



Lockdown Opportunity Mindset: Time to Snap Award Tickets Now Rather than Wait for that Ace

September 2020

Don't wait! Airlines are adapting to The Lockdown in a hurry, so jump on these deals while you can, as the Lockdown Landscape is shifting under our feet as I write.

FCF's team has noted a significant change in the last few weeks. Some of the [unprecedented mileage travel opportunities we've found with Delta](#) have been **quietly disappearing**. Not all of them (as we'll discuss), but **the Lockdown Landscape is definitely changing fast** for Delta fliers. In April, for example, the airline had 25 routes with good mileage availability out of 45 we checked, and now only has 7 out 34 routes.

As airlines are learning to adapt to The Lockdown just like the rest of us, **big winners and big losers** will emerge at the end of the day.

The specific losers right now are Delta (Amex partner) fans, where international award availability seems to be **approaching Pre-Lockdown (not good) levels**.

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Survey of Delta Business Class Mileage Availability in April vs. Now

Route	Months with Availability in April	Months with Availability Now
Atlanta - Brussels	Sept. through Feb. 2021	
Atlanta - Dusseldorf	Sept., Oct., Dec., Jan. 2021	
Atlanta - Frankfurt	Sept. through Feb, 2021	
Atlanta - London	Sept. through Feb. 2021	Oct. through July 2021
Atlanta - Paris	Sept. through Mar. 2021	
Atlanta - Santiago		Nov. through Jan. 2021
Atlanta - São Paulo		Nov. through June 2021

Route	Months with Availability in April	Months with Availability Now
Boston - Amsterdam	Sept., Oct. 2020	
Boston - Dublin	Sept., through Dec. 2020	
Boston - London	Sept. through Feb. 2021	
Detroit - Amsterdam	Sept., through November 2020	
Detroit - Frankfurt	Sept. through Feb. 2021	
Detroit - London	Sept. through Feb. 2021	
Los Angeles - Shanghai		April through June 2021
Minneapolis - Amsterdam	Sept., through Dec. 2020	
Minneapolis - Paris	Sept. through Feb. 2021	April through July 2021
New York - Amsterdam	Sept., Oct., Dec., Jan. 2021	
New York - Berlin	Aug. through Oct. 2020	
New York - Edinburgh	Sept. through Feb. 2021	
New York - Lisbon	Sept. through Mar. 2021	
New York - London	Sept. through Feb., 2021	
New York - São Paulo		Nov. through July 2021
New York - Zurich	Sept. through Feb. 2021	Nov. through July 2021
Salt Lake City - Paris	Sept. through Feb. 2021	
Seattle - Paris	Sept. through Feb. 2021	

POUNCE NOW, THINK LATER WHEN A LOCKDOWN SUPER DEAL GETS DEALT

As we've said often, **now is not the time for procrastination**. When you see a great opportunity, particularly with miles, play **'snap'**: slam your hand down and claim the prize when it's right there in front of you.



What a deal-snap!

To review, here's our recent advice on opportunities on the big three U.S. carriers:

[Discount availability on United](#). [Grabbing opportunities on Delta](#). [Discount miles on American](#). And... [A Lockdown thought piece on future travel](#).

Hate to say it, but [we did warn](#) that deals like these may not be around for long. And now, it seems, some are drifting away. The reasons for this are more streamlined services (fewer flights) and fuller flights—especially with socially distanced seating in Business and domestic First Class on [Delta](#). The upshot is less low-cost mileage-award availability when you're ready to book travel later this year.

That's exactly what's happening now with Delta. FCF's research team surveyed 34 international nonstop routes on Delta and found that only 7 currently have a volume of low-cost award space.

On the other hand, **United has a stack of routes with award space**. In fact, it's out-award spacing both American and Delta, as you'll see below.

GRAB A DEAL NOW FOR REVENGE

A recent Washington Post [article](#) highlights the phenomenon of “revenge travel,” where a pent-up need to get out of one's home or home city will lead to a travel explosion once it becomes possible. Like Yellowstone's Old Faithful, it's a natural build-up that needs release—travel is simply in our DNA.

FULL HOUSE: GREAT INTERNATIONAL DEALS NOW FOR TRAVEL LATER

Since American, Delta, and United have zone-based mileage programs, you can **get free connecting flights from your non-hub home airport** based on availability in the U.S./Canada with onward connections in their hub cities. More on this in a minute.

Unprecedented low-cost mileage award opportunities available now with American on 5 routes:

New York to [Sao Paulo](#), [Rome](#), and [London](#).

[Miami to São Paulo](#) and [Charlotte to Munich](#).

Unprecedented low-cost mileage award opportunities available now with Delta on 7 routes:

Atlanta to [London](#), [Santiago](#), and [São Paulo](#).

New York to [Zurich](#) and [São Paulo](#).

[Minneapolis to Paris](#) and [Los Angeles to Shanghai](#).

Unprecedented low-cost mileage award opportunities available now with United on 19 routes:

United still has many routes with award space. FCF's research team checked 78 international nonstop routes and found that 19 routes currently have low-cost award availability.

Chicago to [Brussels](#), [London](#), and [São Paulo](#).

Houston to [Santiago](#) and [São Paulo](#).

Newark to [Paris](#), [Amsterdam](#), [Lisbon](#), [Dublin](#), [London](#), [Madrid](#), [Geneva](#), and [São Paulo](#).

Washington, DC to [Paris](#), [London](#), [Amsterdam](#), [Zurich](#), [Brussels](#), and [São Paulo](#).

For more information on using hubs to your advantage, see "[Don't See Your Origin and/or Destination in an FCF Headline?](#)" or "[This Report Was Made For You and The Art of Skipping Stones](#)."

BRIDGE ROUTE CONNECTING FLIGHTS

Remember, when using the available discounted long-haul flight as a “bridge,” the connecting flight from the U.S. and/or international hub can be either booked in Business Class or economy, based on availability.

If only economy is available on the short connecting flights, don't let that deter your travel plans. The most important part is getting the long-haul flight in the class you want first.

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

[American, Delta, and United](#) 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 for international travel for the remainder of 2020.

DREAM. BOOK. SAVE.

We've said it before but it bears repeating: you've probably been at home dreaming about that getaway. Don't leave it at that. Snap up the deals now while they're still here and you're thinking about it. **They won't be around forever** and you'll undoubtedly kick yourself when they're gone (and be stuck playing 52 pick up in a huff).

The risk is low or nil if you end up changing your mind, and we really believe the positives far outweigh the negatives right now. Whether you're dreaming of bringing your golf *clubs* to Edinburgh, finding *diamonds* in South Africa, calling a spade a *spade* in Spain or leaving your *heart* in San Francisco, now's the time to book flights to make it happen later this year or through the middle of next year.

MORE FCF SPECIAL REPORTS TO HELP YOU BOOK THE BEST MILES AND POINTS TICKETS

[Pro Tips and Tricks on Booking Mileage Tickets Way in Advance and How to Strike While the Iron is Hot](#)

[Mining for Miles Availability: 10 Common Mistakes Most Travelers Make](#)

[80/20 in 2020—Putting the Pareto Principle to Work for a Better Travel Credit Card Points and Miles Life](#)

[How to Choose Between a Flash Low-Cash Fare and a Discount Mileage Deal.](#)



Stunning Lockdown Tactical Fares: East Coast from \$633 to \$1,400 and West Coast from \$1,560, round-trip to the Azores, Portugal, and all over Europe. On TAP, a Star Alliance member, netting United award miles and elite-qualifying points.

FCF doesn't report on mistake fares for several reasons including the fact that they can net you [pain](#). But we sure as heck report on fares that look like mistake fares but aren't.

That's the case with a \$633 round-trip fare to the Azores in Portugal in Business Class. Unmistakably great.

As you're undoubtedly aware, Europe is off-limits to U.S. travelers at the time of writing this report, but these fares apply for later this year and into 2021. So let's get to it, or as we like to say, there are...

GREAT FARES ON TAP

TAP, Portugal's national carrier, offers more than just one "one-off" fares. Let's take a look at some numbers that are tastier than a Portuguese custard tart (well, almost...).

Best in show is: [Boston to Ponta Delgada](#) (the Azores) **\$633** round-trip (valid for travel October 2020 through July 2021).

But also amazing are: [Nonstop TAP Business Class to Lisbon R/T](#); from Newark, \$1,152 (compared to \$3,347 on United); from Washington, DC, \$1,400 (\$3,299 on United); from Chicago, \$1,560 (\$3,347 on United connecting via Newark); and from San Francisco, \$1,560 (\$3,500 on United connecting via New).

More great TAP fares to [Porto and Faro](#).

To Porto: from Newark, \$1,150; from Miami, \$1,204; from Washington, DC, \$1,401; from San Francisco, \$1,461; and from Chicago, \$1,511.

To Faro: from Washington, DC, \$1,401; and from San Francisco, \$1,561



MORE GREAT BUSINESS CLASS FARES FOR TRAVEL ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE ON TAP ROUND-TRIP

- > [Boston to Berlin for \\$1,503](#)
- > [Miami to Madrid for \\$1,904](#)
- > [New York to Milan for \\$1,878](#)
- > [New York to Amsterdam for \\$1,772](#)
- > [Chicago to Rome for \\$2,002](#)
- > [Chicago to Zurich for \\$2,112](#)
- > [San Francisco to Amsterdam for \\$2,202](#)

FREE UPGRADES FROM ECONOMY

For travel in summer 2021, which is peak season for economy fares to Europe (based on sample travel dates of June 23-July 7), you can book Newark-Lisbon nonstop in Business Class on TAP for just \$1,152. Economy during the same time window is \$1,249 for a nonstop flight on United. **So that's a *less-than-free* upgrade.** It's like they're paying you to get a better flight! That's why it's super important to check those prices before committing to a cabin when you're booking right now.



Colorful Lisbon at sunset

TWO EUROPEAN DESTINATIONS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

For a small fee (or sometimes no fee at all), some airlines allow a stopover in their hub city on published Business Class fares. FCF wrote about TAP's free stopover in Portugal when traveling to other parts of Europe [here](#).

LISBON FOR \$2.00

\$2.00? Yup. (No mistake fares *or* typos here.) Get two European cities for the price of one plus half a cup of coffee. Let's say you want to travel from Boston to Berlin and the lowest Business Class fare is \$1,505 round-trip with TAP. Now, for \$1,507 (a mere \$2 more) you can fly from Boston to Berlin and stop off in beautiful Lisbon.

ELITES PAY A PRICE

Currently, we're seeing TAP undercutting all major U.S. airlines (American, Delta, and United) from their major hub cities.

American Airlines example: It's \$2,201 from Chicago to London on TAP, while American's fares are often \$3,349. That's a difference of \$1,148/34%.

Delta Airlines example: Newark to Frankfurt on TAP is \$2,080, while Delta's fares are often \$3,537 (from JFK). That's a difference of \$1,457/41%.

United Airlines example: It's \$1,152 from Newark to Lisbon on TAP, while United's fares are often \$3,347. A difference of \$2,195/66%.

As TAP is a Star Alliance member, you'll earn United award miles and Premier qualifying points (PQPs). For TAP J class Business Class fares, you earn [125% award miles](#) and a maximum of [1,000 PQPs](#).

That's the cost of being an elite-focused traveler. If you're an elite who's locked into one airline, then you're getting diddled.

DON'T USE MILES TO UPGRADE WHEN FARES ARE THIS LOW

You can buy an economy ticket on United from Newark to Lisbon for \$979 (T class) plus a co-pay of \$1,100 (total \$2,079) and 40,000 miles round-trip to upgrade for travel Feb. 4 to Feb. 11, for example. Or, you could book TAP in Business Class to Lisbon for just \$1,152.

TAP'S BUSINESS CLASS SEAT

Fly in comfort with [TAP's lie-flat Business Class seats](#), available on all U.S. flights to the Azores and Portugal. TAP's new [A330-900neo](#) aircraft has its newest seat—with 34 seats configured in 1-2-1 layout.



FCF'S ELEVATOR PITCH FOR PORTUGAL AND THE AZORES

Portugal: Charming historic cities such as Lisbon and Porto. The spectacular Algarve beaches (the area's capital is Faro). The hiking paradise of Parque Natural da Serra da Estrela. Monsanto, a village built from boulders. A train ride through the Rio Douro valley, famed for its port (the one you drink). Portugese tarts (mmm, did we already mention them?)

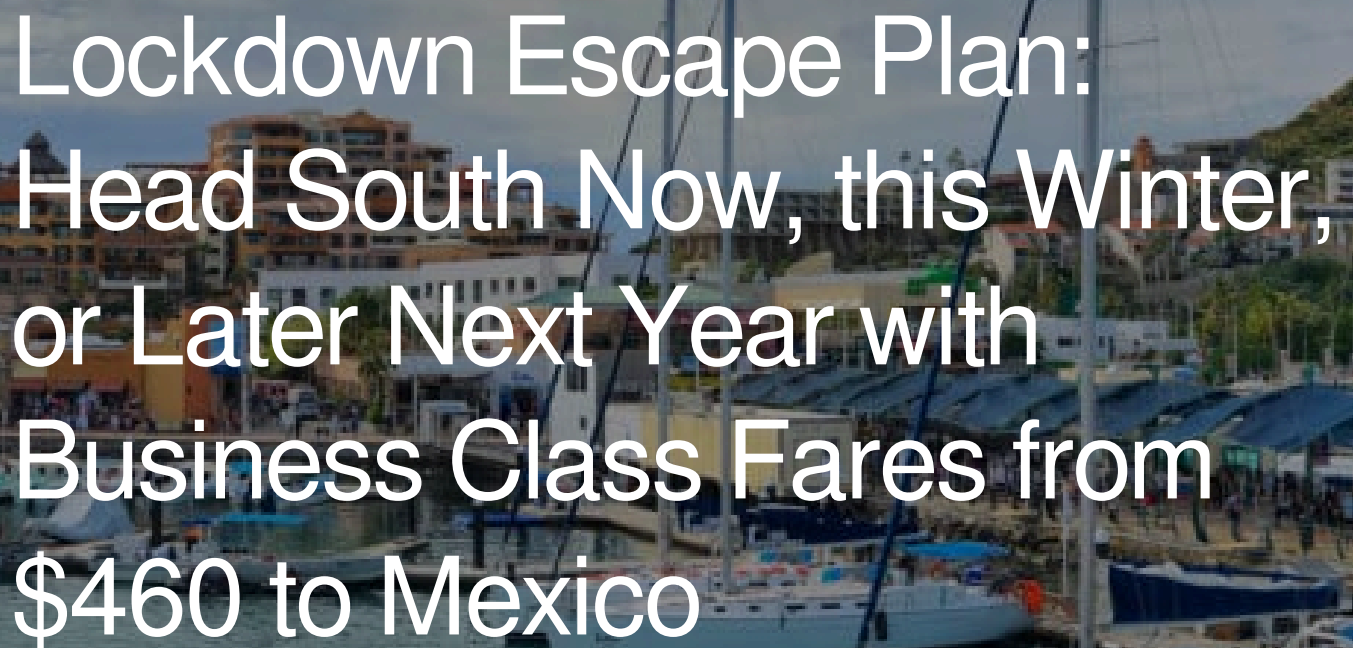
The Azores: A Portugese island chain about 850 miles west of the mainland, this is an inviting water paradise with whale watching, snorkeling and diving. The Sete Cidades, a three-mile-diameter volcanic crater. The historic hub of Ponta Delgada. Biking and hiking. Delicious local cuisine.



The Sete Cidades

THE RISK OF BOOKING TICKETS NOW

Due to The Lockdown, the current “change fee waiver” policy for TAP allows a one-time change without a fee for tickets issued by September 30, 2020, for travel by November 30, 2020, but fare differential is charged when applicable. See FCF’s risk-of-booking widget [here](#) to get info for TAP. The normal change fee with no waiver before departure is \$300, plus the fare difference. Cancellation is \$250 before departure.



Lockdown Escape Plan: Head South Now, this Winter, or Later Next Year with Business Class Fares from \$460 to Mexico

September 2020

If you're tired of being a homebody, you can get great Business Class airfares if you're ready to travel now, or travel later.

American Express

which found that 48% of consumers attribute not being able to travel right now to an increase in stress and anxiety, while 75% said traveling is one of the top activities they miss.

Well, what if you didn't have to miss out on travel? And what better place to go than Mexico for some well-earned R&R? It's the right kind of tropical vaccine a lot of us could use right now.



The Marina at Cabo San Lucas

ME-HI-CO – MUY LOW

Batman can keep his Bat Signal... FCF has the Fare Siren and we've almost lost our hearing here at FCF HQ. We're sounding the alarm all day long right now. There are great beach destinations in Mexico with fares hotter than a Cabo sandcastle. To find your mojo, cast your *ojos* on these **sample** low-priced round-trip Business Class jewels:

[California to Cabo \\$466, Manzanillo \\$589, Puerto Vallarta \\$501](#)

Miami to Cancun, [\\$460](#)

New York to Cancun, [\\$483](#)

Chicago to Cancun, [\\$490](#)

Boston to Cancun, [\\$566](#)

Washington, DC to Cancun, [\\$578](#)

Atlanta to Cancun, [\\$597](#)

You can also find many more U.S. cities to Cancun [here](#). And click [here](#) for other destinations.



LOW-COST UPGRADES FROM ECONOMY

You can book Chicago to Cancun nonstop in Business Class on United for just \$490 round-trip. Economy during the same time window is \$240, but if you add the Economy Plus seat section—which includes up to 6 inches of extra legroom—the cost is \$474 for Economy. So that's only \$16 more round-trip or \$2 per flight hour to upgrade to Business Class.

TWO DESTINATIONS FOR A BIT MORE

For a fee, American and United often allow a stopover in their hub city on published Business Class fares.

Add Dallas for \$164: Let's say you want to travel from Chicago to Puerto Vallarta and the lowest Business Class fare is **\$778 round-trip with American**. Now, for \$942 (just \$164 more) you can fly Chicago to Puerto Vallarta and stop in Dallas. Use this option to visit friends or family, or JR and Sue Ellen—whatever you like.

Add Houston for \$100: Maybe you want to travel from Newark to Mazatlán and the lowest Business Class fare is **\$824 round-trip with United**. Well, for \$924 (just \$100 more) you can fly from Newark to Mazatlán and stopover in Houston. Check your oil wells before heading south.

FCF'S ELEVATOR PITCH FOR MEXICO

Cancun: Turquoise waters. Majestic beaches. Mayan ruins. Snorkeling at an underwater museum. Sublime Isla Blanca.

Cabo: Beaches everywhere the eyes can see. Great resorts. Water sports.

Manzanillo: Calm watersport-friendly waters. Beautiful beaches. Coral reefs and shipwrecks. Deep-sea fishing. Energetic nightlife.

Puerto Vallarta: Cobblestone streets. Boutique shops. Spacious beaches. Galleries and sculptures. The Malecón boardwalk.



Pristine Puerto Vallarta

THE RISK OF BOOKING TICKETS NOW?

Due to The Lockdown, many airlines have new “change fee waiver” policies in place. It varies by airline, but generally, the policy waives change fees if you decide not to travel. See FCF’s risk-of-booking widget [here](#) for American, Alaska, Delta, and United.



Premium FCF Fare & Miles Alerts Available Now

September 2020

We've put together a survey of the best airfares and unprecedented mileage availability (aka "Sweet Redeems") that we've published in the last month—on major airlines—that are still live today and are valid for travel later this year and/or into 2021. So in case you missed them the first time, here they are in all their glory.

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

FCF Sweet Redeems

TO/FROM ASIA

[Great Single-Seat Opportunities with Cathay Pacific *First Class* from San Francisco and Many Other U.S. Cities to Hong Kong \(and Beyond\)](#)

[Delta Business Class Options from Los Angeles and Many Other U.S. Cities to Shanghai](#)

[Forward Thinker *First Class* Opportunities with Japan Airlines from New York and Many Other U.S. Cities to Tokyo](#)

[Great Single-Seat Opportunities with Cathay Pacific *First Class* from Chicago and Many Other U.S. Cities to Hong Kong and Beyond](#)

TO/FROM EUROPE

[Unprecedented United Business Class Opportunities from Chicago and Many Other Cities to Brussels](#)

[Unprecedented United Business Class Opportunities from Washington, DC and Many Other Cities to Zurich](#)

[Unprecedented United Business Class Opportunities from Newark and Many Other Cities to London](#)

[Unprecedented United Business Class Opportunities from Washington, DC and Many Other Cities to Paris](#)

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

[Unprecedented Delta Business Class Opportunities from Atlanta and Many Other Cities to London](#)

[Unprecedented United Business Class Upgrade Opportunities from Newark and Many Other U.S. Cities to Zurich](#)

[Unprecedented American Business Class Opportunities from New York and Many Other U.S. Cities to Rome](#)

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

[Unprecedented American Business Class Opportunities from New York and Many Other U.S. Cities to London](#)

[Unprecedented Delta Business Class Opportunities from Boston and Many Other U.S. Cities to Amsterdam – Using Virgin Miles \(Amex Partner\)](#)

[Unprecedented Delta Business Class Opportunities from New York and Many Other U.S. Cities to Zurich](#)

[Unprecedented Delta Airlines Business Class Opportunities from Minneapolis and Many Other U.S. Cities to Paris](#)

TO/FROM SOUTH AMERICA

[Unprecedented American Business Class Opportunities from New York and Many Other U.S. Cities to São Paulo](#)

[Unprecedented Delta \(Amex Partner\) Business Class Opportunities from Atlanta and Many Other U.S. Cities to São Paulo](#)

[Unprecedented Delta Business Class Opportunities from Atlanta and Many Other U.S. Cities to Santiago](#)

[Unprecedented American Business Class Opportunities from Miami and Many Other U.S. Cities to São Paulo](#)

FCF Rare Fares

TO AFRICA

[Business Class Fares from All Over the U.S. to South Africa from \\$2,756](#)

TO ASIA

[Low Business Class Fares from All Over the U.S. and Canada to Japan from \\$2,324](#)

[New Business Class Fares from New York to Asia from \\$2,591](#)

[New Premium Economy Fares from All Over the U.S. to Asia from \\$825](#)

TO CARIBBEAN

[Business Class Fares from Many U.S. Cities to St. Thomas from \\$658 R/T](#)

[Business Class Fares from Many Cities to Grand Cayman from \\$532 R/T](#)

[Cheap Business Class Fares from Many Cities to Bermuda from \\$603 R/T](#)

TO CENTRAL AMERICA

[New Business Class Fares from All Over the U.S. to San Jose, Costa Rica from \\$615](#)

TO EUROPE

[New Business Class Fares from Chicago to Europe from \\$1,510 with TAP](#)

[Business Class Fares from All Over the U.S. to Nice from \\$1,996](#)

[Business Class Fares from Washington DC to Europe from \\$1,399](#)

[\\$1,203 Business Class Fares from Miami to Europe](#)

[New *First Class* Fares from the U.S. to Barcelona, Copenhagen, London, Milan, Paris and Rome from \\$3,389](#)

[Business Class Fares from Los Angeles to Europe from \\$1,927](#)

[New *First Class* Fares from New York to Europe from \\$3,360](#)

[*First Class* Fares from All Over the East Coast to Europe from \\$3,308](#)

[Special Business Class Fares from the U.S. to Spain from \\$1,778](#)

[Business Class Fares from All Over the U.S. to Warsaw from \\$1,872](#)

[Business Class Fares from Chicago, Boston and Dallas to Croatia from \\$1,924](#)

[Business Class Fares from All Over the U.S. to Germany from \\$1,503](#)

[Business Class Fares from All Over the East Coast to All Over Scandinavia from \\$1,982](#)

[New Business Class Fares from All Over the U.S. to France from \\$2,009](#)

[New Business Class Fares from All Over the U.S. to Amsterdam from \\$1,772](#)

[Business Class Fares from the East Coast to Switzerland from \\$1,773](#)

[New Business Class Fares from All Over the U.S. to Greece from \\$2,145](#)

[Low Business Class Fares from North America to Dublin from \\$1,998 R/T](#)

[New \\$1,150 R/T Business Class Fares from North America to Porto and Faro, Portugal for October Through June 2021 Travel](#)

[New \\$633 R/T Azores Business Class Fares + \\$1,152 Fares to Lisbon for Travel October through June 2021](#)

[New Business Class Fares from Boston to Europe for October 2020 through June 2021 Travel, from \\$1,159](#)

TO HAWAII

[Hawaii Nonstop \\$796 Business Class Fares from Southern California](#)

[Hawaii \\$697 Business Class Fares from Northern California](#)

TO INDIA

[Low Premium Economy Fares from the U.S. to Mumbai from \\$1,084](#)

TO MEXICO

[New Cheap Nonstop Biz Class Fares from California to Cabo \\$431, Manzanillo \\$495, Puerto Vallarta \\$499](#)

NORTH AMERICA

[Low Nonstop Transcon Business Class Fares from \\$776](#)

[Many Nonstop Transcon Business Class Fares Found From \\$769](#)

TO SOUTH AMERICA

[New Premium Economy Fares from All Over the U.S. to South America from \\$704](#)

[Cheap Business Class Fares from All Over the East Coast to South America from \\$1,675](#)

[Business Class Fares from Boston to South America from \\$2,163](#)

[New Business Class Fares from Los Angeles to Brazil for October Through June 2021 Travel from \\$2,413](#)

[New \\$1,359 Business Class Fares from Miami to Rio for October Through June 2021 Travel \(\\$1,976 to Argentina\).](#)

[New Delta \\$1,642 Business Class Fares to Santiago from Atlanta, Detroit, Seattle and More for October and November Travel](#)

TO THE MIDDLE EAST

[New Business Class Fares from the U.S. to Dubai from \\$2,762](#)

[Special Business Class Fares from All Over the U.S. and Canada to Israel from \\$2,406](#)



Domestic Business Class upgrades are as low as \$30 each way, or \$6 per flight hour more than economy.

It's time to think more positively and grab some of the stunning bargains we're finding—like a \$357 Business Class fare on a nine-hour round-trip flight. Just \$6 an hour more to fly in Business than in coach?! Awesome.

That's great. And it's not alone. We've discovered other amazing premium domestic fares to report, as well as some previously reported deals that are still valid. On the downside, there are fare increases on some routes we need to tell you about.

FREE UPGRADE TO AMERICAN'S [\\$357 ROUND-TRIP SAN FRANCISCO-CHICAGO FARE](#)

AA's lowest Business Class fare is \$357 on the San Francisco-Chicago route. But its Main Cabin Extra section, which includes up to 6 inches of extra legroom, is \$297. So the Business Class fare is only \$60 more, or \$30 each way or \$6 per flight hour, for perspective. **Now that's an upgrade.** It's actually even less when you factor in the cost of a checked bag in coach (\$60 round-trip). That makes the upgrade **free**.

DON'T GET FOOLED BY AN AIRLINE UPSELL OPTION

Depending on the route and airline, upsell options can cost you just as much as a Business Class seat. It catches people by surprise—they think they're being value conscious by flying in some form of economy class, but they end up paying more, and sacrificing comfort.

SAMPLES OF NEW AWESOME NONSTOP DOMESTIC BUSINESS CLASS FARES

These **sample** fares are valid in either direction:

American: Seattle-Chicago, [\\$317](#)

American: Dallas-Seattle, [\\$357](#)

American: Chicago-Portland, [\\$417](#)

American & United: Los Angeles-Orlando, [\\$745](#)

United: Boston-Los Angeles, [\\$755](#)

United: Newark-San Diego, [\\$765](#)

United: Philadelphia-San Francisco, [\\$775](#)

United: Washington, DC-Los Angeles, [\\$775](#)

United: Boston-San Francisco, [\\$785](#)

AA: Seattle-Miami, [\\$809](#)

United: Washington, DC-Seattle, [\\$825](#)

United: Newark-Seattle, [\\$825](#)

AA & United: Miami-San Francisco, [\\$845](#)

For more routes go [here](#) and [here](#).

CATCH THEM WHILE YOU CAN AMERICA'S BIGGEST (AND USUALLY MOST EXPENSIVE) ROUTES, LOS ANGELES/SAN FRANCISCO-NEW YORK, ARE STILL AMAZINGLY LOW

United continues to undercut American and Delta on these two routes. It's \$877 on United (Newark-Los Angeles) while American and Delta fares start at \$1,417 (JFK-Los Angeles). That's a difference of **38%**.

This is a golden opportunity if you're the type of traveler who can plan ahead and [book and save now for travel later](#), as the landscape for fares, at some point, will change again, back to Pre-Lockdown pricing. Birthdays, anniversaries, trips to summer homes, all that could be booked now, at rates you won't find when the Lockdown ends.



MORE GREAT OLDER DEALS ARE STILL VALID

Transcontinental Business Class fares can easily run \$1,300 to \$1,800. Here are some tasty deals that have stuck around from last month. As always, **sample** domestic fares are valid in either direction: Raleigh-Seattle, \$631; New York-San Jose, \$814; Sacramento-Miami, \$821; and New York-Palm Springs, \$824.

LOW RISK OF BOOKING DOMESTIC TRAVEL

[American, Delta, and United](#) "permanently" eliminated their change fees for domestic travel, and [JetBlue](#) has a change waiver policy for new tickets issued by October 15. But no cash refund on non-refundable tickets. You can change your flight for free, however you will have to pay the fare difference.

OTHER DOMESTIC BLISS ON FCF

[Sea to Shining Sea: Transcon Travel Still 47% Off in Business Class:](#) Coast to coast with the most. Take a deeper dive on the transcontinental route plunge-o-rama as published last month. Despite a lot of Lockdown Turbulence, a bunch of fares are still valid.

[Lockdown Fare Trend: If You Have Firm Travel Dates \(or Could\), Now Is the Time to Book Domestic Premium Flights to Save 52%:](#) A 52% saving on domestic Business Class fares is nothing to sneeze at. Read our still-very-relevant June [report](#) on booking now versus waiting.



Upgrade to Business Class from Premium Economy for just \$376 each way.

Whenever we see super low fares in a premium cabin to alluring cities on a major airline, we wake up in the morning full of vim and vigor. So finding great opportunities to southern South America with Delta was the best kind of wake-up call.

These are tactical fares at their best: used sparingly by airlines to fight competition or stir up interest in a route. Probably because the airline president's spouse's mother lives there (just kidding). There are lots of reasons that don't really matter, as long as you're ready to leverage them. That might mean being opportunistic—

seeing great fares and being flexible enough to nab them, such as moving forward or pushing back vacation dates, or changing your intended city (and going to that city later).

SOUTH AMERICA: DEAL NOW, FLY LATER

Most of South America is currently closed to U.S. travelers, but the deals below on Delta are for travel later in 2020, and some even until July 2021, so you can [Book Now for Super Cheap Travel Later](#).

LOW FARE HIGHLIGHTS

Some low fares we found are Atlanta to [Buenos Aires \\$1,675](#) round-trip, [Santiago \\$1,642](#), and [São Paulo \\$1,631](#), all on nonstop service with Delta.

Normally, Business Class flights like this to southern South America would cost you between \$3,077 and \$4,979.

Plus, we've found many more routes ranging from \$1,800 to \$2,000 round-trip from the East and West Coast.

Samples:

~**\$1,800:** Cincinnati, Detroit, Minneapolis to Santiago, [\\$1,807](#). Detroit to Buenos Aires, [\\$1,841](#), to Sao Paulo, [\\$1,796](#).

~**\$1,900:** Seattle and Salt Lake City to Santiago, [\\$1,907](#). Baltimore to Sao Paulo, [\\$1,946](#).

\$2,000-plus: [New York to São Paulo, \\$2,036](#); [New York to Rio de Janeiro, \\$2,096](#); [Boston to Sao Paulo, \\$2,151](#); [Los Angeles to Sao Paulo, \\$2,391](#); and [Austin and San Antonio to Rio de Janeiro, \\$2,341](#)

Plus, more U.S. cities from \$2,213 to \$2,653. For details go [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).



LOW-COST UPGRADES FROM PREMIUM ECONOMY

You can book [Atlanta to Santiago](#) nonstop in Business Class on Delta for just \$1,642. Premium Economy during the same time window is \$890 for a nonstop flight. That's a difference of \$376 each way, or just \$39 per flight hour to upgrade. That's why it's important to check prices before committing to a cabin right now.



Santiago, Chile

ATLANTA STOPOVER: GET TWO DESTINATIONS FOR \$200 MORE

For a fee, Delta allows a stopover in their hub city on published Business Class fares, most of the time anyway. So let's say you want to travel from Detroit to São Paulo and the lowest Business Class fare is \$1,796 round-trip with Delta. Now, for \$1,996 (\$200 more) you can fly from Detroit to São Paulo and stop off in Atlanta. Watch the Falcons, check out MLK's childhood home, tour the Coke museum.

DURING FARE WARS, LOYALTY-FREE AGENTS WIN

Delta is currently undercutting American from major nonstop hub cities. For example, it's [\\$2,036 from New York to São Paulo](#) on Delta's nonstop flight, while American fares are often \$4,376. That's a difference of \$2,340/53%.

Plus, you also earn SkyMiles and elite miles (MQMs) and dollars (MQDs). For example, as a regular SkyMiles member (no elite status) you earn 9,990 award SkyMiles (14,236 MQMs and 1,998 MQDs). If you value Delta award miles at 3.5¢ (the [cost to buy miles from Delta](#)), this offsets the cost of the ticket by about \$350, making the ticket just \$1,686 on the New York-São Paulo route.

Another reason why "elite" is anything but—once again, it makes you miss out on the real action.

WHEN FARES ARE LOW DON'T USE MILES

You can book and buy an economy ticket on American from New York to São Paulo for \$691 plus a co-pay of \$700 (total \$1,391) and 50,000 miles round-trip to upgrade. Or you could book Delta in Business Class for just \$2,036. No brainer.

FCF'S ELEVATOR PITCH FOR SOUTHERN SOUTH AMERICA

São Paulo: South America's largest city offers art gazing at museums such as the majestic Museum of Modern Art. Great food like the famous pork dishes at A Casa do Porco. The bustling Paulista Avenue, the city's cultural and commercial artery.

Santiago: Chilean wine. The cityscape views from Santa Lucia and San Cristobal Hills. Museum hopping. Bike-friendly city exploring. Urban street art and murals. Day trips to the beautiful surrounding mountains.

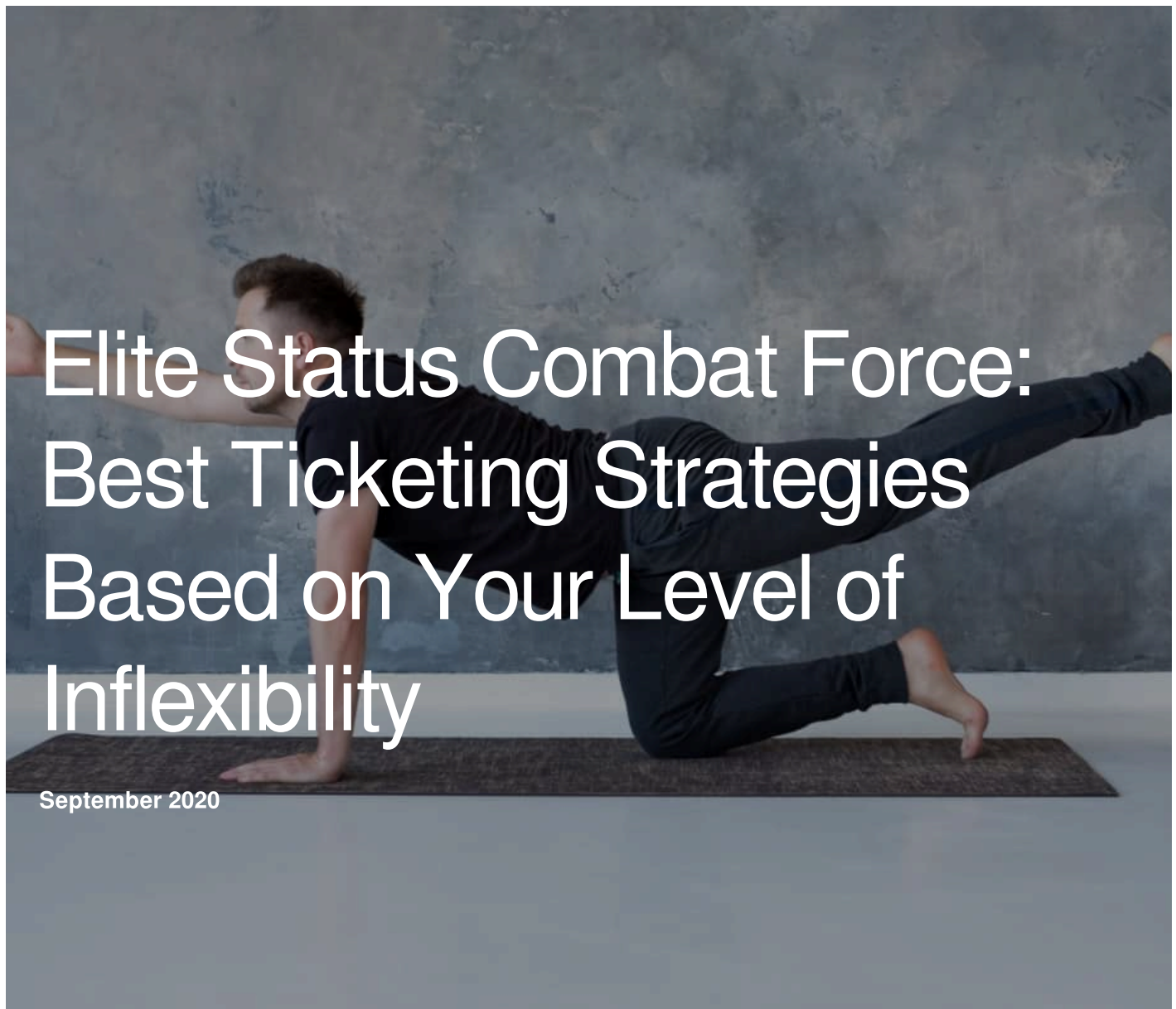
Buenos Aires: High energy, creativity, and fun. Sublime Argentinian beef. The Evita Peron Museum to learn about the icon. A high-vibe nightlife. Dancing the tango. The historic Recoleta Cemetery. The legendary Colon Theater opera house. A day trip to charming Tigre with its bohemian art scene.

Rio De Janeiro: World-famous Copacabana and Ipanema beaches. Christ the Redeemer statue (pictured below). A cablecar ride to the top of Sugarloaf Mountain. The Museum of Tomorrow. Morning markets.



THE RISK OF BOOKING TICKETS NOW

Due to the Lockdown, many airlines have “change fee waiver” policies in place for non-refundable tickets. Policies vary by airline, but in general, the policy waives change fees if you decide not to travel. See FCF's risk-of-booking widget [here](#).



Elite Status Combat Force: Best Ticketing Strategies Based on Your Level of Inflexibility

September 2020

FCF has locked-in an opportunity cheat sheet for you to become a top-tier elite athlete.

Our philosophy is that [loyalty-free agents](#) are much better off when it comes to buying cash tickets. But we know that many readers are elite-centric and want the best bang for their locked-in buck.

So, if you're an elite loyalist with American, Delta, or United, this one's for you. We've crunched the numbers on what will work best for you depending on your level of travel flexibility **when buying cash tickets**. We've broken it down to four elite types:

- No flexibility on origin, destination, or dates. Let's call him Rigid Rod.
- Flexibility on dates, but not origin or destination, Shifty Shawn.
- Flexibility on the origin or destination, but not dates, Wandering Wanda.
- Flexibility on everything, Flexible Felix.

RIGID ROD – “I CAN'T BUDGE ON DATES OR MY OR DESTINATION, BUT I MUST EARN ELITE CREDIT.”

Rod (who's going to a wedding, so has no flexibility—unless things fall apart between Beth and Bob...) can earn elite credit not only by flying and paying for a ticket on his preferred airline but also **by flying on partner airlines** of that loyalty program. The partner flight needs to be booked as a marked flight (as an AA, Delta, or United flight number) and operated by the partner. Elite credit earnings vary. See the links below for each airline.

[American](#): Click on the partner airline to see earnings based on purchased fares booked in cabin class, EQMs and EQDs per mile flown, and EQSs.

For example, British Airways currently has Business Class fares from Miami to Marseille (connecting in London) starting at [\\$2,339 round-trip](#). This fare can also be booked via AA as code-share flights so you can earn elite credit.

[Delta](#): Click on the partner airline to see earnings based on purchased fares for MQMs and MQDs.

For example, Air France currently has Business Class fares from Boston to Florence (connecting in Paris) starting at [\\$2,239 round-trip](#). This fare can also be booked via Delta as code-share flights so you can earn elite credit.

[United](#): Click on the partner airline to see earnings based on purchased fares for PQFs and PQPs. (With United you still earn elite benefits even if your flight was not ticketed by United.)

For example, TAP currently has [Business Class fares to Europe starting as low as \\$633 round-trip](#). For TAP J class Business Class fares, you earn 125% award miles and a maximum of 1,000 PQPs. That's a great fare deal plus elite credit to boot.

CONSIDER USING MILES FOR AN UPGRADE, NOT A FREE TICKET

FCF is a **huge** fan of using miles to upgrade, rather than using them to buy a free coach ticket (like most people do). And the numbers support this too. You can open otherwise-locked doors, spend fewer miles, and even take the family. For more information, see [Ten Reasons Why I'm the Biggest Fan of Mileage Upgrade Awards—and Why You Should Be Too](#). (FYI, it's not a great option with Delta's mileage program, but can be with American and United.)

American example: Say you're traveling New York-Paris in mid-January. You can easily pay \$559 for a nonstop on American in Basic Economy (mileage upgrades are valid with Basic Economy fares as of October 1), while Business Class is often \$2,899 (\$2,340 more). So even with the \$700 co-pay to Europe and 50,000 miles to upgrade from the lowest upgradeable economy fares, you can save 57% (\$1,640) off the published fare by using miles. For more information, see [Defying the Mileage Upgrade Drought to South America on American Airlines](#), [Elite Status Seeker: The Power of American Airlines Business to First Class Domestic Upgrades](#), and [Like Free Award Tickets, American Mileage Upgrades Are Drying Up](#).

United example: Let's say you're traveling from Newark to London. The lowest United upgradeable economy fare is currently \$808 for travel in February, while Business Class is \$3,247. So, even with the \$1,100 co-pay, you can save \$1,339 (41%) off the published fare by using miles. For more information regarding travel to [Asia](#), [South America](#), [Europe](#), [the South Pacific](#), and how [United is beating American 3 to 1](#).

CHECK THE AMEX IAP DISCOUNT

If you're locked and loaded, Rod, why not save a few hundred bucks (or even more)? We'll show you how to save on many normal fares with Amex. Dates/destinations are almost never an issue. For more information, see [Amex Platinum Card Discounts Save \\$200 to \\$6,557 Off Many Published Fares](#).

AIR-AND-LAND PACKAGE DEALS

Package deals can offer amazing value, particularly to Europe. We found deals on [American and British Airways](#) on short notice that offered a 52% saving with accommodations at a five-star hotel. With vacation packages, finding dates with the availability of discount seats can often be a lot easier.

Here are some package insights that will really click: [American and British Airways to Europe](#), [American to Brazil](#), [Delta to Australia](#), [to South America](#), [to India](#), and [United to Asia](#).

CONSIDER MIXED-CLASS FARES

Sometimes it makes sense to travel to Europe in Business Class and return in Premium Economy, or the other way round. Or even Business Class one-way and First Class the other. Find out when mixed-class fares make sense and how to book them. For more information, see [Business Class One Way to Europe, Premium Economy the Other](#) and [How to Price and Book Mixed-Cabin Tickets to Get More Bang for Your Buck](#).

LEVERAGE BA'S AARP AND CHASE DISCOUNTS

[British Airways' \\$200 AARP discount per flight](#) can be yours for an AARP membership fee of only \$16 a year—and it's **available to anyone of any age**. Plus, you can save even more with [British Airways Visa Card discount](#) (current promo code is CHASEBA10).

LOCK-IN WHAT YOU CAN NOW, IMPROVE AS YOU GO

Many airlines allow fare holds that prevent you from missing that amazing fare find. This gives you time to do more research and make the call. If so, buy the ticket; if not, cancel the hold. The best time to buy a ticket is when your hold fare is lower than the current “live” fare. For more information, see [How to Lock in Amazing Premium Flash Fares Long Enough to Decide If They’re Right for You](#).

SHIFTY SHAWN – “I CAN SHIFT DATES, BUT NOT PLACES (AND STILL NEED TO EARN ELITE CREDIT).”

Shifty Shawn can take advantage of everything mentioned above, plus when travel dates are flexible he can take advantage of **hidden low-cost travel windows**. Shawn isn’t flexible on his destination/departure cities, but he can change travel dates, and in that case, land some good savings. Airlines have shifted away from pricing seats as high as they possibly can. Now they’re pricing them more [strategically to sell all their seats](#). Airlines call them [tactical fares](#). In doing so, airlines have changed traveler behavior by enticing you to book flights when they want you to, hoping to funnel you to lesser-sold flights so all seats get sold.

HIDDEN TRAVEL WINDOWS SPECIAL REPORTS

[The Best Month to Book Business Class Flights to Europe](#), [Business Class Fares to Europe Less than Premium Economy](#), [Seasonal Business and First Class Fares Are Back](#), and [New Tactical Winter Vacation Premium Fares to Europe Discovered for Nov. & Dec. 2020 Travel](#).

WANDERING WANDA – “I’M LOCKED IN ON DATES, BUT AM FLEXIBLE ON DESTINATION/DEPARTURE CITIES (AND YEAH, I NEED TO EARN ELITE CREDIT).”

Wandering Wanda can take advantage of everything already mentioned above for Rigid Rod. Plus, she can take advantage of **hidden low-cost destinations**. Sounds mysterious, huh? The combination of keeping her travel dates but changing her destination and/or departure city allows her to save. In the airlines’ quest to offload Business Class seats, they’ll often sell particular destinations—for *year-round travel*—much cheaper than other destinations. Wanda should be aware that these cities can be either nonstop or with connections, and they’re often on a [flash-sale](#) basis.

HIDDEN LOW-FARE DESTINATION REPORTS

FCF has written many special reports about tactical low-cost destinations over the last year. Here are a few recent examples: [Greece’s Sparkling Island Jewels Shine Bright in Business Class](#), [From Russia with Love: Moscow & St. Petersburg](#), [Bologna is No Load of Baloney for Low Business Class Fares](#). Also in this issue, [Southern South American Business Class Prices Head South and You Should Too](#).

FLEXIBLE FELIX – “I’M SUPER FLEX, MAN. SAY WHEN, SAY WHERE, JUST GIMME ELITE CREDIT.”

You’re in luck, Felix. You can take advantage of everything mentioned above. Enjoy that yoga class.

Governing Elite Summary

Strategies	Non/Flexibility Scenario			
	Date-Only Flexibility	Route-Only Flexibility	Route and Date Flexibility	
No Flexibility				
Look for lower-cost partner airlines	X	X	X	X
Use miles for an upgrade, not a free ticket	X	X	X	X
Compare Amex IAP discounts	X	X	X	X
Compare air-and-land/or car package deals	X	X	X	X
Consider mixed-class fares	X	X	X	X
Use BA's AARP \$200 Discount & BA Chase 10% discount	X	X	X	X
Lock-in what you can now, while continuing to check for better fares	X	X	X	X
Leverage hidden low-cost travel windows		X		X
Leverage hidden low-cost destinations			X	X