileage
Business	Seats available	28,000 Miles Adult x1