



# Guide to Domestic “Space” Travel: Current AA Domestic Flights With the Best (International) Seats

November 2020

**Domestic travel has rebounded to ~30% of last year according to [TSA statistics](#)—here are the flights with the best seats.**

Have we ever been so conscious of space? And no, I'm not talking about the space that rocket ships take you to. I'm talking about proximity to fellow human beings.

When it comes to travel—now more than ever1you don't want to be elbow wrestling with a neighbor on a flight.

So, why not only choose flights that put you in a bigger, wider, more spacious cabin if there's an option?

Let's "expand" this discussion with American domestic flights using a widebody aircraft. You'll never have to rub shoulders so closely again.

## FCF'S GUIDE TO "SPACE TRAVEL"

First of all, there's a big difference between a seat in First Class and a first-class seat, especially on flights within North America — the two almost never cross paths. In fact, on many North American routes, the seats up front are no better than many international Premium Economy seats.

### FREE IN-CLASS UPGRADES

If you know the 31 different domestic flights on which American Airlines uses widebody aircraft with international Business and sometimes First Class seats, you'll have a simple way to get an in-class seat upgrade. How can you possibly know those 31 flights? Simply put your seat into the recline position, and read on.

### IT STARTS WITH THE TYPE OF AIRCRAFT

**American's B777-300ERs:** On four routes, Dallas-Honolulu, Miami-Dallas, Los Angeles-Miami and Chicago-Miami, the airline's three-class, internationally configured B777-300 offers eight "Flagship" First Class suites, which have a 30-inch-wide seat (with the armrest dropped) and convert to a 78-inch-long flat bed. Seats are configured 1x2x1, and each has a 17-inch touchscreen monitor. Business Class on this aircraft has a flat-bed seat as well.

**American's B777-200s:** The aircraft offers 37 flat-bed Business Class seats; they're in a 1x2x1 layout, are 21 inches wide, and have a 15.4-inch touchscreen monitor.

**American's B788s:** The aircraft offers 20 flat-bed Business Class open suites in a 1x2x1 layout at 21 inches wide.

**American's B789s:** These aircraft offer 30 flat-bed Business Class seats in a 1x2x1 layout, 21 inches wide, and with a 15.4-inch touchscreen monitor.

## Where to Find Free In-Class Seat Upgrades Through Little-Known Aircraft-Deployment Anomalies

Route	Departure Flight number**	Aircraft	Return Flight number**	Aircraft
Charlotte-Miami	AA1344	B777-200	AA2358	B777-200
Chicago-Honolulu	AA75	B777-200	AA74*	B777-200
Chicago-Los Angeles	AA1172	B777-200	AA335	B777-200

Route	Departure Flight number**	Aircraft	Return Flight number**	Aifrcraft
Chicago-Philadelphia	AA493	B787-800	AA2103	B787-800
Dallas-Honolulu	AA5	B777-300	AA8*	B777-200
	AA123*	B777-200	AA102	B777-300
Dallas-Los Angeles	AA1807	B787-900	AA2338	B787-900
Dallas-Miami	AA2008	B777-200	AA2447	B787-800
			AA2808	B777-200
Dallas-Maui	AA119	B777-200	AA116*	B777-200
	AA7*			
Dallas-Chicago	AA1258	B787-800	AA114	B787-800
Miami - Los Angeles	AA1235	B777-300	AA1473	B777-300
	AA2289		AA1782	
Miami-Chicago	AA2796	B777-200	AA275	B777-300
Miami-Philadelphia	AA1312	B787-800	AA1533	B787-800
New York-Los Angeles	AA1	B777-200	AA2	B777-200
	AA3	B777-200	AA4	B777-200
New York-Miami	AA313	B777-200	AA1140	B777-200
	AA1706	B777-200	AA1357	B777-200
Phoenix-Honolulu	AA692*	B777-200	AA693*	B777-200

\*Service begins November 19/20. \*\*Always recheck aircraft type at time of booking as aircraft can change by the week. FCF research is based on flights through November 30.



Avoid the arm wrestle.



# Lion's Share: United's New Route to South Africa's Safari Hub Has Mileage Upgrade Opportunities

November 2020

**As airlines jockey for position in the new world of travel, United elites have options.**

On September 9, United announced new service from New York/Newark to Johannesburg. It's the perfect springboard to your very own safari adventure all over the continent. And it's just a short hop to Cape Town from there, too. Daily service begins March 27, 2021.

## THE BAD NEWS FIRST

We hate to be the bearer of bad news, but there's a growing trend of increasingly limited "free" award availability in the airwaves. This isn't unique to United either—you won't find any free award seats to this

region with Delta or South African Airways.



## THE GOOD NEWS

That's why mileage upgrades—[the elite-status traveler's best friend](#)—are the best way to go. Indeed, we found some unique opportunities on that South Africa route. If you're looking for two seats, our research found May is a good option for travel. There are a handful of available dates for two from April through July, and decent availability for one traveler in April, May, and July.

Upgradable economy fares range from \$1,000 to \$1,500, and require 70,000 United miles to upgrade round-trip, plus a \$1,200 co-pay.

Contrast that with normal Business Class fares from the U.S. to South Africa, which range from \$3,700 to \$9,000. Now you can kick that safari adventure up a notch.

## UNITED ECONOMY TO BUSINESS CLASS UPGRADE AVAILABILITY SURVEY

Newark - Johannesburg	Outbound			Return		
1 Seat	2 Seats	4 Seats	1 Seat	2 Seats	4 Seats	
Days Available	13+	9-12	4-8	13+	9-12	4-8

Newark - Johannesburg	Outbound			Return		
	April, May	July	April to July	April to Aug.	May, June, Aug.	Apr., July

More on [how to book this option here](#).

## SAFARI ON YOUR MIND?

A safari is the perfect vacation for these socially distanced times. You're in the great outdoors in sparsely populated areas, typically as part of a very small group. I can say from first-hand experience that there's nothing like [Singita safari camps](#). Singita is a high-end operator of 15 luxury safari camps in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Rwanda. Accommodations are in upscale lodges, tented camps, or in luxury villas for even more privacy.

They claim to have had no covid cases at any of their camps. So get out there and heed the call of the wild. Africa's wondrous animal kingdom awaits.



# Maple Relief: Why Canada Is the Smart Way to Book Asia Right Now, With Amex or Chase Points

November 2020

## Save thousands with a different way of booking.

For our Canadian friends, and for Americans willing to make a connection via Canada, we've got some great news to share. Whether you're coming or going (you'd be hard-pressed for a nicer stopover), this survey for Asia-bound travelers was made for you.

Our research team poured through flight data to find you **the amazing availability of hidden premium seats—which normally run \$4,000 to \$8,000—using your miles or Amex or Chase Points.**

We focused primarily on nonstop flights from Canada to Asia **on Air Canada, All Nippon, Cathay Pacific, and Japan Airlines.** They're all in Business Class, as no First Class service is offered between Canada and

Asia.

## HOT DISCOUNT MILEAGE AWARD OPTIONS

All with taxes under \$100 roundtrip, here are the opportunities available right now, that can save you a small fortune in miles when you book at the lowest levels.



Check out the treasure map below to know when and where you can find cheap Business Class awards.

Check out the treasure map below to know when and where you can find cheap Business Class awards.

Airline / Route	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
Air Canada Toronto to Tokyo	Dec., Jan., Feb.	Nov., Jan., Feb.	Nov.	Dec., Jan., Feb.	Nov., Feb.	Nov.
Air Canada Toronto to Hong Kong	Sept.		March to Aug.	Dec., April, May, Sept.	April	Jan., Feb., March, May, June to Aug.
Air Canada	May, June, July, Aug.	Jan.	Nov., Feb. to April, May, June	Dec., April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept.	Nov., May	Jan., to March, May, June

Airline / Route	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
Vancouver to Tokyo						
All Nippon						
Vancouver to Tokyo	Nov., Jan., <a href="#">Feb. to May</a> , Oct.	Feb., April, May, <a href="#">June</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a>	March, June, <a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a>	Nov., Dec., Feb., March, <a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>	Jan.	May, June, Sept.
Cathay Pacific						
Toronto to Hong Kong	<a href="#">Jan.</a> , <a href="#">Feb.</a> , <a href="#">March</a> , <a href="#">April</a>	March, June	Jan. to March, <a href="#">April to June</a> , <a href="#">July</a> <a href="#">to Sept.</a>	Feb, May, June, <a href="#">July</a>	Jan, <a href="#">March</a> , <a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">June</a> , <a href="#">July</a>	Jan. to March, June, <a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a>
Cathay Pacific						
Vancouver to Hong Kong	<a href="#">March</a> , <a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a>	July, <a href="#">Aug.</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a>	Sept.	Feb., <a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a>	March, <a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">Aug.</a>	<a href="#">Sept.</a>
Japan Airlines						
Vancouver to Tokyo	Nov., Dec., <a href="#">Jan.</a> , <a href="#">July</a> , Oct.	Nov., Jan., <a href="#">Feb.</a> , <a href="#">March</a> , <a href="#">July</a>	Nov., Jan., <a href="#">Feb.</a> , <a href="#">April to June</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a>	Jan., <a href="#">Feb.</a> , <a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">July</a> , <a href="#">Oct.</a>	Nov., Dec., <a href="#">April</a> , <a href="#">July</a>	Nov., <a href="#">Feb.</a> , <a href="#">March</a> , <a href="#">May</a> , <a href="#">June</a> , <a href="#">Sept.</a>

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

Looking for the lowest mileage partners for getting to Asia from Canada? Check out the following chart.

Carrier	Route	Mileage Program	Award Cost
Air Canada (Amex Transfer Partner)	Toronto and Vancouver to Tokyo; Toronto to Hong Kong	Air Canada	150,000 miles.

Carrier	Route	Mileage Program	Award Cost
		All Nippon*	<b>75,000 to 85,000 miles.</b>
		LifeMiles	150,000 miles.
		United	Dynamic award pricing for partner flights.
All Nippon (Amex Transfer Partner)	Toronto to Tokyo	All Nippon*	<b>75,000 to 85,000 miles.</b>
		Air Canada	150,000 miles.
		LifeMiles	150,000 miles.
		United	Dynamic award pricing for partner flights.
		Virgin Atlantic	<b>90,000 miles.</b>
Cathay Pacific (Amex & Chase Transfer Partner)	Vancouver and Toronto to Hong Kong	Cathay Pacific	140,000 (Vancouver)/170,000 (Tokyo) miles.
		American	140,000 miles.
		Japan Airlines	110,000 (Vancouver)/130,000 (Toronto) miles.
		Alaska	100,000 miles.
		Iberia	175,000 (Vancouver)/250,000 (Tokyo) miles.
Japan Airlines (Marriott Transfer Partner)	Vancouver to Tokyo	Japan Airlines	100,000 miles.
		American	120,000 miles.
		Cathay Pacific	122,000 miles.
		Alaska	120,000 miles.
		Iberia	150,000 miles.

\*All Nippon rates are based on low season, slightly higher during regular and high season, more [here](#).



# Pass or Fail? A Look at 2021 Summer Business Class Fares to Europe, What's Trending Now, and the World Health Organization's Flipped Advice

November 2020

**This special report examines the current fare trends and recommendations based on your budget and level of flexibility.**

Free, lockdown-friendly mileage awards are getting harder and harder to find, which means published fares are what we turn our attention to for now.

Of the 19 Delta routes for which we previously found award availability, for example, we now find zero, zip, zilch. Of the five American Airlines routes, only one now has availability ([alert here](#)).

The one bright spot is that out of the previous 22 options available on United, we find 16 that still have award space.

With that in mind, let's see what the published fare landscape is like. But before we get into that, let's check out a breakthrough lockdown-related announcement.

## A LOCKDOWN TIPPING POINT?

On October 9, the World Health Organization's Special Envoy on Covid-19, [David Navarro said](#), "We at the World Health Organization do not advocate lockdowns as the primary means of control of this virus."

The WHO's argument is that long-term lockdowns have a dangerous effect: "lockdowns just have one consequence... making poor people an awful lot poorer."

## A REMINDER ON THE ODDS OF DYING (AND LIVING)

AUGUST 2020 LIFE AND DEATH RISK PERSPECTIVE							
		From COVID-19			All Causes		Comparison of COVID vs all causes
Age Group	Population	COVID deaths <sup>2</sup>	Odds of Dying (1 in X)	Relative risk of dying <sup>3</sup>	Total Deaths <sup>2</sup>	Odds of Dying (1 in X)	Odds of dying a non-COVID death
< 1 year	3,783,726	17	222,572	A little less than a lightning strike	9,514	398	560X
1-4 years	15569627	12	1,297,469	8x less than lightning strike	1,840	8,462	153X
5-14 years	40,971,395	27	1,517,459	9x less than lightning strike	2,820	14,529	104X
15-24 years	42,595,554	264	161,347	As likely as a lightning strike	17,838	2,388	68X
25-34 years	46,066,708	1,201	38,357	32x less likely than drowning	37,040	1,244	31X
35-44 years	42,202,378	3,126	13,500	11x less likely than drowning	52,475	804	17X
45-54 years	40,366,996	8,242	4,898	4x less likely than drowning	97,225	415	12X
55-64 years	42,448,262	19,729	2,152	2x less likely than drowning	223,744	190	11X
65-74 years	32,722,505	33,410	979	9x less likely than a car accident	339,355	96	10X
75-84 years	16,560,329	41,530	399	4x less likely than a car accident	415,968	40	10X
85 years and over	6,760,046	49,855	136	A little less likely than a car accident	519,942	13	10X
All Ages	330,047,526	157,413	2,097	A little less likely than fire/smoke exposure	1,717,761	192	11X

DATA SOURCES - COVID-19 data as of 8/19/20: From \*February 2020 through week ending 8/15/20 1. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-national-detail.html>  
2. <https://data.cdc.gov/NCHS/Provisional-COVID-19-Death-Counts-by-Sex-Age-and-S/9bhg-hcku> 3. <https://www.nsc.org/work-safety/tools-resources/injury-facts/chart>

## SO, WHAT DOES A GOOD FARE TO EUROPE LOOK LIKE?

So, given that palpable desire to hop across the pond, combined with lockdown second thoughts, what is a good fare to Europe? Should you buy now or hold off until things open up more? We've put together a school-style grading system for fares to help you make the call.

Fare Range	FCF Grade
Under \$2,000	A
\$2,001-\$2,500	B
\$2,501-\$3,000	C
\$3,001-\$3,500	D
\$3,500 +	F

This grading system will help you to decide whether to buy or wait it out. If you find exactly what you want in terms of airline, origin, destination, schedule, departure date, and return date, and your fare is sub-\$2,500, we think it's not a bad idea to book now.

## \$1,500 FARE TOO FAR? ALMOST.

There are no \$1,500 [premium tactical fares](#) today to Europe on major U.S. airlines. Those are generally on a “flash” basis. If you want to land a \$1,500ish fare to Europe you’ll need to be flexible. So keep a close eye on [FCF alerts](#) for the best sub-\$2,000 fares.

On the other hand, [TAP Air Portugal](#) (a Star Alliance partner) has been intermittently offering fares starting at \$1,382, for example, from Chicago to Bilbao and \$1,485 from Boston to Berlin, as well as low tactic fares on many other routes. If you’re okay with TAP and you’re a United loyalist, these fares are well worth considering – especially if your budget is sub-\$2,000 and you can’t find any availability with your miles or points.

**We’re happy to give an “A” to any fare that comes very close to matching your preferred dates, route, schedule, and airline for under \$2,000. Here’s a handful of candidates:**

- **Star Alliance:** **New York** to Barcelona for \$1,894 and Madrid, \$1,997; **Chicago** to Majorca, \$1,954, Naples, \$1,983, and Seville and Bilbao, \$1,855; **Miami** to Barcelona, \$1,999.
- **Oneworld:** **New York** to Barcelona and Milan, \$1,901; Rome, \$1,911, Genoa and Turin, \$1,990; **Chicago** to Bilbao, \$1,862, Seville, \$1,884, Ibiza and Minorca \$1,970; **Miami** to Rome, \$1,923.
- **SkyTeam?** Sorry, none. No prizes from the teacher.

**Examples of fares that are between \$2,001 and \$2,500, but still match your ideal itinerary, or come pretty close, we score a “B.”**

- **Star Alliance:** **New York** to Bordeaux, Lisbon, Malaga, Frankfurt, Milan, Faro, Kyiv, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Genoa, Turin, Rome; **Boston** to Milan, Venice, Rome, Barcelona, Madrid, Lisbon; **Miami** to Rome, Milan, Porto; **Chicago** to Lisbon, Madrid, Rome, Venice, Barcelona, Riga.
- **oneworld:** **New York** to Madrid, Lisbon, Porto, Faro, Malaga, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Malta; **Los Angeles** to Moscow, St. Petersburg; **San Francisco** to Madrid; **Boston** to Catania, Palermo, Naples,

Valencia, Lisbon, Milan, Rome, Porto, Bilbao; **Chicago** to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Valencia, Venice, Barcelona, Madrid, Lisbon, Porto; **Miami** to Malta, Milan, Barcelona, Porto; **Philadelphia** to Nice.

- **SkyTeam:** New York to Milan and Rome.

**Samples of routes with fares between \$2,500 and \$3,000 and get a “C”...**

- **Star Alliance:** **Los Angeles** to Prague, Zagreb, Kyiv, Rome, Barcelona, Lisbon, Vienna, Athens, Stockholm, Milan, Copenhagen, Dublin, Dubrovnik, Zurich, Moscow, Porto, Split, Warsaw, Oslo; **Washington, DC**, to Madrid, London, Paris, Rome, Amsterdam, Berlin, Vienna, Lisbon, Stockholm, Munich, Dublin, Zurich, Frankfurt, Porto, Nice; **New York** to Vienna, Dublin, London, Paris, Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, Venice, Prague, Florence, Munich, Dubrovnik, Seville, Zurich, Mykonos, Naples, Helsinki, Split, Warsaw, Zagreb; **Miami** to Malaga, Paris, Amsterdam, Lisbon, Venice, Berlin, Prague, Florence, Athens, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Dubrovnik, Dublin, Porto, Naples, Nice, Split, Helsinki, Warsaw; **Houston** to Amsterdam, Berlin, Vienna, Lisbon, Stockholm, Munich, Dublin, Zurich, Porto, Nice; **Chicago** to Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Vienna, Munich, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Dublin, Dubrovnik, Zurich, Frankfurt, Moscow, Krakow, Nice, Split, Helsinki, Warsaw, Zagreb, Oslo.
- **oneworld:** **New York** to Venice, Nice, Majorca, Seville, Dublin, Helsinki, Athens, Vienna, London, Prague, Munich, Warsaw, Split, Zagreb, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Hamburg; **Boston** to Zurich, Berlin, Amsterdam, Prague, Vienna, Athens, Oslo, Munich, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Dublin, Dubrovnik, Seville, Nice, Helsinki; **Miami** to Valencia, London, Paris, Lisbon, Prague, Florence, Athens, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Dubrovnik, Dublin, Seville, Moscow, Naples, Nice, Helsinki, Zagreb; **Raleigh** to Milan, Paris, Rome, Barcelona, Venice, Prague, Vienna, Florence, Lisbon, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Madrid, Munich, Dublin, Zurich, Porto, Naples, Frankfurt, Helsinki, Oslo; **Chicago** to London, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Munich, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Dublin, Dubrovnik, Frankfurt, Nice, Split, Helsinki, Warsaw, Zagreb, Oslo; **Los Angeles** to Rome, Barcelona, Prague, Vienna, Lisbon, Santorini, Athens, Stockholm, Milan, Copenhagen, Dublin, Dubrovnik, Seville, Zurich, Mykonos, Porto, Split, Zagreb, Warsaw, Oslo.
- **SkyTeam:** **New York** to Dublin, Cork, Nice, Kyiv, Moscow, Vienna, Warsaw, Athens, London, Oslo, Helsinki, Lisbon, Barcelona, Split, Zagreb, Prague, Frankfurt, Paris, Amsterdam, Madrid, Seville, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, Kyiv, Vienna; **Boston** to Venice, Milan, Naples, Florence, Rome, Madrid, Malaga, Paris, Athens, Barcelona, Dublin, London, Madrid, Seville, Oslo, Helsinki, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Prague, Zagreb, Zurich; **Miami** to Madrid, Oslo, Helsinki, Stockholm, Moscow, Dublin, Barcelona, Athens, Rome, Paris, Geneva, Nice, Berlin; **Chicago** to Milan, Naples, Florence, Pisa, Rome, Madrid, Malaga, Paris, Barcelona, Dublin, London, Seville, Oslo, Helsinki, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Prague, Zagreb, Zurich, Valencia, Geneva, Vienna, Warsaw, Amsterdam; **Orlando** to Milan, Dublin, Rome, Barcelona, Lisbon, Madrid, Paris, Venice, Rome; **Los Angeles** to Oslo, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Warsaw, Moscow, Dublin, Vienna, Split, Rome, Barcelona, Dublin, Lisbon, Milan, Naples, Florence, Malaga, Valencia, Athens; **Atlanta** to Milan, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Malaga, Madrid, Rome, Naples, Florence, Pisa.

**Examples of routes with fares right now above \$3,000, scoring a “D.” These are last-ditch options that we only recommend if you’re really uneasy about not having a ticket in your hand and have really firm requirement.**

- **Star Alliance:** **Washington, DC**, to Barcelona, Venice, Prague, Florence, Athens, Edinburgh, Milan, Dubrovnik, Seville, Naples, Moscow, Split, Zagreb, Bordeaux, Warsaw; **New York** to Edinburgh,

Copenhagen; **Chicago** to London, St. Petersburg; **Miami** to London, Vienna, Edinburgh, Munich, Mykonos, Zurich, Moscow, Frankfurt, Zagreb, Bordeaux; **Los Angeles** to London, Paris, Amsterdam, Madrid, Berlin, Venice, Santorini, Florence, Edinburgh, Munich, Seville, Frankfurt, Naples, Krakow, Helsinki.

- **Oneworld: New York** to Berlin, Santorini, Edinburgh, Copenhagen, Zurich, Frankfurt, Mykonos, Krakow; **Chicago** to Zurich, Krakow; **Miami** to Amsterdam, Edinburgh, Munich, Zurich, Frankfurt, Split, Warsaw, Bordeaux; **Los Angeles** to London, Paris, Amsterdam, Madrid, Berlin, Venice, Florence, Edinburgh, Munich, Frankfurt, Naples, Krakow; **Boston** to Edinburgh, Santorini, Mykonos, Moscow, Krakow, Split, Warsaw, Bordeaux.
- **SkyTeam: Atlanta** to London, Paris, Venice, Berlin, Prague, Athens, Lisbon, Dublin, Munich, Seville, Zurich, Porto, Frankfurt, Nice, Split, Warsaw, Majorca, Valencia; **New York** to Berlin, Edinburgh, Munich, Copenhagen, Krakow; **Chicago** to London, Berlin, Venice, Edinburgh, Munich, St. Petersburg, Krakow; **Miami** to London, Amsterdam, Venice, Prague, Milan, Zurich, Frankfurt, Naples, St. Petersburg; **Los Angeles** to London, Paris, Amsterdam, Madrid, Venice, Edinburgh, Munich, Seville, Zurich, Frankfurt, Helsinki, St. Petersburg; **Boston** to Berlin, Vienna, Munich, Frankfurt, Moscow, Bordeaux.

**Fares above \$3,500 get an “F.” In general, we don’t think these are worth it. But if you’re dying to have a ticket in your hand and you have really tight airline/date requirements, then one of these could work for you if you’re not very price-sensitive. Some examples:**

- **Star Alliance: Washington, DC**, to Santorini, Krakow; **New York** to Santorini; **Chicago** to Athens, Santorini, Edinburgh; **Miami** to Seville, Krakow; **Los Angeles** to Mykonos, Nice.
- **Oneworld: Chicago** to Athens, Santorini, Edinburgh, Mykonos; **Miami** to Vienna.
- **SkyTeam: Atlanta** to Vienna, Moscow, Krakow, Zagreb, Bordeaux, Edinburgh; **Chicago** to Athens, Frankfurt; **Miami** to Munich, Warsaw, Bordeaux; **Los Angeles** to Nice, Krakow; **Boston** to Edinburgh, Krakow, St. Petersburg.

## NOT SCORING? CONSIDER THESE STRATEGIES

- Wait for [fares to drop](#)
- Leverage hidden [low-cost destinations](#)
- Leverage hidden [low-cost travel windows](#)
- Consider [mixed-class](#) fares
- Look for [lower-cost partner airlines](#)
- Look for [mileage upgrade options](#)
- Consider [pro tips and tricks on booking mileage tickets](#)
- Consider [one-way awards](#)
- [Buy miles](#)
- [Transfer miles](#)
- Compare air-and-land/or car [package deals](#)

- Compare [Amex IAP](#) discounts
- Use BA's [AARP](#) \$200 Discount & [BA Chase 10% discount](#)

## WHAT ARE FARE TRENDS RIGHT NOW?

The theme of the moment is constant change, so **expect fares to vary** by the time you read this. Treat this report as a framework, rather than a strict highlight of particular fares. For example, this is what we found on fares surveyed in the last few weeks of putting together this report (it's been a wild ride):

- SkyTeam offers no fares under \$2,000.
- The lowest fares to London are in the \$2,500-\$3,000 range on United from New York and Washington, DC; on American from Chicago, Miami, and New York; and on Delta from Boston, Chicago, and New York. Meanwhile, fares on Delta are the highest at \$3,000+ departing from Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Miami.
- No fares to Edinburgh for less than \$3,000 on any airline.
- The best fares under \$2,000 are New York to Bordeaux, Faro, Genoa, Kyiv, Naples, St. Petersburg, Turin, Valencia, Venice; Philadelphia to Nice; and Boston to Catania and Palermo.
- American is the only airline offering fares under \$3,000 to Santorini and Majorca. Two alliances, meanwhile, offer similar prices: SkyTeam to Geneva and Pisa, and Star to Krakow.
- SkyTeam offers the highest fares to Frankfurt from the most U.S. cities.
- Most fares fall into the "C" range at the moment.
- Italy and Spain have the overall lowest fares on United from Chicago and New York.
- Some of Delta's highest fares are to Germany, London, Poland, Russia, and Scotland.
- Some of American's highest fares are to Germany, Poland, and Russia.
- Some of United's highest fares are to Scotland, Greece, and Germany.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE YOUR MIND?

Most airlines are currently offering "travel fee waivers" even for award flights. That means it won't cost you anything to cancel or change your ticket for international travel for the remainder of 2020.

## GET REVENGE, BUT DON'T BE SILLY ABOUT IT

FCF says the best time to book flights is when the price is low. We know "[revenge travel](#)" is going to be a big thing next year, so be careful not to let your itchy feet walk into a bad deal.



# Transcon Transfusion: One Airline Is Breathing Low-Fare Life Into This Iconic Flight

November 2020

**Did you hit snooze on that Transcon wide-open, once-in-a-lifetime deal last month? If so, you now have a second chance with one airline, although you'll get gouged up to 5X more with another.**

Remember that Transcontinental deal I told you about last month? The one that showed there were over 120 days over the next 11 months that had more than seven seats available?

I'd like to pour a little salt into that wound if you ignored that advice, just so you take me a little more seriously about a crazy amazing deal that you might never see again.

I'd like to but I won't.

Because I have *another* one for you.

## SUPPLY, DEMAND, AND EMPTY PREMIUM SEATS

Leisure travel is coming back relatively fast, with TSA reporting [a million travelers going through security](#) at U.S. airports on October 18. With leisure numbers increasing, that means many premium seats—occupied typically by business travelers—will be in high supply.

## A TALE OF THREE AIRLINES

**United:** The airline has slashed transcontinental fares (LAX/SFO-NYC) to **\$837 round-trip**, which is as cheap a [domestic premium service flight](#) as you'll ever find. The airline consistently has the lowest fares for both midweek and weekend departures.

**If you have an anniversary, birthday, conference, or want to visit family “on the other side,” these are prime prices for flying in a premium seat.**



United Premium Transcontinental Service

**American:** Fare are fairly consistent at \$1,417—59% higher than United. American fares are typically \$200 less for travel departing on Saturdays.

**Delta:** Talk about Russian roulette... This airline's fares fluctuate 5X, from \$1,200 to \$6,000. Delta offers New York to San Francisco for \$6,441 for several days in early December—not even over a holiday. Delta fares are typically MUCH less for travel departing on Saturdays.

# United Gets Stingy With Mileage Upgrades, Apart From One Hidden Bucket List Buster

November 2020

## **FCF exclusive lockdown report for elites.**

Sheesh. What the lockdown [giveth in terms of travel opportunities](#), it just as quickly [taketh away](#). In this case, I'm talking about United mileage upgrades to Asia, and wouldn't you know it, the airline isn't offering them anymore. However, we did find some shining city lights on the far horizon... It's time to put South America on your vacation bucket list—especially if you want to earn Elite Qualifying Miles and Dollars (EQMs and EQDs).

I'm sure most travelers would be happy with an LEN (lockdown escape now).

## AN ODE TO USING MILES TO UPGRADE

Alright, this is definitely one of my favorite subjects. FCF LOVES using miles to upgrade, as opposed to using them for free award tickets, which is the default mindset of the average traveler. But like so many default mindsets, *it's not a great idea*. There are so many reasons for this. But a big one is that using miles to upgrade opens doors that are usually locked shut. The truth is that airlines have a different amount of availability for using miles to upgrade versus using miles for a free seat.

In United's case (and they're not alone here), they generally offer substantially more seats and days for upgrade availability than for awards. Free mileage award tickets can be an availability nightmare on United to most parts of the world, rendering your miles next to useless for Business Class travel. But that's not often the case with their mileage upgrades. [FCF's daily alerts](#) uncover the best of United upgrade opportunities on an almost weekly basis.

### THE EXCEPTION TO UNITED'S STINGY AVAILABILITY: SOUTH AMERICA

Just when things were looking down for United upgrade options, we decided to *really* look down—all the way down to South America. And lo and behold, opportunity is knocking.

**EXAMPLE SAVINGS:** Let's say you're traveling from Houston to Santiago in April. United's lowest upgradeable economy fare currently starts at \$1,242 round-trip, while Business Class is \$7,534. Even with a \$1,000 co-pay round-trip, you'll pay just \$2,242 plus 50,000 miles, which you can buy for ~\$1,000 when on sale, to fly in Business Class at a savings of \$4,292 (or 56%) off the published fare [by using miles](#) to upgrade.

If you don't want to buy miles, **you can transfer your Marriott or Chase points to United.**

### SO WHAT'S AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW?

Get a big-picture sense of date clusters using FCF's Upgrade Alerts (there's a list of recent ones below).

[Sao Paulo, Brazil:](#) Unprecedented United Business Class Upgrade Opportunities from Houston and Many Other U.S. Cities

[Buenos Aires, Argentina:](#) Unprecedented United Business Class Upgrade Opportunities from Houston and Many Other U.S. Cities

[Santiago, Chile:](#) Unprecedented United Business Class Upgrade Opportunities from Houston and Many Other U.S. Cities

[Rio de Janeiro, Brazil:](#) Unprecedented United Business Class Upgrade Opportunities to Rio from Houston and Many Other U.S. Cities

[Sao Paulo, Brazil:](#) Unprecedented United Business Class Upgrade Opportunities from Washington, DC and Many Other U.S. Cities

[Sao Paulo, Brazil:](#) Unprecedented United Business Class Upgrade Opportunities to Brazil from Chicago and Many Other U.S. Cities

Want to know more about the sweet science of upgrading with miles? Read this special report—it's a real eye (and cabin door) opener: [Ten Reasons Why I'm the Biggest Fan of Mileage Upgrade Awards—and Why You Should Be Too.](#)



# [PDF TEST] Costa Rica Now Open for Business (and Especially, Pleasure)

November 2020

## **FCF surveys the fare opportunity landscape.**

Beautiful, stress-busting, relaxation-enticing, escape-inducing, and cost-saving opportunities to Costa Rica are now open to you.

And by “you” I mean every single person reading this. Costa Rica is now open to every state in the union, having dropped their previous lockdown barriers. Some travel restrictions apply, and we’ve outlined those for you below.

## COSTA RICA: EUREKA

Happily, the Business Class fares to Costa Rica are often incredibly low right now (as seen in the table below). When fares are this low we generally recommend you pay the fare with cash rather than using your miles. See example fares to San Jose, Costa Rica:

To Costa Rica, From	American	United	Delta
New York	\$794	\$846	\$829
Atlanta	\$1,069	\$943	\$784
Miami	\$583	\$943	\$717
Orlando	\$679	\$675	\$809
Houston	\$809	\$880	\$807
Dallas	\$894	\$999	\$849
Los Angeles	\$975	\$1,021	\$830
Charlotte	\$965	\$1,049	\$972
Chicago	\$1,066	\$1,094	\$969
Phoenix	\$1,046	\$1,041	\$1,061

\*Non-stop flights in blue



Arenal Volcano

## **COSTA RICA ELEVATOR PITCH (AS IF THE WORDS “COSTA” AND “RICA” AREN’T ENOUGH)**

- Spectacular rainforests
- Majestic volcanoes
- Just 200 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Caribbean Sea
- Water sports galore and world class zip-lining
- Abundant wildlife, including sea turtles and the three-toed sloth

### **Need to Know:**

As of now, all local and foreign passengers who enter Costa Rica by air are NOT required to present a covid test with a negative result, although every traveler must fill out the electronic epidemiological Health Pass form. Additionally, all travelers must show proof of Traveler’s Medical Insurance. It can be an international plan or purchased pre-arrival in Costa Rica through the National Insurance Institute. All those [requirements are here.](#)

A large, dark, conical volcano, likely Arenal, is shown in the background. The sky is blue with some white clouds. The volcano's slopes are covered in green vegetation at the base, transitioning to a dark, rocky surface higher up.

# Costa Rica Now Open for Business (and Especially, Pleasure)

November 2020

## **FCF surveys the fare opportunity landscape.**

Beautiful, stress-busting, relaxation-enticing, escape-inducing, and cost-saving opportunities to Costa Rica are now open to you.

And by “you” I mean every single person reading this. Costa Rica is now open to every state in the union, having dropped their previous lockdown barriers. Some travel restrictions apply, and we’ve outlined those for you below.

## COSTA RICA: EUREKA

Happily, the Business Class fares to Costa Rica are often incredibly low right now (as seen in the table below). When fares are this low we generally recommend you pay the fare with cash rather than using your miles. See example fares to San Jose, Costa Rica:

To Costa Rica, From	American	United	Delta
New York	\$794	\$846	\$829
Atlanta	\$1,069	\$943	\$784
Miami	\$583	\$943	\$717
Orlando	\$679	\$675	\$809
Houston	\$809	\$880	\$807
Dallas	\$894	\$999	\$849
Los Angeles	\$975	\$1,021	\$830
Charlotte	\$965	\$1,049	\$972
Chicago	\$1,066	\$1,094	\$969
Phoenix	\$1,046	\$1,041	\$1,061

\*Non-stop flights in blue



Arenal Volcano

## **COSTA RICA ELEVATOR PITCH (AS IF THE WORDS “COSTA” AND “RICA” AREN’T ENOUGH)**

- Spectacular rainforests
- Majestic volcanoes
- Just 200 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Caribbean Sea
- Water sports galore and world class zip-lining
- Abundant wildlife, including sea turtles and the three-toed sloth

### **Need to Know:**

As of now, all local and foreign passengers who enter Costa Rica by air are NOT required to present a covid test with a negative result, although every traveler must fill out the electronic epidemiological Health Pass form. Additionally, all travelers must show proof of Traveler’s Medical Insurance. It can be an international plan or purchased pre-arrival in Costa Rica through the National Insurance Institute. All those [requirements are here.](#)



# ABA Continues to Offer High-End Hotel Discounts Up to 59%

November 2020

**This strategy doesn't work every time, but when it does, it really sings.**

Sweet freedom. As travelers start to get out more, there's no reason to skimp on ground comforts. That's when a valuable little benefit from the American Bar Association (ABA) comes into play. It can harmonize beautifully with some of the low fares and mileage deals available. We first examined this hidden gem just over a year ago. But given the lingering lockdown, we thought it'd be worthwhile to see how it's holding up right now.

## HOW TO TUNE UP TO A BETTER HIGH-END HOTEL DEAL

This benefit always takes people by surprise, but it often *really* works. The first step is to become a member of the ABA and no, that has nothing to do with making cocktails, although it is an Old Fashioned great deal. We're talking about bars of the legal kind and **you do NOT have to be a lawyer to join.**

The ABA is able to offer hotel discounts because they've negotiated special rates with a number of luxury hotels around the world. So their members save significant amounts of money when they travel just through their membership.

Here's what you can expect: the [annual membership is \\$150](#) and for that you get some truly melodious savings – up to 59% off on some great hotels. A note of caution – **the discount does NOT always work.** You can't expect your membership to always lower the price at every luxury hotel. However, we've found that this strategy works primarily at higher end hotels.

Here are examples of savings you can expect.

The screenshot below shows prices for the Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove in Miami. The price per night is \$571 BEFORE the ABA discount, and **just \$289 AFTER the discount is applied** for a five-night stay in December over Christmas. It's for a standard king room with a partial bay view and balcony using the ABA rate code.

**That's a savings of \$1,594 / 49%.**

## BEFORE ABA DISCOUNT: \$571 / NIGHT

English Help My Trips Sign In or Join MARRIOTT BONVOY

 **The Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove, Miami**  
THE RITZ-CARLTON 3300 SW 27th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33133 USA +1 305-644-4680 4.3 191 Reviews Currency Calculator

Dates: Wed, Dec 23, 2020 – Mon, Dec 28, 2020 Rooms & Guests: 1 Room : 2 Adults **EDIT**

Special Rates American Bar Assoc. rate From 254 USD Avg./night	Standard Rates Most Flexible From 471 USD Avg./night	Deals and Packages Special Savings From 461 USD Avg./night
--	--	--

**Guest room, 1 King, Partial bay view, Balcony** **Room Details**

 **Flexible Rate** **571** USD Avg./night **2,855** Total per room **SELECT**

Rate Details

Stay Dates: Wed, Dec 23, 2020 - Mon, Dec 28, 2020 Total for Stay: 3,226.15 USD **Rooms held for: 14:40** **CONTINUE**

## AFTER ABA DISCOUNT: \$289 / NIGHT

English Help My Trips Sign In or Join MARRIOTT BONVOY

 **The Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove, Miami**  
THE RITZ-CARLTON 3300 SW 27th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33133 USA +1 305-644-4680 4.3 191 Reviews Currency Calculator

Dates: Wed, Dec 23, 2020 – Mon, Dec 28, 2020 Rooms & Guests: 1 Room : 2 Adults **EDIT**

Special Rates American Bar Assoc. rate From 254 USD Avg./night	Standard Rates Most Flexible From 471 USD Avg./night	Deals and Packages Special Savings From 461 USD Avg./night
--	--	--

**Guest room, 1 King, Partial bay view, Balcony** **Room Details**

 **American Bar Assoc. rate** **289** USD Avg./night **1,445** Total per room **SELECT**

Valid ID required  
Rate Details

Stay Dates: Wed, Dec 23, 2020 - Mon, Dec 28, 2020 Total for Stay: 1,632.85 USD **Rooms held for: 14:42** **CONTINUE**

## MORE EXAMPLES OF ABA DISCOUNT OPPORTUNITIES

Hotel	Room Type	Date	Regular nightly rate for a 5 night stay, including all taxes and fees	ABA rate for a 5 night stay, including all taxes and fees	Savings
St. Regis, Atlanta	Deluxe Guest room, 1 King, Balcony	February 13 to 18	\$3,822	\$2,059	\$1,763 / 46%
Ritz Carlton, Boston	Guest room, 1 King, Club lounge access	February 12 to 17	\$4,320	\$2,638	\$1,682 / 39%
Four Seasons, Houston*	City Room, 1 King	February 18 to 23	\$3,104	\$1,954	\$1,150 / 37%
St. Regis, Houston	Deluxe Guest room, 1 King	March 31 to April 5	\$2,503	\$1,784	\$719 / 29%
Savoy, London	Deluxe King	June 28 to July 3	\$6,160	\$2,515	\$3,645 / 59%
Ritz Carlton Coconut Grove, Miami	Guest room, 1 King, Partial Bay View, Balcony	December 23 to 28	\$3,226	\$1,632	\$1,594 / 49%
W, Miami	Cool Corner Room, 1 King	February 3 to 8	\$3,165	\$2,101	\$1,064 / 34%
Four Seasons, St. Louis	City Room, 1 King	February 14 to 19	\$2,613	\$1,393	\$1,220 / 47%

\* Call or Email for discount rates

## THE ABA DISCOUNT CAN BE USED AT THE FOLLOWING HOTEL CHAINS, AMONG MANY OTHERS:

- Four Seasons Hotels
- Marriott Hotels (The Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis, Westin Hotels, etc.)
- Hilton Hotels
- Fairmont Hotels
- Trump International Hotel & Tower
- Mandarin Oriental

For a full list of hotels and cities around the world, visit the [ABA website](#).

For Marriott hotels, you simply enter the rate code provided upon sign-up with the [ABA program](#). For other hotels, you must contact them directly either by phone or by email, which you can get from the hotel's website.

## HOW TO JOIN THE ABA

Joining the ABA is simple. Just visit this [link](#) and submit a payment of \$150 per year. **It only takes two minutes.** Once you do that,

you're all set to sometimes score some truly amazing hotel deals around the world.

Here's more on [how I saved big with the ABA last year, twice in the same month.](#)

