



Our Tactical Mileage Prediction Came True to Hawaii: Better Hula Fast

In our January “2020 Vision” report, which looked at the year ahead, we said...

FCF predicts that in 2020 we will see a lot more tactical Business Class mileage award flash sales on U.S. airlines.

We’re very glad to share that it’s already happening with opportunities to Hawaii dropping like ripe pineapples on American Airlines.

Despite our predictions, it still comes as a surprise for two reasons. First, it's notoriously difficult to find low-cost award space to Hawaii. Second, American earned the ire of travelers when it started charging any price it wanted. Out went the published pricing charts and any chance of scoring "saver" awards.

Think about this number for a second: 960,000. That, incredibly, was the number of miles American was charging for a Business Class round-trip between Sydney and Los Angeles back in [January](#). Simply outrageous.

BUT THERE IS AN UPSIDE TO THE MADNESS. WHAT THE AIRLINE TAKETH AWAY, THEY CAN ALSO GIVETH.

And they have, with a sudden sporadic outpouring of low-mileage Business Class offerings to Hawaii **with rates lower than in 2018.**

BEST IN YEARS: 56K ROUND TRIP IN BIZ TO HAWAII

American flyers should note the rollercoaster that this route has gone on.

In [2018](#), [80,000](#) miles round-trip was the lowest saver award rate.

In [2019](#), [110,000](#) miles was the lowest saver award rate. The trend was not promising.

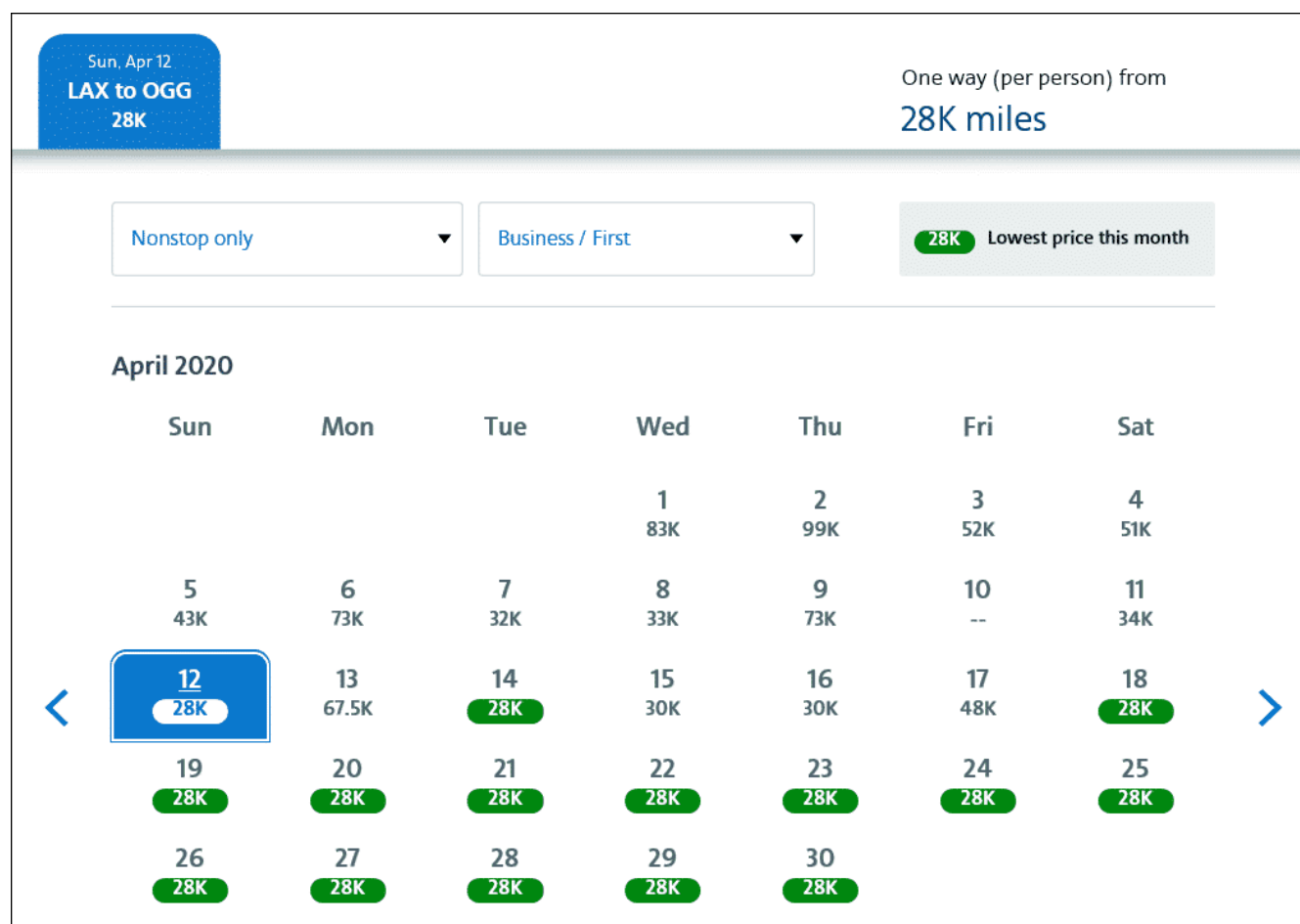
Yet now in 2020, the lowest rate is quietly down to just **56,000 miles** round-trip; that's a 54,000 mile *fall* in just a year, and 24,000 fewer than 2018. **That's only 5,500 miles more than what the airline was charging for economy class in 2019.**

New cheap flash mileage deals are also only available on the Los Angeles-Hawaii (Honolulu, Maui, Kauai, and Kona) routes (details [here](#) and [here](#)), not with other non-stops such as Dallas or Phoenix—yet. So get to LA and get 'em while they're hot.

American's New 2020 Biz Class Mileage Cost to Hawaii

	2018 Cost	2020 Cost	Difference	2019 Cost	2020 Cost	Difference
Lowest Biz Class Mileage Cost to Hawaii Round-trip	80,000	56,000	24,000 fewer miles in 2020	110,000	56,000	54,000 fewer miles in 2020

Now we can't say the 28K-mile one-way will be available every day, but we did find two-seat availability on the Maui route 15 days out of 30 in April. Not bad.



DISCOUNT-LEVEL HAPPINESS IS RELATIVE

These new cheap flash mileage deals do have limited date availability. Still, these flash one-way rates of 28,000 miles aren't just available once a year. **You can consistently find them four-eight times per month** (at time of writing April even had 15 days with two-seats) and for up to four months of travel in 2020. Don't look at the glass as half empty, but instead as half full, as cheap flash mileage deals are always better a few months out of the year than nothing.

WHAT IF YOU'RE NOT FLEXIBLE?

If you want more options for travel dates, you often only have to pay a bit more. FCF found one-way awards ranging between 30,000 to 40,000 miles, which are still OK, and way lower than in 2019, and the same or lower rates than 2018.

Or, if you only find the new 28,000 one-way price for your departure, and nothing for your return, you could always buy a one-way ticket from Hawaii or vice versa.

HOW TO SEARCH FOR MILEAGE AWARD SPACE

Most people search for availability depending on the number of people traveling. We don't. We search for **one seat**, *then* search for a second seat. Why? Because when you search for two seats, you won't see the available one-seat opportunities.

Also, many people search for availability round-trip. We don't. We **search for seats one-way**, because if the return is not available you could always buy a one-way ticket coming back.

For more details go [here](#).

NO ROUND-TRIP MILEAGE AWARD SPACE TO THE SAME ISLAND?

What if you can't find good mileage award space round-trip to the same island? Then grab a seat in premium class to one island, for example from LA to Kona, and book the return ticket from another island, for example from Maui to LA, and just buy a cheap ticket from Kona to Maui.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE AA MILES, BUT DO HAVE CREDIT CARD POINTS

Amex Rewards and Citi ThankYou Points: Cathay Pacific has the lowest partner mileage cost and is based on the distance flown. From Los Angeles to Hawaii, the cost is 60,000 miles round-trip.

Chase Rewards Points: British Airways also uses a flight distance chart. From Los Angeles to Hawaii, the cost is 77,500 miles round-trip.

AWARD MILEAGE HOLD WITH AMERICAN

If you want to grab this opportunity but haven't sorted out your dates, kid's vacation times, hotel bookings and the like, you can hold the award seat for five days at no charge. You can also nab more than one date, and then cancel the ones you don't need—again, there's no charge for the mileage award hold.

For more details go [here](#).

NOT BASED IN LA?

At this point, it appears that connecting flights to Los Angeles offer less award space than the non-stop LAX to Hawaii. So you could buy a second ticket with cash to connect in LAX.



Still Limber, the Leg Stretch Strategy (LSS), One of FCF's Favorite Airfare Secrets, Is Still Scoring Perfect 10s

March 2020

Did You Stretch This Morning? Shhhh. The Airlines Still Haven't Hamstrung the Acrobatic Leg Stretch Strategy. Still Awesome. Still Valid. Here's Why It Is Premium Flying Gold...

Our regular readers know that we love below-the-radar, counter-intuitive strategies that save tons of money. After all, it's been the cornerstone of our reputation for over two decades.

But one thing often happens. Airlines tend to shut down these strategies quickly once they realize how much money smart travelers can save.

Think of it like the beta version of a new app or operating system. The developer (or airline) removes the glitches and bugs that come up as users start working with it.

Well, we're happy to say that our Leg Stretch Strategy has defied that trend and continues to offer amazing opportunities today — as long as you're prepared to take advantage of it.

IT'S NOT A STRETCH TO SAY IT'S ONE OUR FAVORITE AIRFARE STRATEGIES

If you're new to this idea, or you need a refresher, here's a quick rundown:

The Leg Stretch Strategy makes use of round-trip itineraries between two continents with free stopovers each way on a third continent. (See map below.)

This last continent is the “connecting continent” between the other two. In all our examples that third continent is the U.S. Simple so far. But here's the thing, the U.S. stopovers are free each way. That means if you intend to go to those other continents in a 12-month period, you can **use the Leg Stretch Strategy to fly in Business Class for LESS than what you would pay in coach.**

99.999999% of travelers would treat those trips separately instead of **combining them together on one ticket** to save big.

THE STRETCH FOR PREMIUM TRAVELERS

Let's look at an example of this strategy with Stella, an acrobat based in the U.S who's planning to have two performances in Europe this year, and one in South America.

Now, most people would fly to Europe, do their thing, and return. Then they would fly to South America, do their thing, and return. And then finally fly to Europe again and return. Not many folks would think, or know, that they could **combine those trips into one ticket** to save thousands of dollars — even if the itineraries are stretched out over time.

Obviously, this strategy won't make sense for everyone. Plenty of business travelers need to visit different continents more than once in a 12-month period, especially Europe. **Many leisure travelers would do it if they knew how to do it in Business Class for the cost of coach.** One of the great things about this strategy is that you can even link a couple of Leg Stretches together if you're traveling much.

STRETCHY STELLA'S LEG STRETCH

Stella's itinerary has four discreet legs on her ticket (equivalent to two round-trips):

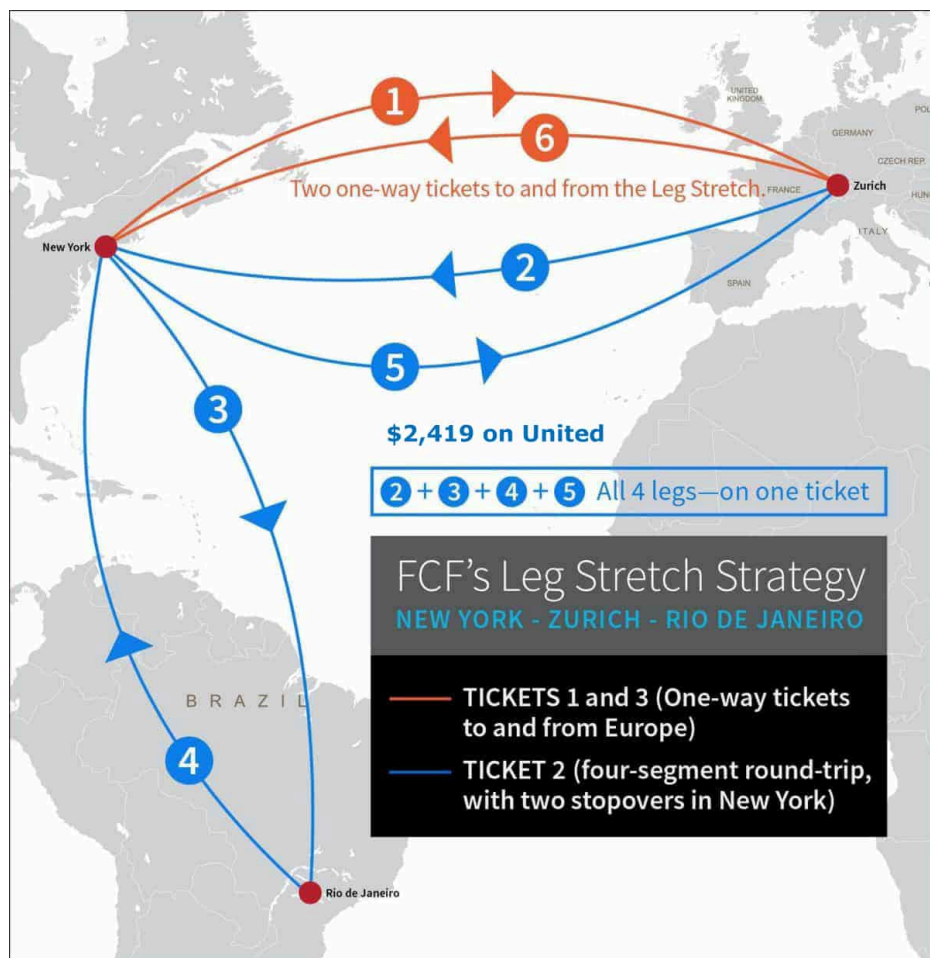
1. Europe to the U.S. (the stopover/home)

2. U.S. to South America (your vacation or business destination)
3. South America to the U.S. (the second stopover/ home)
4. U.S. to Europe (the start of your next trip)

Stella can do all that starting at \$2,419 in Business Class on **United**, and a bit more on **Delta**, at \$2,525.

That's a crazy-great price—just **\$605 per long-haul / international flight segment**, and it's in Business Class.

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



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

Now, you might be a bit confused, thinking: "Guys, you're saying it starts and ends in Europe?!" Don't worry, we'll get to that. But first, let's dive deeper into this deal.

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

EXAMPLE: This Leg Stretch is on United Airlines and connects Rio de Janeiro with Zurich via (either) **Chicago, Houston, Newark/New York, or Washington, D.C.**, and on Delta via (either) **Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Detroit, Miami, Minneapolis, or New York**.

BASED ON WHERE YOU LIVE, YOU BOOK THE COROLLARY CONNECTION POINT

So there are plenty of options in the U.S., while Rio and Zurich are gateway cities to the rest of their respective continents. (See the chart below for many different FCF-pre-baked itinerary options with both Delta and United.)

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

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

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

EXAMPLE TICKET #2 (The Start of the Leg Stretch)

Zurich to Rio round-trip—four segments on one ticket—via the U.S.

Example Segment #1: Zurich to New York (the free stopover as part of the Zurich-Rio Leg Stretch). Stay at home as long as you'd like before your trip to South America—as long as you complete the entire itinerary in 12 months.

Example Segment #2: New York to Rio. Stay for a week or more and have an awesome time in Brazil.

Example Segment #3: Rio to New York. Go home and relax.

Example Segment #4: New York to Zurich (the final leg of the Leg Stretch).

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

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

Here are sample flight segments on Google Flights:

1 • Business Class

Total price from
\$2,419

Multi-city trip

Selected flights

	Mon, Apr 20 • 10:10 AM – 1:10 PM United • SWISS	9h 0m ZRH–EWR	Nonstop	▼
	Tue, Jun 9 • 5:51 PM – 10:15 AM ⁺¹ United	15h 24m EWR–GIG	1 stop 1h 21m IAH	▼
	Tue, Jun 23 • 8:55 PM – 12:18 PM ⁺¹ United	16h 23m GIG–EWR	1 stop 2h 15m IAH	▼
	Thu, Nov 26 • 6:55 PM – 8:40 AM ⁺¹ United • SWISS	7h 45m EWR–ZRH	Nonstop	▼

Booking options

Book with United
 UA 135, UA 1002, UA 129, UA 128, UA 408, UA 134

\$2,419
 CHF 2,343

Select

Here are sample flight segments on Google Flights:

YOGA FOR FREQUENT PREMIUM FLYERS

With this deal, you're getting Business Class for about the price of coach. It all depends on the destinations you choose.

Sample Math: A New York-Zurich non-stop ticket in economy typically ranges from ~\$600 to \$1,100 round-trip and New York-Rio de Janeiro in economy ranges from ~\$1,300 to \$1,800 on Delta/United. That's \$1,900 minimum to fly economy—and possibly \$2,900 depending on your dates—while the Leg Stretch nets those same destinations in Business Class for as little as \$2,419.

Another way to look at the savings is that a New York-Zurich ticket in Business Class typically ranges from ~\$2,500 to \$6,500 and a New York-Rio de Janeiro return ticket in Business Class ranges from ~\$4,000 to \$5,800 on Delta. **That's \$6,500 minimum to fly Business Class**—and as much as \$12,300 depending on your dates. Meanwhile, the LSS can net **those same destinations in Business Class for \$2,419.**

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

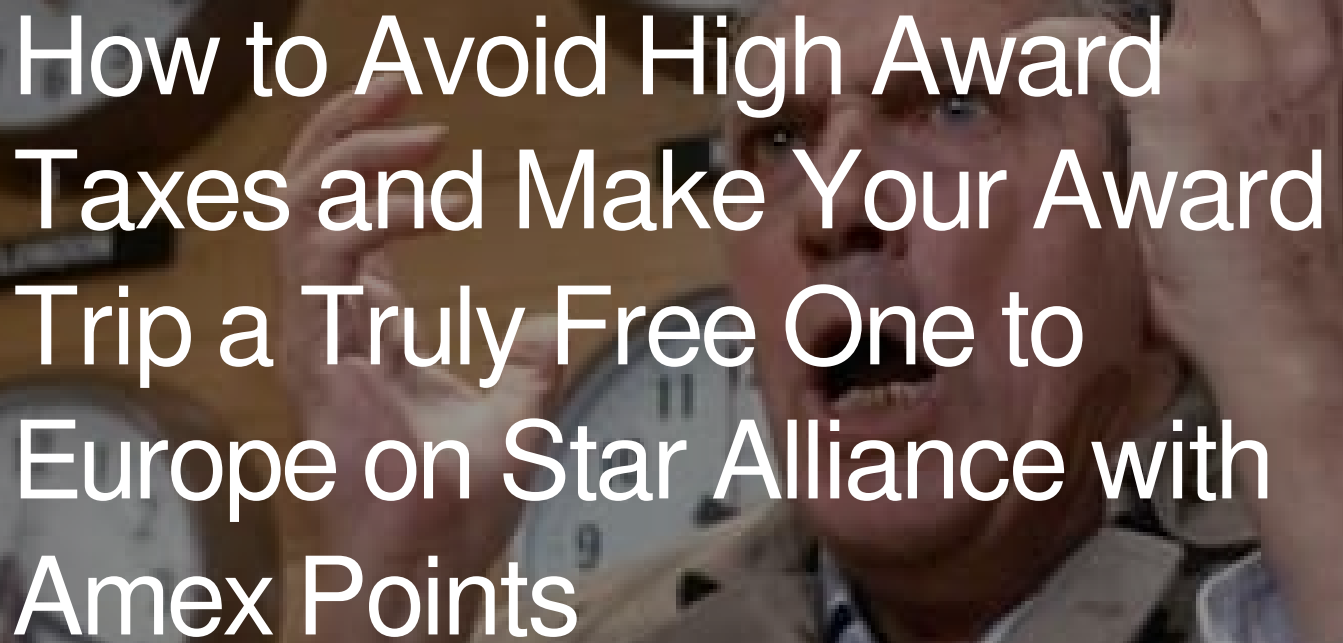
FINE PRINT FOR TICKET RULES:

Delta: 300 EUR for changes before departure (plus fare difference if any), 300 EUR after you started your trip (based on space being available), routing changes are not permitted, 12 months maximum stay.

United: 300 EUR for changes before departure (plus fare difference if any), 300 EUR after you started your trip (based on space being available), routing changes are not permitted; 12 months maximum stay.

Here are SAMPLE itinerary options FCF Has Pre-Baked for you:

Airline	Start Your LSS Ticket In:	Your U.S. Stopover / Home / Closest-to-Home City (Both Going and Coming):	Your South American Destination:	Fare for Four Legs (in Effect, Two Round-trips)	Quick Links:
United	Zurich	Newark	Rio de Janeiro	\$2,447	Expired
United	Dublin	Washington, DC	São Paulo	\$2,519	Expired
Delta	Zurich	New York	Rio de Janeiro	\$2,525	Expired
United	Milan	Houston	Buenos Aires	\$2,566	Expired
United	Frankfurt	Washington, DC	Santiago	\$2,605	Expired
United	Paris	Chicago	Rio de Janeiro	\$2,619	Expired
Delta	Zurich	Dallas	São Paulo	\$2,731	Expired
Delta	Milan	Detroit	São Paulo	\$2,766	Expired
Delta	Frankfurt	Atlanta	São Paulo	\$2,850	Expired
Delta	Brussels	Miami	São Paulo	\$2,990	Expired
Delta	Copenhagen	Minneapolis	São Paulo	\$2,908	Expired

A photograph of actor Peter Finch in a scene from the 1976 film *Network*. He is in a room with several large wall clocks, looking distressed with his hands raised to his head. The image is used as a background for the article title.

How to Avoid High Award Taxes and Make Your Award Trip a Truly Free One to Europe on Star Alliance with Amex Points

March 2020

Bypass Fake “Free” Awards & Guarantee Your Hard-Earned Free Award Ticket

You may remember a speech delivered by actor Peter Finch in the 1976 film *Network*:

“I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore!”



"I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore!"

Fast forward 44 years and I'm still hearing that sentiment from travelers when they discover the award taxes they have to pay with some airlines.

They just won't get an Oscar for expressing their frustration like Finch did...

MAD AS HECK

You may have experienced this frustration. You go to use your hard earned miles or points for a trip across the pond for what is ostensibly a free award trip. OK, you bought stuff to get those miles and/or flew a lot, but now the miles are yours to use.

And then a maddening thing happens: The airline hits you with an award "tax." Sure, their marketing departments have come up with creative names, like "fuel surcharge," "levy," "carrier-imposed surcharge," and so on. But at the end of the day, it's really just a big fat tax that's robbing you of all the awesome savings you thought you just got.

Consider SWISS or Lufthansa: Those two airlines can charge as much as **\$1,400 or more in taxes** for a Business Class flight to Europe. They call them "fuel surcharges." So much for a "free" award seat. While U.S. airlines typically don't hit you with taxes that high, (generally, they're around \$100 to \$300) they charge more miles AND they don't have as much award space.

So you end up stuck between a wheel and a tarmac. You can either pay more taxes and fewer miles, OR, pay more miles and fewer taxes.

DON'T TAKE IT ANYMORE

So what's the play here to get around this highway robbery and beat these fake "free" airline rewards?

It's time to get strategic.

Today we're going to concentrate on Star Alliance airlines, Lufthansa and SWISS, and show you ways to avoid these taxes by using little-known partner loopholes and tax discrepancies.

The idea is to use **Amex points** to **fly Lufthansa or SWISS**, but **avoid having to pay 1) high mileage award taxes** and/or **2) high mileage amounts**. Start by using FCF's Sweet Redeem alerts that show what **routes have award space**.

So, the trick is to find an airline mileage program:

- For which you can **easily transfer points** to miles from Amex, and
- That **charges low taxes** for partner flights, and
- That **charges about the same** number of miles as partners, and
- That actually has mileage **award space** to Europe on partner flights

Let's take a closer look.

LET YOUR FREE FLAG FLY—WAYS TO AVOID SWISS AND LUFTHANSA'S HIGH TAXES

[Use Air Canada miles for SWISS flights](#)

One play is to transfer your Amex points to Air Canada. The miles are about the same (110,000 using Air Canada miles vs. 112,000 using SWISS miles) but the taxes are lower. **Air Canada charges ~\$58 vs. SWISS's ~\$1,400.** Air Canada also does not charge high taxes for other partner airlines like Brussels Airlines and Scandinavian Airlines.

[Use LifeMiles/Avianca for Lufthansa flights](#)

Another play is to transfer your Amex points to LifeMiles. You can circumvent Lufthansa's high taxes with Colombian airline Avianca (go figure) and their program LifeMiles. It will cost you a few more miles than Lufthansa charges (126,000 vs. 112,000), but **the taxes are way lower: ~\$115 vs. ~\$1,400.** LifeMiles/Avianca doesn't charge high taxes for any partner airline to Europe including SWISS, Brussels Airlines, Austrian Airlines, and Scandinavian Airlines.

HOW TO BOOK

AEROPLAN (AIR CANADA)

Aeroplan has a fast tool to search award availability but requires [logging in](#). Head to "Use your Miles" and "Travel" to access the award search tool. Although some airlines allow you to hold bookings, Air Canada will

not hold award reservations online. But if you call (800-361-5373), the representative will stay on the line while you transfer points (either online or by phone) to your account from Amex. For more details go [here](#).

LIFEMILES (AVIANCA)

This also requires [logging in](#) before searching for award space. You then click on “Fly.” Then you can search by all airlines “Smart Search,” or by “Star Alliance,” or by a certain airline, for example, “Lufthansa.” Put in your data and hit enter.

Admittedly, high award taxes are a complicated beast if you want to travel to Europe, but they can be avoided if you book with the right airline.



Baja Upgrade Buzz: How Los Cabos First Class Stacks Up Against Maui

March 2020

Cabo Sees Maui and Raises the Bar with First Class for the Price of Coach in Some Cases, Low-Cost Upgrades in Others

Is Hawaii on your radar for an upcoming vacation?

Hold that thought. You might want to turn your attention instead to another beautiful, beachy, relaxing tropical locale: the Mexican resort region of Los Cabos.

They’re both staple vacation destinations, and have been for decades. But how do these vacation veterans stack up against each other in an FCF-style, head-to-head match-up?

There’s plenty to love about either one, but right now, we think Los Cabos is swinging harder.

Found at the southern end of the Baja Peninsula where the Pacific meets the Sea of Cortez, Los Cabos (also known as “Cabo”) is comprised of two major towns: San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas.

When you compare this region to Hawaii, you might be swayed like a palm tree to choose it over Hawaii.

PREMIUM CLASS TO CABO FOR THE PRICE OF COACH TO MAUI

Cabo vs. Maui in coach: The cost to fly to **Maui in coach** from Los Angeles typically ranges between **\$600** and **\$800** with American, Delta, or United. Meanwhile, fares from Los Angeles to **Cabo in Business Class** with American Airlines range from **\$598 to \$799**. That’s a free upgrade.

Cabo vs. Maui in Business Class: The cost to fly to Maui in **Business Class** is almost double what it costs to fly Business Class to Cabo, generally speaking. For example, fares range from \$1,130 to \$1,633 for Los Angeles-Maui in Business Class with American, Delta, or United. Fares from Los Angeles to Cabo in Business Class with American range from \$598 to \$799.

LOW-COST UPGRADES FROM COACH

The cost to fly to Maui in coach from New York typically ranges between \$750 and \$950 with American, Delta, or United. Fares from New York to Cabo in Business Class range from \$1,230 to \$1,360, most often with American, Delta, or United. So the cost difference is only ~\$280 to \$610 more to fly in Business Class to Cabo.

Premium Class to Cabo: Low Cost Upgrades from Coach

U.S. Departure City	Average Range for Cabo Business Class Fare	Average Range for Maui Economy Fare	Range Difference for the Cost to Upgrade Round-trip
Chicago	\$1,000 to \$1,180	\$600 to \$850	\$150 to \$580
Houston	\$730 to \$1,270	\$600 to \$850	free to \$670
Kansas City	\$820 to \$1,150	\$600 to \$950	free to \$550
New York	\$1,230 to \$1,360	\$750 and \$950	\$280 to \$610
Orlando	\$940 to \$1,300	\$750 and \$950	free to \$550
San Jose	\$690 to \$1,050	\$600 and \$800	\$90 to \$450
Seattle	\$630 to \$1,100	\$500 and \$800	\$130 to \$600

U.S. Departure City	Average Range for Cabo Business Class Fare	Average Range for Maui Economy Fare	Range Difference for the Cost to Upgrade Round-trip
Washington, DC	\$1,100 to \$1,400	\$750 and \$950	\$150 to \$650

WHY CABO?

[Cabo](#) is a beautiful beachtown with spectacular resorts and a buzzing nightlife. It also boasts top-rated golf courses, great restaurants, and all the vacation shopping you could ever need.

On top of all that, you can find water sports, whale watching, fishing, and The Arch (aka, “El Arco”) — a stunning natural rock formation at the southernmost tip of the peninsula.

RESORTS & MORE

Sure, you can save plenty of money on flights, but Cabo has another benefit: cheaper resort rates!





Want to add a little pizzazz to your next European vacation? SLS it.

Our Stopover Loophole Strategy (SLS) has the potential to “upgrade” a European visit in a big way.

Here’s how it works: For a small fee (or sometimes no fee at all) some airlines allow a stopover in their hub city on published Business Class fares.

We’ve written about this strategy a number of times over the last few months: [British Airways with a London stopover](#) and [Germany and Switzerland with Lufthansa and SWISS](#); and [for Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, and SAS, to Vienna, Brussels, and Copenhagen](#).

The great thing is that most people have no idea it exists.

TAP TAP. WHO'S THERE? PORTUGAL (AND EUROPE)

In this edition, we have a very exciting stopover opportunity for you: Portugal, via TAP Air Portugal.

With this strategy, you can [book a stopover](#) in Lisbon or Porto for up to five days for free, before traveling on to your other European destination. Or you can do it the other way and visit Portugal on your way back.

Here at FCF we like to call this kind of thinking the “Upgrade Mindset.” It’s a way to think outside of the travel booking box to score two destinations for the price of one. That’s an incredible upgrade no matter where you’re traveling from. Travel like this and you can have a bucket list twice the size—for little or no more cost.

LISBON FOR \$2.00

Two European cities for the price of one: Let’s say you want to travel from New York to Venice and the lowest Business Class fare is \$1,999 round-trip with TAP. Now, for \$2,001, just \$2 more, you can fly New York to Venice *and* stop in Lisbon. Here’s the screenshot.

☒ Flight resume

Change

06 Aug

TP

18:00 EWR

✈

05:50 LIS

6h50m
TP0202

BASIC
[Conditions](#)

Stopover : Lisbon 4 nights stay

11 Aug

TP

15:30 LIS

✈

19:25 VCE

2h55m
TP0862

BASIC
[Conditions](#)

19 Aug

TP

11:45 VCE

✈

13:55 LIS

3h10m
TP0863

BASIC
[Conditions](#)

↓

Layover : 5h35m

↓

TP

19:30 LIS

✈

22:30 EWR

8h00m
TP0207

BASIC
[Conditions](#)

Price and Taxes Breakdown

All prices in this page are in United States Dollar USD

Air Transportation charges ▾	1868.00
Taxes, fees and carrier charges ▾	133.28
Passengers	x 1
Total Price	2001.28

Total amount for all passengers

2001.28 USD

See FCF's [recent TAP fare alert for more low-cost](#) Business Class routes from the U.S. and Canada.

HOW TO BOOK

First, we recommend that you price the flight itinerary via [Google Flight's search engine](#). Filter by TAP only, so you can get an idea of what your trip cost would be without the stopover. For example, let's say you're traveling New York to Venice in August, currently the lowest fare starts at \$1,999.

YOU THEN HAVE 2 OPTIONS:

#1. You could continue with Google Flights, select your travel dates and flights, and click on the "Book with TAP Air Portugal" under "Booking options." This takes you to the TAP website, which will then show you the options of booking the flight with a stopover (in red) or without a stopover (in grey).

If you decide you want the stopover, you will have to consider the following questions:

- "Where do you want to stay?" Your choice is either Lisbon or Porto.

- “When do you want to stay” You can choose either on the departure or the return part of your trip.
- “How many nights do you want to stay in Portugal?” You have up to five nights.

PORTUGAL STOPOVER

✕

How about adding a Stopover to this trip

With no additional costs to your airfare, we are giving you the unique opportunity to visit two destinations for the price of one. Take advantage of a stop in Lisbon or Porto for 1 to 5 nights (24 to 120 hours) and enjoy the unique advantages only Portugal Stopover offers.

Where do you want to stay?

☐ Lisbon
☐ Porto

When do you want to stay?

EWR - VCE

▼

How many nights do you want to stay in Portugal?

1

2

3

4

5

Book without Stopover

Book with Stopover

Option #2: Or, you can book the stopover via TAP’s website. They even have a video to show you how to book the stopover titled, “[How do I book a Stopover?](#)” with step-by-step instructions.

WHY STOP IN PORTUGAL?

Portugal is a bucket list destination waiting to happen, and it’s one of the cheapest destinations in the European Union. Portugal is known for great food and wine, clean beaches, cool *calçada* tiled pavements, colorful buildings, and beautiful sunsets over the Atlantic.

Lisbon features magnificent views all over the city from its seven hills overlooking the Tejo River. You can explore gorgeous old Lisbon with its narrow, curling streets and trundling trams. And Lisbon’s mild climate is perfect for a short stay, with beaches just 30 minutes away. There are tons of great restaurants and cafes and culture-seekers will find treasures at every turn including Bertrand, the world’s oldest bookshop.

Porto is Portugal’s second largest city, with a unique charm of its own. Located on the Douro River, Porto is a relaxed, pedestrian-friendly city that’s perfect for exploring on foot. Like Lisbon, the food and wine is great, and of course, a glass of Port – in Porto – is an absolute must.

TAP’S BUSINESS CLASS SEAT

Stop over in comfort with [TAP’s Business Class](#) lie-flat seats, which are available on all U.S. and Canada flights. TAP’s new [A330-900neo aircraft](#) has its newest seat — with 34 seats that are configured in 1-2-1

layout.





Hub Capped? Don't Fall for the Allure of Elite (It'll Cost You Much More)

March 2020

It's Time for a Divorce: Why Your Marriage to an Airline is Killing Your Upgrade Life

Call me old fashioned, but I think you're supposed to dance with the one that brought you.

And when I say "you," I'm talking to **airlines that take their loyal customers for granted** when it comes to Business Class fares.

And worst of all, they do this in their home hubs. Unfortunately, airlines are always focused on the almighty dollar, and less on the satisfaction of their customers.

HOME FIELD DISADVANTAGE

If you live in Atlanta – Delta’s hub and heartland – and you’re an extreme Delta loyalist, then you’re really taking one for the team. Because Delta doesn’t have as much competition for your business in its hub city and because it knows you want to fly Delta as a loyalty member, it can charge you higher prices. So much for rewarding your loyalty. You don’t always have to be a hub schlub.

Some cities are multi-hub towns. Think New York, where all three major U.S. airlines are represented well. Then there are hub towns where particular airlines run the show. In those, it’s a bit like the Wild West where anything goes.

San Francisco is dominated by United, for example. Dallas is dominated by American Airlines. And we just mentioned who’s leading the charge in Atlanta.

PAY 37%+ MORE TO EUROPE

Take a look at the screenshots below and the cost of being an elite-focused traveler or tied to a single airline for whatever reason. In the first instance, a Delta flight to Glasgow out of its home hub of Atlanta costs \$3,445 round-trip with one stop. British Airways is only charging \$2,383. That **\$1,062** is a big difference that doesn’t sound like a home field advantage to me.

Round trip ▼ 1 passenger ▼ Business ▼

Atlanta ATL ↔ Istanbul

Tue, Jun 9 < > Tue, Jun 16 < >

Bags ▼ 1 stop or fewer X Delta +1 X Price ▼ Times ▼ Connecting airports ▼ More ▼

Date grid Price graph Nearby airports

Departing flights
Total price includes taxes + fees for 1 adult. [Additional bag fees](#) and other fees may apply.

Sort by: ↑↓

	4:10 PM – 1:00 PM* ¹ Lufthansa	13h 50m ATL–IST	1 stop 1h 55m FRA	\$2,560 round trip	▼
	7:42 PM – 4:05 PM* ¹ Delta, KLM	13h 23m ATL–IST	1 stop 1h 15m AMS	\$3,543 round trip	▼

It’s not just Delta. American Airlines loyalists should look at the screenshot below (if they can stomach it) to see that a round-trip flight from its hub in Charlotte to Manchester in Business Class will cost them \$1,300 *more* than if they flew with United. You’d think there would be no loyalty left in the world.

Round trip ▾ 1 passenger ▾ Business ▾

○ Charlotte CLT

Manchester MAN

📅

Wed, Aug 5

< >

Wed, Aug 19

< >

Bags ▾

1 stop or fewer ✕

American +1 ✕

Price ▾

Times ▾

Layover: Max 6h 0m ✕

More ▾

Date grid

Price graph

Nearby airports

Best departing flights ⓘ

Total price includes taxes + fees for 1 adult. [Additional bag fees](#) and other fees may apply.

Sort by: ↑↓

<

Simply put, airlines know you want their elite cards. They also know that a lot of people seem to value them more than a significantly discounted fare.

Most people who fly a lot and live in Atlanta are going to be Delta people – Delta elites and/or Delta mileage members. So they will want to fly with Delta.

Who is very happy about that? Delta.

Who loses out in that deal? Delta loyalists.

Delta knows this (as does United for San Francisco and American for Dallas). So the demand to compete with other airlines and keep prices down is not as strong as the demand would be for an airline operating primarily out of New York City, where no major airline has a monopoly hold.

The result of all this is that Delta people (route depending) will end up paying more for their Business Class ticket when they depart from Atlanta.

It's the cost of being an elite, and you won't find that hidden cost on their fancy websites or in their glossy ads.

EXAMPLES TO ASIA

You can fly from Dallas to Singapore on American Aug. 24–Sept. 19 and make a connection in Tokyo, for a total cost of \$5,022 round-trip in Business Class. But if you were to fly United and make a connection in San Francisco, your ticket would only cost you \$3,317, a difference of \$1,705.

If you fly from San Francisco to Bangkok on United in May (12-26) and make a connection in Tokyo, you will pay at least \$4,569 round-trip in Business Class. But if you were to fly American and also make a connection in Tokyo, your ticket would only cost you \$2,568, a difference of \$2,001.

EXAMPLE TO SOUTH AMERICA

If you fly from San Francisco to Buenos Aires on United in August (11-18) and make a connection in Houston, you will pay at least \$5,837 round-trip in Business Class. But if you were to fly Delta and make a connection in Atlanta, your ticket would only cost you \$3,597, a difference of \$2,240. So your hub city airline is costing you \$2,240 more.

The lesson? It's better to be a loyalty-free traveler who isn't shackled to one elite program. That way you'll have the flexibility to shop around. Don't be a hub schlub.



Early Christmas Presents: New Low Tactical Premium Fares ~\$2,000

As FCF's team emerges from a harsh winter, we found some great springtime bookings blooming in the form of very low Business Class fares to Europe for travel this November and December 2020.

These special winter fares have arrived much earlier than last year, and all the major carriers are on board. They seem to be determined to fill their typically unsold seats at that time of year and get the revenue posted on their books now.

If you were bummed by missing the great summer Business Class deals that we found ([as reported here](#)) because you are unable to travel this summer, this is your chance to still get to Europe for a deep discount in 2020.

SHOW ME WHAT YOU MEAN BY “GREAT FARE”

Check out these tactical fares to get a feel for what’s possible... [Amsterdam](#) for \$2,096 round-trip; [Barcelona](#) for \$2,003; [Dublin](#) for \$2,079; [Munich](#) for \$2,067; [Milan](#) for \$2,109; and [Warsaw](#) for \$1,936 round-trip.

AIRLINES THAT HAVE THESE NOV. / DEC. TACTICAL FARES

While the fares vary by route, most of the major airlines are on this bandwagon. We’ve found good options on Air France, American Airlines, British Airways, Delta, Iberia, KLM, Lufthansa, and United, to name a few.

PARLAY THESE TACTICAL FARES TO ANOTHER EUROPEAN DESTINATION WITH BA FOR A LOW COST

Our Stopover Loophole Strategy (SLS) makes these tactical fares even more beneficial for you. For a small fee, some airlines allow a stopover in their hub city on published Business Class fares, and British Airways is one.

This means you can [book a “stopover” in London](#) for a small fee before traveling on to your primary destination. For example, San Francisco to Dublin is \$2,145 with British Airways, however with this loophole you can add in a wonderful London stopover for just \$40 more.

Sample Winter Fares with a Stopover in London with BA

Route	Business Class Fare	Business Class Fare with Stopover in London	Difference
Atlanta - Munich	\$2,227	\$2,270	\$43
Boston - Barcelona	\$2,150	\$2,194	\$44
Chicago - Rome	\$2,164	\$2,207	\$43
Dallas - Madrid	\$2,151	\$2,195	\$44
Houston - Paris	\$2,235	\$2,278	\$43
Los Angeles - Milan	\$2,156	\$2,200	\$44
Miami - Nice	\$2,224	\$2,261	\$37
New York - Athens	\$2,166	\$2,209	\$43
San Francisco - Dublin	\$2,145	\$2,185	\$40

Route	Business Class Fare	Business Class Fare with Stopover in London	Difference
Seattle - Zürich	\$2,166	\$2,209	\$43

LOWER YOUR FARE EVEN FURTHER

- [Get 10% off on British Airways](#) when using the BA Chase Visa card.

To give you an example of the extra savings possible with BA's Visa: Los Angeles to Milan goes for \$2,160 round-trip. Deduct the 10% discount for the British Airways Visa Card (current promo code CHASEBA10) and the fare drops to \$1,944.

- [Save 5% to 20% through Amex IAP](#) on already-low tactical Business Class fares on Air France, Delta, and Virgin Atlantic to Europe.

WHAT ABOUT FIRST CLASS?

No happy tactical surprises have appeared yet for First Class, but keep your eyes on these pages. As soon as we find those First Class deals, you'll be the first to know about them. That said, you can always...

USE MILES FOR AN UPGRADE TO FIRST CLASS

On British Airways to London: The cost of upgrading from Business to First Class is 36,000 to 45,000 miles during off-peak and 40,000 to 50,000 miles during peak season round-trip, plus about \$100 more to pay in taxes for First Class. For more information, go [here](#).

Upgrading on American to London: Business to First Class costs 50,000 miles round-trip plus \$1,100 co-pay. For more information, go [here](#).

OUR TACTICAL CRYSTAL BALL

Where will these low end-of-year fares go from here? We think there's room for them to drop a little more, but it's a risk you'd be taking versus jumping on them now.

GETTING TACTICAL

[Tactical fares](#) are significantly discounted fares that airlines occasionally offer for a variety of reasons. Some include [season tactical fares](#), [destination-specific tactical fares](#), [departure-specific tactical fares](#), [advance-purchase tactical fares](#) and, as with the example our [special report on holiday tactical fares](#) at Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and New Year's. As the airlines' computers get bigger, so is their capacity to compete at an ever increasing level of minutiae. All the way to seat 3A to Dublin.



March 2020

We have good news for business travelers heading to South America for a typical mid-week business trip and for spontaneous leisure travelers who book their trips on shorter notice.

We turned our attention to this region because both business and leisure flyers typically face high fares without a lot of advance purchase and/or no Saturday-night stay.

Last-minute decisions to get to South America come at a cost: typically \$4,500 to \$6,500 for leisure travelers and \$8,000+ for business travelers in Business Class.

But there's a less obvious way to save big by using an air-and-land package — even when booking at the last minute or traveling mid-week.

BUSINESS TRAVELERS: SAVE UP TO 32%

Example: Dallas-Rio de Janeiro: The lowest published Business Class fare on American Airlines for midweek travel April 26 to May 2 is \$6,469 for one ticket. If you book the Hilton Barra Rio de Janeiro for five nights, for example, that adds about \$745, bringing the total cost of air and hotel to \$7,214 for one person.

But if you book an air-and-land package with the airline you can save big. The American Airlines Vacation air-and-land package is \$4,931. **That's a total savings of \$2,283, or 32% less.**

Sample Package Savings for Business Travelers: Based on One Traveler

Route	Travel Dates	Business Class Fare Total	Hotel	Hotel Price	Total Price: Not Booked as a Package	Total Package Price	Savings
Chicago - Buenos Aires	April 19 to 25	\$7,068	Park Hyatt Buenos Aires	\$2,329	\$9,397	\$6,195	\$3,202
San Francisco - Santiago	April 5 to 11	\$8,321	Renaissance Santiago	\$1,255	\$9,576	\$6,676	\$2,900
Dallas - Santiago	April 5 to 11	\$6,735	The Ritz-Carlton Santiago	\$1,515	\$8,250	\$5,735	\$2,515

SPONTANEOUS LEISURE TRAVELERS: SAVE UP TO 24%

Example: Miami-Santiago: The lowest published Business Class fare on American non-stop departing April 14 to April 22 is \$6,380 for two tickets. If you book the InterContinental Santiago for seven nights (April 15 to 22), that adds about \$2,729, bringing the total cost of air and hotel to \$9,109 for two people.

Once again, you have a better option. The AA Vacation air-and-land package is \$6,939 (based on two travelers) flying American in Business Class and staying at the InterContinental Santiago for seven nights for the same dates and flights. **That's a total savings of \$2,170 / 24% for the package, or \$1,085 per person less.**

Sample Package Savings for Spontaneous Leisure Travelers: Based on Two Travelers

Route	Sample Travel Dates	Business Class Fare Total	Hotel	Hotel Price	Total Price: Not Booked as a Package	Total Package Price	Savings
Los Angeles - Rio de Janeiro	March 23 - 31	\$13,294	Hilton Barra Rio de Janeiro	\$1,051	\$14,345	\$10,684	\$3,661
Dallas - Buenos Aires	April 14 to 22	\$11,288	Park Hyatt Buenos Aires	\$3,092	\$14,380	\$12,587	\$1,793

As always, prices vary, so before booking anything, always check flight and hotel prices first to see whether it's cheaper to book the package or the flight and hotel separately.