

# With a Little Forethought, Save 42% to 89% on American, Japan Airlines, Qantas, Cathay Pacific and More

September 2019

**Save \$30,293 to Asia; \$1,719 to Africa; \$15,935 to Australia; \$1,812 to the Middle East; \$1,911 to S. America.**

[Last month](#) we introduced you to a simple yet powerful travel formula:

**RGV=BR<sup>2</sup>**

It means Really Great Value = Be Ready, Squared (in other words, be REALLY ready.)

This month, the same genius formula applies, but this time it's for American Airlines.

## A BUYING MILES PRIMER

For those fresh to the idea, there's more than one way to skin a miles cat. Earning them by flying or making purchases on credit cards is the slow way. You can shortcut this process by simply buying them.

Buying them gives you a big pile of miles so you can take advantage of great opportunities right when they surface (and before they disappear). Importantly, don't buy these miles off the first shelf—wait until they're on sale.

That's the idea of "being ready." Since these sales don't always last long, you need to be cash ready to pounce.

Now, combine the low cost of buying miles on sale with airlines that have low mileage award rates, and you have a sweet spot of a deal. See our special report about "When to Buy Miles Instead of Purchasing a Normal Published Fare" [here](#).

So, back to American Airlines.

Like Iberia, AA often has great buy-miles deals and low-cost mileage award rates for travel on AA flights and flights on its airline partners all over the world.

## FCF'S 3-STEP ACTION PLAN FOR AMERICAN MILES

### **Step 1: Follow [FCF Sweet Redemptions Alerts](#).**

We'll keep you informed when both the sale hits and details on routes and partners where availability is rich.

### **Step 2: Buy miles when they're on sale.**

Let's look at an example. In July, American had a buy-miles deal that offered a purchase bonus of up to 100,000 miles + a saving of up to 10%. So at that time you could buy up to 150,000 AA miles (the maximum amount) and receive another 100,000 (total 250,000) for \$4,319, a cost of 1.7¢ each. Even [now there is a sale](#) that can net a price at just 1.8¢ each (ends Aug. 31). Still a good deal if you can use the miles now. Otherwise I usually wait till they can be had at 1.7¢.

### **Step 3: Book the low-cost mileage award ticket.**

Here are a few finds that demonstrate the power of this approach:

## **FIRST CLASS TO ASIA \$3,807 (UP TO 89% OFF) ON CATHAY PACIFIC**

AA charges 220,000 miles round-trip in First Class from the continental U.S. to Asia (region 2: Hong Kong), which you can buy when they're on sale for \$3,740, plus ~\$67 in award taxes, making the total \$3,807.

[See this Sweet Redeem for details.](#)

## **FIRST CLASS TO ASIA \$2,776 (UP TO 83% OFF) ON JAPAN AIRLINES**

AA charges 160,000 miles round-trip in First Class from the continental U.S. to Asia (region 1: Japan and Korea), which you can buy when they're on sale for \$2,720, plus ~\$56 in award taxes, making the total \$2,776.

[See this Sweet Redeem for details.](#)

## **BUSINESS CLASS TO SOUTH AMERICA FOR \$2,015 (UP TO 49% OFF) ON AMERICAN**

AA charges 115,000 miles round-trip in Business Class from the continental U.S. to southern South America, which you can buy when they're on sale for \$1,955, plus ~\$60 in award taxes, making the total \$2,015.

[See this Sweet Redeem for details.](#)

## **BUSINESS CLASS TO THE MIDDLE EAST FOR \$2,455 (UP TO 42% OFF) ON ETIHAD**

AA charges 140,000 miles round-trip in Business Class from the continental U.S./Canada to the Middle East on partner Etihad Airways, which you can buy when they're on sale for \$2,380, plus ~\$75 in award taxes, making the total \$2,455.

[See this Sweet Redeem for details.](#)

## **FIRST CLASS TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC FOR \$3,865 (UP TO 80% OFF) QANTAS**

AA charges 220,000 miles round-trip in First Class from the continental U.S. to the South Pacific on partner Qantas, which you can buy when they're on sale for \$3,740, plus ~\$125 in award taxes, making the total \$3,865.

[See this Sweet Redeem for details.](#)

## **BUSINESS CLASS TO AFRICA FOR \$2,644 (UP TO 39% OFF) ON ETIHAD AIRWAYS**

AA charges 150,000 miles round-trip in Business Class from the continental U.S./Canada to Africa, which you can buy when they're on sale for \$2,550, plus ~\$94 in award taxes, making the total \$2,644 for one ticket.

[See this Sweet Redeem for details.](#)

## **God Bless American\***

We know you don't need it, but just in case, here are a few more reasons we recommend buying miles on American:

### **AMERICAN PARTNER POWER**

It charges the same mileage award rates for its own and oneworld partner flights (more [here](#)). For more on "American Partner Power 101 and the Hidden Miles Opportunities," go [here](#).

### **LOW AWARD TAXES FOR AMERICAN FLIGHTS**

American Airlines charges low award taxes for their own flights. For partners it varies, but often these are also low (except for AA partner British Airways, which has some of the highest award taxes).

### **FREE HOLD FOR MILEAGE AWARD TICKETS**

For American mileage award tickets booked 15 or more days in advance, AA usually holds free award space for five days. This perk also applies to partners such as British Airways, Finnair, Japan Airlines, Hawaiian, Qantas, and Royal Jordanian Airlines. This means you can look for your mileage award, find something you like, put a free hold on the ticket for up to five days, during which time you can buy your miles. For more details on the free award hold option, go [here](#).

### **FREE CONNECTING CITIES FROM ANYWHERE IN THE CONTINENTAL U.S. THAT AA OPERATES FLIGHTS**

Because AA uses a zone award mileage program (meaning travel from anywhere in the continental U.S. to your departure city costs the same amount of miles, regardless of *where* in the U.S. you depart from), you do not have to spend additional miles to get from your home city to the other departure cities in the U.S.

For example, if you see an FCF Sweet Redemeems Alert (Step 1 in the Action Plan) for Japan Airlines in First Class from Chicago to Tokyo for travel in June 2020 for 80,000 miles one-way using AA miles, but you live in Tampa, FL, no problem. You can add an American flight from Tampa to Chicago (also in First Class) for no extra cost, still only using 80,000 one-way to Tokyo.

For more details on connecting cities from the U.S., go [here](#).

## FREE CONNECTING CITIES WITHIN THE ARRIVAL REGION ON PARTNER FLIGHTS

And remember, because AA uses a zone award program, travel beyond your arrival city **does not** require more miles as long as you stay in the same region.

For example, you see an FCF Sweet Redemptions Alert for Etihad Airways in First Class from Washington, DC, to Abu Dhabi for 115,000 miles one-way using AA miles, but you need to go to Kuwait City. No problem, you can add an Etihad Airways flight from Abu Dhabi to Kuwait City for no extra cost, still only using 115,000 miles one-way from Washington, DC, to Kuwait City.

## CAN'T GET ENOUGH MILES? GET BY WITH SOME HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS

[Need more miles than the maximum you're allowed to buy?](#) No problem.

Most airlines allow you to redeem miles for your trip from someone else's account. So open an account for your dad, daughter, or other family members or friends, fill it with miles when they go on sale, and then use the miles for your ticket.

Once you have these other mileage accounts set up, you can buy the annual maximum for each account when the miles are on sale, giving you almost unlimited access to miles for travel.

## Opportunity Summary

Origin	Destination	Airline	Class	Savings	Sample SR Alert
48 U.S.	Asia	Cathay Pacific	First	\$30,293 / 89%	<a href="#">Deal</a>
	Asia	Japan Airlines	First	\$13,486 / 83%	<a href="#">Deal</a>
	South America	American	Business	\$1,911 / 49%	<a href="#">Deal</a>
	Middle East	Etihad Airways	Business	\$1,812 / 42%	<a href="#">Deal</a>
	South Pacific	Qantas	First	\$15,935 / 80%	<a href="#">Deal</a>
	Africa	Etihad Airways	Business	\$1,719 / 39%	<a href="#">Deal</a>

# United Partner Power 101: Hidden Opportunities and Mileage Availability Comparison

September 2019

**With few exceptions, the best way to use United miles for free award tickets is with their partners. Here's how with All Nippon in First Class to Asia, South African Airways to Africa, Air Canada to the South Pacific, and more.**

There's a *Twilight Zone* episode from 1963 called "Of Late I Think of Cliffordville." It's about a man—William Feathersmith—who time-travels to 1910 knowing exactly where oil will eventually be discovered. He plans to reap the dividends. But when he gets there, to his horror, he realizes the oil is inaccessible to the drills of 1910.

Of late I think of miles. You've worked hard to have enough miles to reap dividends, and then you discover they're inaccessible.

This report is all about United miles, how you *can* drill them for "oil," and how you can fly First Class while doing it—despite United eliminating their First Class cabin.

## AMERICAN AND UNITED LOYALISTS SHARE A COMMON PROBLEM

Last month we covered [American Airlines](#) and I urge you to check it out if you have American miles. But this month is all about United. The two carriers share some similarities:

- Most people have miles but aren't maximizing their value.
- Most people don't realize how beneficial partner airlines are.

That said, United has a few differences as we'll outline below.

## MAXIMIZING MILES

Here's what you **should not** be using your miles for: Magazine subscriptions, newspaper subscriptions, toaster ovens or gift cards.

Remember this simple rule of thumb: The best value you will get from miles is with low-cost premium award flights, especially when published fares are high.

## POTENTIALIZING PARTNERS

I love the look on people's faces when they realize their miles aren't just valid on one airline. They open their mouths into an "O" shape almost every time. Their miles are also valid on the other airlines within the big three partnerships—Star Alliance, oneworld or SkyTeam. That's huge. It means your miles open up lots of possibilities that, much like the oil underneath the California ground, was hidden until you had the right tools. They work much harder for you by multiplying your chances of availability, dates and routes. For United, the big picture looks like this:

### MaxiMiler: Your United Miles Also Work on These Carriers



MaxiMiler: Your United Miles Also Work on These Carriers

## SEEING BEHIND UNITED'S FIRST CLASS DISAPPEARING ACT

United dumped its First Class cabin in March 2018. But, this doesn't mean your United miles can no longer land you in First.

*Swing your partner high and low  
Now promenade with a heel and toe.*

That's right, dance with those partners.

Let's look at an example. United may not have a First Class cabin, but partner All Nippon does—from Los Angeles all the way to amazing Tokyo. It's bookable through United's website for 110,000 United miles one-way.

But wait. It gets better.

If you were still considering flying United, it often has no low-cost Business Class award availability. Typically, all you'll find is United's EveryDay rate, which can be high—very high, as the screenshot below shows—at 161,000 miles one-way.

Depart	Arrive	Stops	Duration	Economy (lowest award)	Premium Economy (lowest award)	Business Saver Award	Business Everyday Award	First Saver Award
Mon, Feb 10 10:40 am LAX	Tue, Feb 11 3:30 pm NRT	Nonstop	11h 50m	<a href="#">► Details</a> <a href="#">► Seats</a> 45k miles +\$5.60	Not available	Not available	161k miles +\$5.60	Not available
				<a href="#">Select</a>			<a href="#">Select</a>	

Mon, Feb 10 12:05 am LAX	Tue, Feb 11 5:25 am HND	Nonstop	12h 20m	<a href="#">► Details</a> <a href="#">► Seats</a> 35k miles +\$5.60	Saver Award Not available	Not available	Not available	Saver Award 110k miles +\$5.60
	Operated By All Nippon Airways				<a href="#">Select</a>			<a href="#">Select</a>

1 ticket left at this price

1 ticket left at this price

Displaying 2 of 2 You have filters selected. [Clear all filters](#)

So, by using United's partner All Nippon, not only do you get First Class, but you get it cheaper than United's own flight in Business Class. **That's a free upgrade.**

## TRAVELING A ROUTE UNITED DOESN'T FLY

Also consider partner power for routes that United doesn't fly, like New York-Johannesburg, non-stop. It's operated by United partner South African Airways yet bookable through the United's website using 80,000 United miles each way.

Depart	Arrive	Stops	Duration	Economy (lowest award)	Business Saver Award
Sun, Feb 2 10:40 am JFK	Mon, Feb 3 8:15 am JNB	Nonstop	14h 35m	<a href="#">► Details</a> <a href="#">► Seats</a> Not available	Saver Award 80k miles +\$5.60

Operated By South African Airways

[Select](#)

4 tickets left at this price

Here's our recent alert: [South African Airways Business Class to Johannesburg Dates Found for 2 Seats with United \(Chase Partner\) Miles](#)

*Take your honey and home you go,  
Bow and smile and do-si-do!*

## TRAVELING TO A REGION WHERE UNITED RARELY HAS AVAILABILITY

Check out United partners for travel to Australia, land of strange animals and low award availability—at least with United that is.

For example, Air Canada can get you from Vancouver to Sydney or Brisbane non-stop in Business Class, booked through United's website for 90,000 United miles each way. And before you say, "what about the connecting flight to Vancouver?" I'll tell you that's a free connection from the mainland U.S., Alaska, and Canada.

(Screenshot below shows Vancouver to Sydney flying Air Canada using United miles.)

Depart	Arrive	Stops	Duration	Economy (lowest award)	Business Saver Award
Mon, May 4 11:45 pm	Wed, May 6 8:15 am	Nonstop	15h 30m	<a href="#">► Details</a>	<a href="#">► Seats</a>
Operated By Air Canada				Saver Award 40k miles +\$57 <a href="#">Select</a>	Saver Award 90k miles +\$57 <a href="#">Select</a>

Here's our recent alert about just that: [First Full of Dates With Easy Business Class Availability with Miles / Points to Brisbane and Sydney, 2+ Seats](#)

The evidence is inescapable. You have access to much more free ticket availability in Business and First Class when you bring partners to the dance. And that's just a taste. We're finding a lot of opportunities—and the "caller" who determines when to promenade or do-si-do is FCF's Sweet Redemptions alerts.

## UNITED PARTNERS FOR WHICH FCF PRODUCES SWEET REDEEM ALERTS:

**Africa:** South African Airways

**Asia:** All Nippon, Asiana, Singapore

**Europe:** Air Canada, Lufthansa, Singapore, SWISS

**South Pacific:** Air New Zealand, Air Canada

*Swingin' high and swingin' low  
Some of these partners ain't toe to toe.*

As mentioned last month, the mileage cost for American Airlines and their partners was the same. That's not the case with United. Award prices are all over the place.

As United says [on their website](#), “We’re introducing a broader range of award prices.” They’re not kidding. I guess broad means “all over the place.”

For now at least, thankfully that’s not the case with partner airlines as United seems to still be sticking by their award chart rates when flying partner airlines.

## COMPARING AWARD SPACE USING UNITED MILES ON PARTNER AIRLINES VS. USING PARTNERS’ OWN MILEAGE PROGRAMS

Although using United miles with United partners opens up First Class, more routes, and availability, sometimes you’ll find that award space that shows as available on the partner airline’s booking site does not on [united.com](#).

This is because some United partners release similar availability to United as they release to their own mileage program members, and some release less. So, it can be important to know which airlines will have the best availability using United miles to make the most of this “partner power.” Here’s how it breaks down:

**More Availability:** Asiana

**Similar Availability:** First Class flights on All Nippon have similar availability as on United when travel is for one passenger; with two or more passengers, availability is less. Business Class seems to always be similar.

**Less Availability:** Air Canada, Lufthansa (much less in First Class), SWISS, South African Airways

## HOW TO BOOK

Find out availability trends and good routes by month using the [FCF Daily Deals alerts](#). Then go to [united.com](#) or call (800) 538-2929 to verify availability of specific date opportunities within the hot months.

Should you book online or on the phone? We’ve got a very handy chart all about it in our short report appropriately titled: [Online or On Phone: Redeeming Miles with United](#).

## United Partner Power: Know the Possibilities

Region	Airline Partner	Availability When Using United Miles	Class of Service
Asia	Air Canada	Less than Air Canada offers	Business
	All Nippon	Similar to All Nippon	Business & First
	Asiana	More than Asiana offers	Business

Region	Airline Partner	Availability When Using United Miles	Class of Service
Africa	South African Airways	Less than Asiana offers	Business
	Lufthansa	Less than Lufthansa offers	Business & First
Europe	Air Canada	Less than Air Canada offers	Business
	Lufthansa	Less than Lufthansa offers	Business & First
	SWISS	Less than SWISS offers	
South Pacific	Air New Zealand	No data as Air New Zealand's award redemption is based on fare paid	Business
	Air Canada	Less than Air Canada offers	

# Sub-\$2,500 Fares to India and Beyond? Play That Qatar Image

September 2019

## Popular Qsuite Business Class fares slashed to Africa, Asia, Australia, India, and the Middle East.

There's a growing [tactical fare](#) trend to celebrate and you'll love it if you long for Qatar Airways Business Class.

### WHAT ARE TACTICAL FARES (TFS)?

Tactical fares (TFs) are unusually low fares that come about for a variety of reasons:

- **Holiday TFs:** when discount premium fares are offered around holidays to entice more sales when business travelers fly less.
- **Departure-Specific TFs:** when lower fares between two specific airports are offered to increase sales on that route. For example, we've found Newark to Tokyo for \$2,000 less than JFK to Tokyo. Not a bad savings for catching a cab and driving less than an hour into New Jersey.
- **Destination-Specific TFs:** when, for example, "softer" European markets like Copenhagen and Sofia are much cheaper than usual-city-suspects like London or Paris.
- **Advance-Purchase TFs:** when airlines throw in (seemingly random at times) low fares in advance. Put this one down to airlines crunching big data numbers.

Tactical fare fans, we've recently written more about this topic and approach, covering [Bangkok](#), [Bologna](#), [India](#), and [Russia](#).

## LET'S GET TACTICAL

In this case, we're discussing a different reason airlines offer tactical fares, and that trend is **Uncompetitive-Airline TFs**. These fares are being slashed by a particular airline on routes where they have lower market share.

In other words, most people wouldn't normally think of flying them, either because they are a smaller airline, lack a competitive overall schedule (i.e. layover time or total elapsed time), or loyalty program benefits or partnerships. These airlines are trying to enter a new or soft market for them and spur interest by offering the most competitive prices.

This month, we look at Qatar Airways, a provider to the Middle East (and beyond) whose hub is in Doha, Qatar. The airline traditionally competes with Emirates and Etihad for the American business market that travels to the Middle East.

To wet your whistle, here are some recent unusually low Business Class fares found with Qatar Airways: [Africa](#) – \$2,948; [Asia](#) – \$2,784; [Australia](#) – \$3,946; [India](#) – \$2,452; and [Middle East](#) – \$2,948

## QSUITE: QUINTESSENTIAL QUALITY

When you snag one of Qatar's tactical fares, you'll have the sweet [Qsuite](#) to look forward to on many routes. Lots of travelers enjoy the Qsuite's popular sliding doors and lie-flat seats, and their quad configuration makes meetings or face-to-face family time theoretically possible if you book far enough in advance. My take? I've experienced three of these flights and found them pretty satisfying, if overrated. It's not First Class.



The [Qsuite is available from the U.S.](#) on select flights from Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, D.C. All fly to Doha, Qatar's hub. (Qatar *does* have other U.S. departure cities, but at this point there's no Qsuite service on these routes: Atlanta, Miami, and Philadelphia.)

## LAYOVERS AND TOTAL ELAPSED TIME

Like we said, Qatar Airways' home hub is the city of Doha, and it's where you'll connect on your way farther afield. These layovers can be longer, at times, but the most recent fares we've seen have super-reasonable layovers. Depending on your route, the total flight time can be higher, but often not. Just something to be aware of.

If you do happen to find a special fare with longer times, know that you can stay at the airport and take advantage of the extraordinary [Al Mourjan Business Lounge](#). Spread over 108,000 square feet, you'll find facilities galore.

## QATAR CALLS

Depending on how long your layover is, you could even head out for a half- or full-day trip to explore the city with its striking modern architecture set on Doha Bay. Do some shopping at the exotic Souq Waqif, take a dhow boat ride or escape the skyscrapers and head into the desert by buggy (or camel). If your layover is

more than five hours long, sign up for the [Doha City Tour](#) offered by Qatar right in the airport and discover the iconic highlights of the city in a few hours.

If you're looking to extend your adventure, grab a (visa-free) entry and stay for a few days, turning **one destination into two for next to no additional cost**, as Qatar offers special hotel rates for a stopover in Doha. Details [here](#). If you do stay on in Doha for awhile, here's a link to Qatar Airways' suggestion for what to do [on a 48-hour stay](#).



You can make a stop in Doha when traveling to Asia, Australia, Africa and India. Note that the Qsuite operates from Doha to places like Adelaide, Auckland, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Mumbai, Singapore, Sydney, and many more. [Details](#).

## EARN AMERICAN MILES AND ELITE CREDIT

American elite status members earn additional bonus miles on base flight miles earned when [traveling with Qatar](#).

## Sample Special Business Class Fares

Route	Normal Fares	Qatar Fare	Savings	Layover
Departure	Return			

Route	Normal Fares	Qatar Fare	Savings	Layover	
Atlanta - Delhi	\$3,648	\$2,452	\$1,196 / 32%	3h 30m	2h 50m
Chicago - Bangkok	\$4,306	\$2,784	\$1,522 / 35%	3h 45m	2h 20m
Dallas - Addis Ababa	\$7,982	\$2,950	\$5,032 / 63%	2h 25m	2h 10m
Houston - Beirut	\$3,210	\$2,948	\$262 / 8%	1h 55m	3h 55m
Miami - Melbourne	\$7,370	\$3,943	\$3,427 / 47%	3h 55m	3h 15m
New York - Johannesburg	\$3,981	\$2,948	\$1,033 / 26%	4h 20m	2h 40m



# Score 30% Savings On United to Asia with Packages

September 2019

## Save up to \$2,665 on your next Business Class trip to Asia with package deal on United.

When going on vacation or a business trip, most book hotel and flights separately. But there's an opportunity that is generally overlooked: vacation package deals.

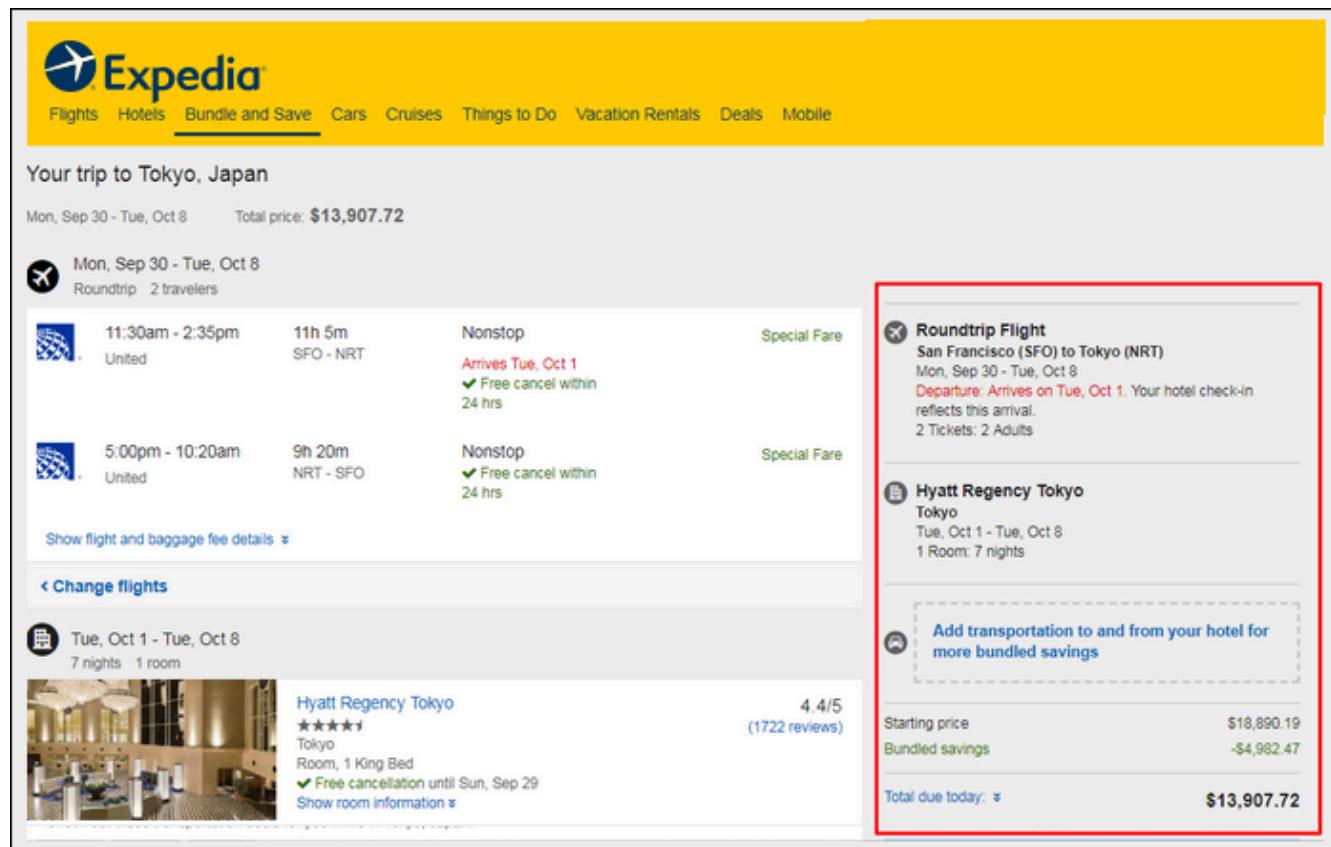
It's somewhat common for travel booking websites like Expedia, Orbitz, and United Vacations to offer package hotel/airfare deals that could save you thousands of dollars. In this special report, we'll go over a few different options on United to Asia.

## EXAMPLE #1: SAN FRANCISCO TO TOKYO

This first example is for a one-week trip to Tokyo. Let's start by going over what you would pay by booking your flights and hotel separately.

Business Class on United from San Francisco non-stop is going for \$7,728. If you want to book a nice hotel on top of that, it can easily be \$2,900+, bringing the total to \$9,205 each (based on two travelers, when packages work best).

Take a look at the screenshot below from Expedia. With the same exact flights using a package, **the total for two is just \$13,907 or \$6,953 per person, 24% discount.**



Your trip to Tokyo, Japan

Mon, Sep 30 - Tue, Oct 8 Total price: **\$13,907.72**

Mon, Sep 30 - Tue, Oct 8  
Roundtrip 2 travelers

Flight	Time	Duration	Type	Arrives	Special Fare
United	11:30am - 2:35pm	11h 5m	Nonstop	Arrives Tue, Oct 1 ✓ Free cancel within 24 hrs	Special Fare
United	5:00pm - 10:20am	9h 20m	Nonstop	Arrives Tue, Oct 1 ✓ Free cancel within 24 hrs	Special Fare

Show flight and baggage fee details 

[Change flights](#)

Tue, Oct 1 - Tue, Oct 8  
7 nights 1 room

 Hyatt Regency Tokyo  
★★★★★  
Tokyo  
Room, 1 King Bed  
✓ Free cancellation until Sun, Sep 29  
[Show room information](#)

4.4/5  
(1722 reviews)

Roundtrip Flight  
San Francisco (SFO) to Tokyo (NRT)  
Mon, Sep 30 - Tue, Oct 8  
Departure: Arrives on Tue, Oct 1. Your hotel check-in reflects this arrival.  
2 Tickets: 2 Adults

Hyatt Regency Tokyo  
Tokyo  
Tue, Oct 1 - Tue, Oct 8  
1 Room: 7 nights

Add transportation to and from your hotel for more bundled savings

Starting price	\$18,890.19
Bundled savings	-\$4,982.47
Total due today:	<b>\$13,907.72</b>

## EXAMPLE #2: NEW YORK/NEWARK TO HONG KONG

The situation here is similar. Business Class from Newark to Hong Kong non-stop on United is \$8,128. Adding in a hotel on top of that brings the total to \$8,735 per person.

The total price for the trip using Expedia's package drops down to just **\$12,141 for two, or \$6,070 per person. That's a total savings of \$2,665 each, or 30% less** than normal when booking flights and hotel separately.



Flights Hotels Bundle and Save Cars Cruises Things to Do Vacation Rentals Deals Mobile

### Your trip to Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR

Mon, Feb 3 - Tue, Feb 11 Total price: \$12,141.22

Mon, Feb 3 - Tue, Feb 11  
Roundtrip 2 travelers



2:20pm - 7:20pm

United

16h 0m

EWR - HKG

Nonstop

Arrives Tue, Feb 4  
✓ Free cancel within 24 hrs

Special Fare



11:00am - 1:25pm

United

15h 25m

HKG - EWR

Nonstop

✓ Free cancel within 24 hrs

Special Fare

Show flight and baggage fee details

[Change flights](#)

Tue, Feb 4 - Tue, Feb 11  
7 nights 1 room



Hong Kong Ocean Park Marriott Hotel

★★★★★

Hong Kong

Deluxe Room, 1 King Bed

✓ Free cancellation until Tue, Jan 28

Show room information

4.2/5

(224 reviews)

✓ Roundtrip Flight

Newark (EWR) to Hong Kong (HKG)

Mon, Feb 3 - Tue, Feb 11

Departure: Arrives on Tue, Feb 4. Your hotel check-in reflects this arrival.  
2 Tickets: 2 Adults

Hong Kong Ocean Park Marriott Hotel

Hong Kong

Tue, Feb 4 - Tue, Feb 11

1 Room: 7 nights

Add transportation to and from your hotel for more bundled savings

Starting price

\$17,306.84

Bundled savings

-\$5,165.62

Total due today:

\$12,141.22

## EXAMPLE #3: DENVER TO TOKYO

Expedia has options from Denver as well. While United is showing Business Class fares at \$8,137 non-stop, based on two travelers and the Hyatt Regency is \$2,796. If you're booking everything separately—and for two people—the total cost comes out at \$19,070.

Through Expedia, **the total drops to just \$7,019 per person**. If you're booking for two, you'll end up saving thousands by using this simple approach.

### THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- First of all, **package deals aren't always the best option**. Before booking anything, always check flight/hotel prices to see which options are lowest.
- Another thing to remember is that **package deals work best on long-haul routes where Business Class fares are typically high, which are often non-stops**.

## Sample Savings for Two Travelers to Asia in Business Class with Packages

Route	Air Only (lowest Advance Fare)	Hotel Price	Air Ticket + Hotel Booked Separate	Package Price (Air+7 Nights Hotel)	Supplier	Savings
Newark - Hong Kong	\$16,256	\$805	\$17,061	\$11,970	United Vacations	\$5,091/30%

Route	Air Only (lowest Advance Fare)	Hotel Price	Air Ticket + Hotel Booked Separate	Package Price (Air+7 Nights Hotel)	Supplier	Savings
Newark - Hong Kong	\$16,257	\$1,211	\$17,468	\$12,141	Expedia	\$5,327/30%
Dallas - Tokyo	\$16,085	\$3,917	\$20,002	\$14,183	Expedia	\$5,819/29%
Denver - Tokyo	\$16,274	\$4,354	\$20,628	\$14,935	United Vacations	\$5,693/28%
Dallas - Tokyo	\$16,085	\$1,718	\$17,803	\$13,235	United Vacations	\$4,568/26%
Denver - Tokyo	\$16,274	\$2,796	\$19,070	\$14,038	Expedia	\$5,032/26%
San Francisco -Tokyo	\$15,456	\$2,955	\$18,411	\$13,907	Expedia	\$4,504/24%
Boston - Hong Kong	\$12,846	\$3,169	\$16,015	\$12,546	Expedia	\$3,469/22%
Chicago - Hong Kong	\$14,257	\$3,056	\$17,313	\$13,437	Expedia	\$3,876/22%

A close-up photograph of a lion's head and upper body. The lion has a large, full, light-brown mane. It is positioned in a field of tall, dry, golden-brown grass that fills the foreground and middle ground. The background is out of focus, showing more of the same grassy landscape under a clear sky.

# How South Africa via South America Can Save You a Lion's Share

September 2019

**This Samba Safari saves thousands with a stunning stopover that delivers two continents for—less than—the price of one.**

Imagine taking the trip of a lifetime, not because you always dreamed of visiting these places, but because the airfare opportunity was so great, you'd be crazy as a bald uakari to miss it.



The Bald Uakari

We're heading to two amazing "souths": South Africa and South America.

## A HYPNOTIC HYBRID HOLIDAY

This opportunity came about through LATAM, Latin America's largest airline and a oneworld member and American Airlines partner.

When you go to South Africa with LATAM (via Brazil), the savings are as spectacular as a Kruger sunset. Here's why. On other airlines, the usual Business Class fare to Johannesburg runs between \$3,800 and \$6,000+.

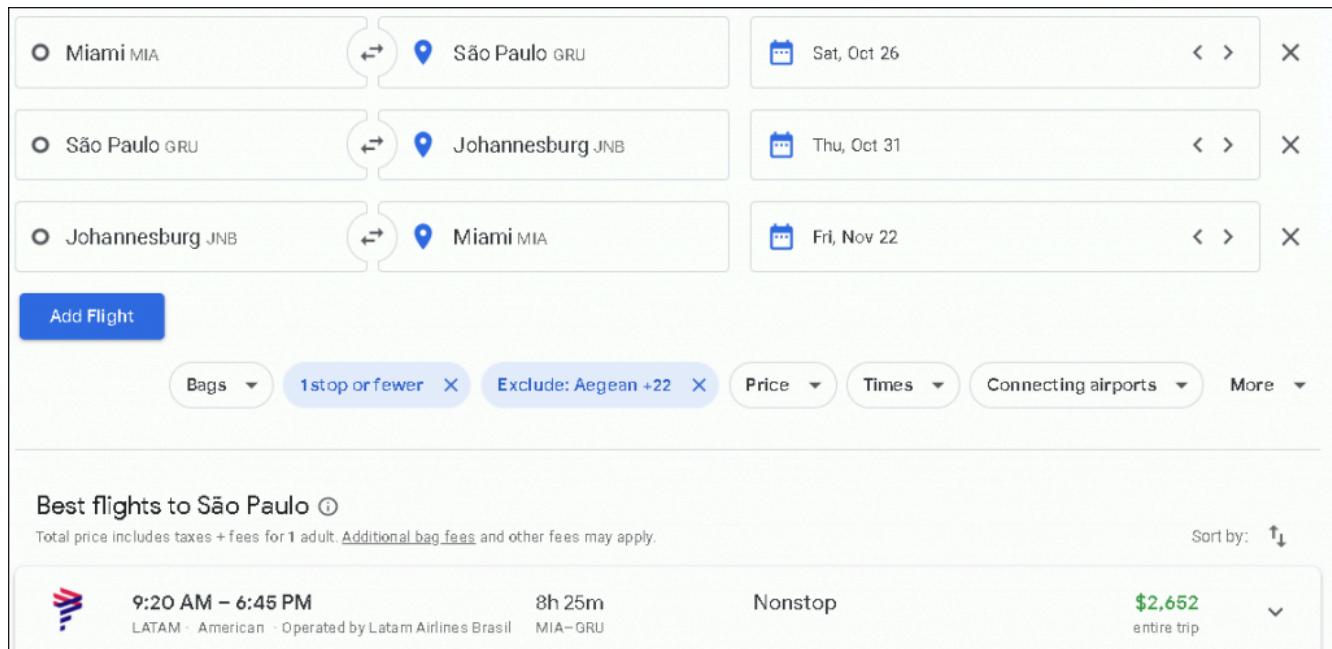
But when you fly on LATAM in Business from Miami to Johannesburg via Brazil round-trip, you cut the cost by almost half: the lowest fare fluctuates between [\\$2,300 and \\$2,500](#). Here's a look at the flight schedule.

## THE 5:55 ARRIVE JIVE

One of the triggers for this idea grew out of flight times. The upside here is obviously saving a few thousand dollars. One downside, though, is that you arrive in São Paulo, Brazil, at 5:20 in the morning, and don't leave until 5:55 that night. That's a lot of 5s.

You might call that a deal killer, but I still call it a killer deal.

That's because you can stop in South America each way (and then take side trips on secondary tickets from there to other places in South America) currently for an additional \$329, as the lowest fare fluctuates between [\\$2,650 and \\$2,850](#). So rather than hang around the airport for 12 hours, why not stay in São Paulo for a few days on the way to South Africa? Then, head back to the airport for your 5:55 departure to South Africa! Using this strategy you'll pay currently only \$329 more than a round-trip between Miami and Johannesburg to make a stopover in South America.



Miami MIA → São Paulo GRU Sat, Oct 26

São Paulo GRU → Johannesburg JNB Thu, Oct 31

Johannesburg JNB → Miami MIA Fri, Nov 22

Add Flight

Bags 1stop or fewer Exclude: Aegean +22 Price Times Connecting airports More

Best flights to São Paulo ⓘ

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

Sort by: ↑

Flight Details	Duration	Nonstop	Total Price
9:20 AM – 6:45 PM LATAM American · Operated by Latam Airlines Brasil	8h 25m MIA–GRU	Nonstop	\$2,652 entire trip

Even better, make a stopover in São Paulo going *both* directions for a total of \$2,973 (again, as the fare fluctuates between [\\$2,900 and \\$3,000](#))—currently only \$468 more than a round-trip between Miami and South Africa. That's (still) a killer deal.

If you go this route, consider taking different side trips on each stopover in São Paulo. **Rio de Janeiro** is only an hour's flight away and dazzling [Iguazu Falls](#), just two hours. If you haven't been to these destinations, now's your chance.

**My favorite way to travel?** Grabbing iconic, world-class destinations and experiences—that you might not otherwise get to—for next to no effort and even less in cost.

Beat that!



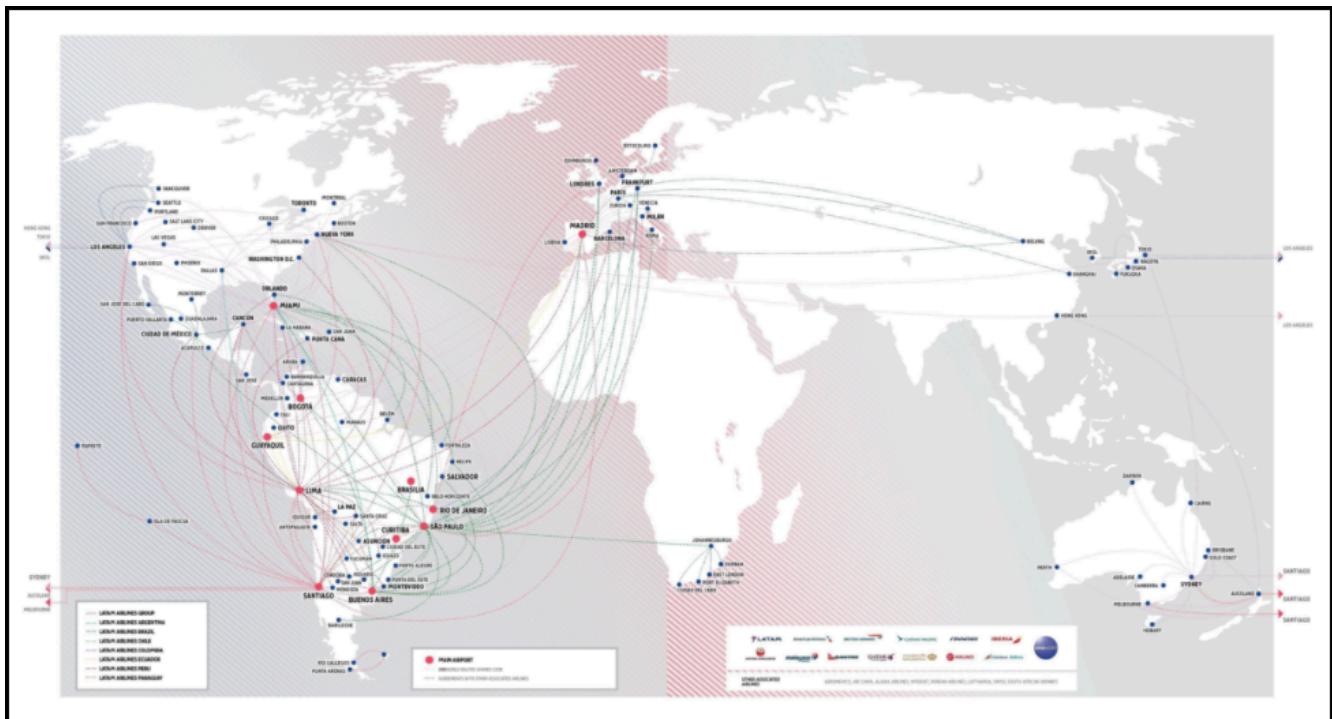
Iguazu Falls

## **AMERICAN AADVANTAGE COMPATIBLE**

Another good feature of this amazing maneuver is that if you want to stop over in São Paulo both ways, **you can fly American Airlines on the Miami-São Paulo segments and buy the ticket with American.**

This means you can earn miles and elite credit with American, and can do so currently for \$2,974 round-trip. Note that trips to Africa on LATAM don't earn American miles.

The adventure of Africa. The romance of Brazil and South Africa. From Carnival to Cape Town, this combination of destinations is a bucket-list-busting bonanza.



When you look at the map (and especially the fare), it begins to make sense to travel to southern Africa via South America.



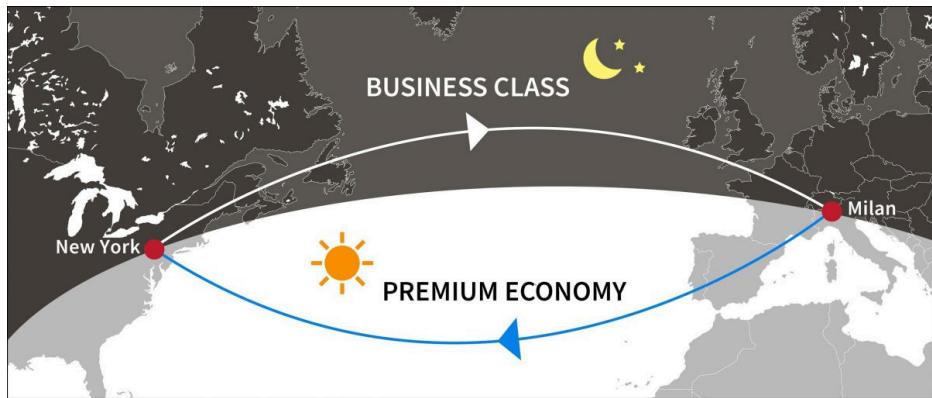
# Cabinology: How to Price and Book Mixed-Cabin Tickets to Get More Bang for Your Buck, Part II

September 2019

**Business Class one way and Premium Economy the other can be a wise compromise for many (or First Class one way and the other in Business). Here's how to search and book with American, Delta, United and Kayak.**

Business Class round-trip fares aren't realistic for everyone's budget—and even for those who can afford it, aren't always the best value.

**Enter Mixed-Cabin Bookings:** While it's not a top-of-mind strategy for most people, FCFianados are not most people and when you see the potential savings, you'll think twice about conventional thinking.



Business Class by night (when you need the Zs), Premium Economy by day.

While we've [reported on the “mixed-cabin seesaw” idea in the past](#), this special report will focus deeper on the “how to.” We'll look at Kayak, where you can search multiple airlines at the same time, then how to search and book with American, Delta, and United.

## HOW TO SEARCH AND BOOK WITH KAYAK

While you can book these routes on the airlines' websites, the benefit of [Kayak.com](#) is that it lets you search for different classes on one round-trip ticket by using the multi-city search option. This way, you can select different classes of service as needed.

To leverage Kayak's search power with the seesaw strategy, select “Multi-city” from the drop down instead of “round-trip.”

Enter your departure and destination, and departure and return dates, and class of service for each flight segment, and hit search. Easy.

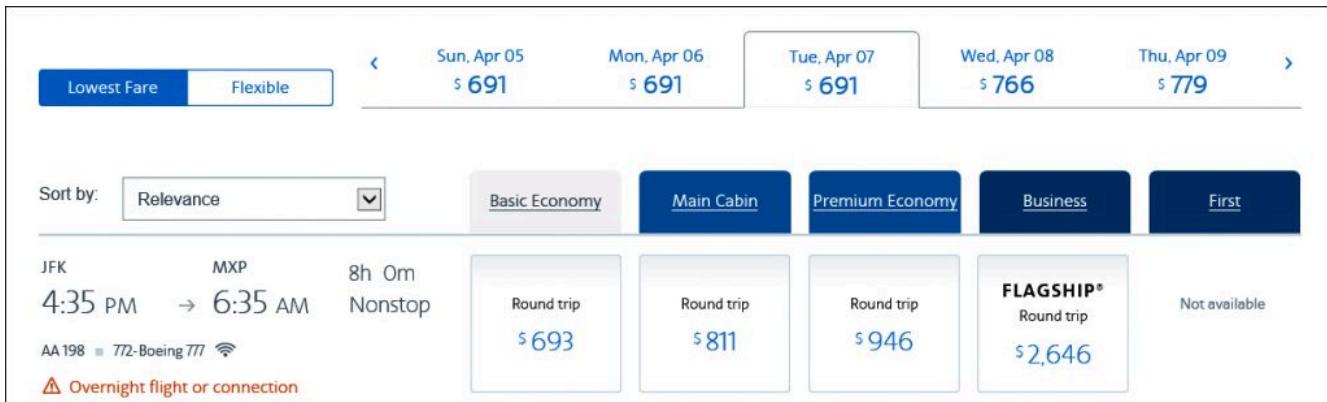
Multi-city ▾	1 Adult ▾			
New York (JFK)	Milan (MXP)	Wed 1/22	Business	
Milan (MXP)	New York (JFK)	Tue 2/11		Premium Econom

## HOW TO BOOK MIXED CABINS WITH AMERICAN

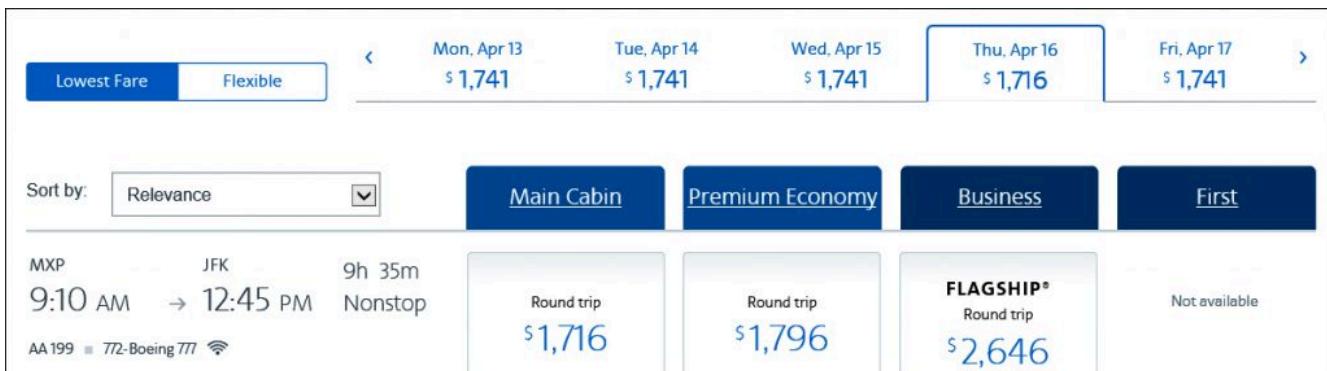
Go to

, then on the “Book Flight” page, select the “Round-trip” fare option, add your departure and destination city, your departure and return dates, then hit “Search.”

Next you'll see fares displayed for each cabin round-trip, including AA's Premium Economy and Business Class. This is where you can select the cabin class you want to fly for your departure.



Our example looks at New York-Milan. We selected Business Class for the departure to Milan, as it's an overnight flight and therefore a good time to use the better sleeping option of Business Class.



So, for example, fly round-trip Business Class New York-Milan and you would pay \$2,646. However, if you fly Premium Economy on the return leg you pay \$1,796—an easy saving of \$850.

These return flights from Europe are usually a late-morning or afternoon departure, so you won't need to sleep most of the time and won't miss the lie-flat seat in Business Class so much. But you still want a seat that gives you some of the same amenities, such as more personal space, entertainment, comfort, food and beverage as in Business Class, but not to the same degree. Hello Premium Economy.

After you select the return cabin, the next page will show a summary of the flights you selected, again showing Business Class for the departure and Premium Economy for the return.

## HOW TO BOOK MIXED CABINS WITH DELTA

Similar to AA, go to [delta.com](http://delta.com), then on the “Book” page, select the “Round-trip” fare option, add your departure and destination city, your departure and return dates, then hit “Search.”

Next you'll see fares displayed for each cabin round-trip, including Delta's Premium Economy (called Premium Select) and Business Class. This is where you can select the cabin class you want to fly for your departure.

Basic	Main	Comfort+	Premium Select	Delta One®
From \$ 337. <sup>33</sup>	From \$ 427. <sup>33</sup>	From \$ 562. <sup>83</sup>	From \$ 1,132. <sup>73</sup>	From \$ 2,897. <sup>83</sup>

1 of 1

JFK - LHR DL3 Mon, Mar 02 Arrives on Tue, Mar 03

11:00 pm Boeing 767-400

JFK New York-Kennedy, NY Basic  
7H

LHR London-Heathrow, United Kingdom Meal Services  
Dinner, Breakfast, Drinks, Light Refreshments

11:00 am

Our example looks at New York-London with Delta. We selected Business Class (“Delta One”) for the departure to London.

Similar to AA, after you select your departure cabin class, options for the return trip come up. The fares displayed at this point are based on flying Business Class on the departure and the different cabin options for the return.

Main	Comfort+	Premium Select	Delta One®
From \$ 1,616. <sup>23</sup>	From \$ 1,681. <sup>23</sup>	From \$ 2,020. <sup>73</sup>	From \$ 2,908. <sup>73</sup>

1 of 1

LHR - JFK DL2 Tue, Mar 17

10:30 am Boeing 767-400

LHR London-Heathrow, United Kingdom Main  
8H 20M

JFK New York-Kennedy, NY Meal Services  
Dinner, Lunch, Drinks, Light Refreshments

2:50 pm

After you select the return cabin, the next page will show a summary of the flights you selected, again showing Business Class for the departure and Premium Economy (“Premium Select” on Delta) for the return.

## Trip Summary

SKY PRIORITY

**(i) Mixed-experience Itinerary**

You have selected a combination of experiences for this trip.

Details ▾

**Outbound**  
[Change Flight](#)
**DL3**  
**JFK ▶ LHR**

Mon, Mar 2

TUE, MAR 3

11:00pm - 11:00am

Nonstop, 7h 0m

Delta One®

▼

**Return**  
[Change Flight](#)
**DL2**  
**LHR ▶ JFK**

Tue, Mar 17

10:30am - 2:50pm

Nonstop, 8h 20m

Premium Select

▼

**Trip Total**

Currency Calculator

1 Passenger

\$1,688.00

Flights

\$332.73

Taxes, Fees &amp; Charges

\$332.73

Amount Due

\$2,020.73 USD

3 left at this price

## HOW TO BOOK MIXED CABINS WITH UNITED

United is also similar to American and Delta, so start at and log in if you have a United account. Then on the “Book Flight” page, select the “Round-trip” fare option, add your departure and destination city, your departure and return dates, and hit “Find Flights.”

Next you’ll see fares displayed for each cabin round-trip, including United’s Premium Economy (called Premium Plus) and Business Class. This is where you can select the cabin class you want to fly for your departure.

Mon, Mar 2 6:00 pm	Tue, Mar 3 6:20 am	Nonstop 7h 20m	 <span>▼ Details</span>	<span>► Seats</span>	Roundtrip \$349	Roundtrip \$469	Roundtrip \$2,378	Roundtrip \$1,133	Roundtrip \$3,713
					<span>Select</span>	<span>Select</span>	<span>Select</span>	<span>Select</span>	<span>Select</span>
4 tickets left at this price									
MileagePlus earnings (each way, per person):				Base award miles PQM   PQS   PQD	330 1,733   0.5   \$66	630 3,466   1   \$126	5,425 3,466   1   \$1,085	2,000 5,199   1.5   \$400	10,460 6,932   1.5   \$2,092
4 tickets left at this price									
New York/Newark, NJ, US (EWR) to London, GB (LHR)				United Economy (K) (most restricted)	United Economy (K)	United Economy (H) (flexible)	United Premium Plus (R) (lowest)	United Polaris business (Z) (lowest)	
 UA 110   Boeing 767-300   Wi-Fi  <span>!</span> Depart EWR: Mon, Mar 2 <span>!</span> Red-eye flight Arrive LHR: Tue, Mar 3				Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	

Our example looks at Newark-London with United. We selected Business Class for the departure to London, as it’s an overnight flight.

Similar to American and Delta, after you select your departure cabin class, options for the return trip come up. The fares displayed at this point are based on flying Business Class on the departure and the different cabin options for the return.

8:00 am	12:15 pm	Nonstop	8h 15m	 <a href="#">Details</a>	 <a href="#">Seats</a>	Roundtrip <b>\$2,436</b>	Roundtrip <b>\$3,395</b>	Roundtrip <b>\$2,825</b>	Roundtrip <b>\$3,713</b>
4 tickets left at this price									
MileagePlus earnings (each way, per person):		Base award miles	3.305	8.100	3.875	6.440			
		PQM   PQS   PQD	3,466   1   \$661	3,466   1   \$1,620	5,199   1.5   \$775	5,199   1.5   \$1,288			
London, GB (LHR) to New York/Newark, NJ, US (EWR)	 UA 883   Boeing 767-300	United Economy (K) Breakfast	United Economy (H) Breakfast	United Premium Plus (R) Breakfast	United Polaris business (P) Breakfast				
	 Wi-Fi								

After you select the return cabin, the next page will show a summary of the flights you selected, again showing Business Class for the departure and Premium Economy for the return.

## THERE YOU HAVE IT.

A strategy that divides and conquers your European trip, **or to anywhere else** for that matter.

The same strategy **works for First Class one way and Business Class the other.**

As we've said before, why pay more for creature comfort benefits you might not even use? Especially when the **savings can net you enough to upgrade your hotel or resort to a magnificent suite.** Sweet savings, indeed.



# Three Knockout Reasons Amex Rewards Beats Chase Rewards and How to Take Advantage of British Airways' 40% Bonus

September 2019

**Fly domestic (or international) First Class for the price of  
coach with the BA Transfer Bonus.**

FCF loves an epic bout, and that's especially the case when it comes to credit card programs.

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight's "card" in the blue corner, weighing in with no less than 19 airline partners: American *"Finesse"* Express Membership Rewards.

And in the red corner, weighing in with 10 airline partners to its name: Chase *"In Your Face"* Ultimate Rewards.

## DING DING!

But wait. Chase is in trouble early... a flurry of blows... and it's ALL OVER.

That's a round 1 knockout.

It was a 3-punch combination from Amex, and it happened so fast we need to go to the tape and look at it again:

# 3 Reasons Why FCF Thinks Amex Membership Rewards Won This Fight

## 1. HEAVY HITTERS—TRANSFER PARTNERS

The [Amex Membership Rewards](#) program provides great redemption options thanks to its many airline transfer partners—19 over Chase's 10.

SHARED PARTNERS: Aer Lingus, British Airways, Iberia, Flying Blue-Air France / KLM, Emirates, JetBlue, Singapore Airlines, Virgin Atlantic

AMEX Membership Rewards Partners: AeroMexico, Air Canada, Alitalia, All Nippon, Avianca (LifeMiles), Cathay Pacific, Delta, El Al, Etihad Airways, Hawaiian, Qantas

CHASE Ultimate Rewards Partners: Southwest, United

## 2. UPPERCUT—TRANSFER BONUS

Amex Rewards often runs transfer bonus promotions, and frequently offers up to a 40% bonus with British Airways, Iberia, Aer Lingus (for more on their current 40% transfer deal read further down) and Virgin Atlantic (go [here](#) for our recent special report on a great Virgin transfer deal, and a [must-follow approach](#) for Delta flyers). Chase Ultimate Rewards does *not* have any transfer bonus deals.

## 3. FIXED FIGHT—YOU CAN BUY AMEX POINTS

You can buy up to 500,000 points annually at a cost of 2.5 cents each. Chase UR on the other hand doesn't sell points; you have to earn them through spending. That can make it hard to get your hands on points fast when you need them.

### BETWEEN ROUNDS

Check out our special report about when to buy miles instead of purchasing a normal published fare, [right here](#).

Also find out about how to buy American Express Membership Rewards points, when you can buy them (there's a caveat), the cards in the program, buying limits and other details, [all here](#).

## AROUND THE WORLD

### TOTAL GLOBAL KNOCKOUT—ACCESS TO THE ULTIMATE AWARD TICKET WITH ALL NIPPON

Saved the best for first, and we don't call this "The Ultimate Award" lightly. You can transfer Amex Rewards to All Nippon and fly around the world for 105,000 miles in Business Class or 160,000 miles in First Class.

Reminder: Chase does *not* have All Nippon as a transfer partner. We wrote about [this amazing offer here](#). To give you an idea of its power, the best you could do for an around-the-world ticket with Chase is Singapore Airlines at 240,000 miles in Business Class and 360,000 miles in First Class. In other words, with Amex Rewards you can get two tickets for the price of one, and even save some miles. TKO.

## EUROPE

### LOW BLOW—ACCESS TO LOW BUSINESS CLASS AWARDS WITH SKYTEAM

You can transfer Amex Rewards to Alitalia and fly [North America to Italy for 80,000](#) miles round-trip. Plus, FCF often reports on Alitalia "Sweet Redemeems" alerts showing routes and dates with award space. The best you can do with Chase UR points with SkyTeam is Flying Blue (Air France) at 106,000 miles, or 26,000 more points.

### FUEL FLYWEIGHT—FLY LUFTHANSA FIRST CLASS WITHOUT \$1,200+ IN SURCHARGES TO EUROPE

You can transfer Amex Rewards to LifeMiles (Avianca) and fly North America to Europe on Lufthansa for 174,000 miles round-trip without paying much in taxes, which can easily run \$1,200+ when booked directly with Lufthansa. Chase does *not* have LifeMiles as a transfer partner.

Lufthansa First Class awards are almost never available more than 15 days in advance for partners, so you'll have to book pretty close to departure. But another great thing about LifeMiles is that they don't incur any close-in booking fees.

With Chase, your options for First Class are booking with United miles at a cost of 220,000 for Lufthansa, an increase of 46,000 additional points.

## **EUROPEAN CHAMPION—NORTH AMERICA TO EUROPE WITH STAR ALLIANCE**

Fly round-trip from the U.S. to Europe in Business Class for only 88,000 miles with Amex points transferred to All Nippon miles and flying any Star Alliance airline. (Note: Watch out for carrier-imposed surcharges with airlines such as Lufthansa. Try to stay with United to avoid higher taxes and fees.) The best you could do with Chase UR points is United starting at 120,000 miles, so 32,000 points more.

## **MIDDLE EAST MAULERS—ACCESS TO ETIHAD AIRWAYS**

You can fly it to Africa, Asia, the South Pacific and more. You can transfer Amex Rewards to Etihad Airways. Again, it is *not* a transfer partner with Chase.

## **ASIA**

### **HK HEAVYWEIGHT—BOOK CATHAY PACIFIC TO HONG KONG**

You can transfer Amex Rewards to Cathay Pacific and fly Los Angeles/San Francisco/Seattle to Hong Kong for 140,000 miles round-trip in Business Class, plus FCF often has Cathay Pacific Sweet Redemptions alerts showing routes and dates with award space. [More on the deal here.](#)

Chase is *not* a transfer partner with Cathay, but British Airways is. They charge 210,000, or 70,000 *more* points than the Amex example above.

Los Angeles/San Francisco/Seattle to Hong Kong is 220,000 miles round-trip in First Class, and again, we often have Cathay Pacific Sweet Redemptions alerts showing routes and dates with award space. [More on the deal here.](#)

Chase is not a transfer partner with Cathay. Their point transfer partner is BA, which charges 280,000, or 60,000 more points when you use the Chase UR program.

## **SOUTH AMERICA**

### **SOUTHPAW—BOOK AMERICAN AIRLINES AWARD FLIGHTS TO SOUTHERN SOUTH AMERICA**

A round-trip Business Class flight from the U.S. to Southern South America is 100,000 Etihad Guest or Cathay Pacific miles. Again of course, you can't transfer your Membership Rewards points to American, but you can transfer points to Etihad or Cathay, both of which are mileage partner airlines with AA, so this is a great option to snag AA award flights with your Amex points. British Airways is a point transfer partner with Chase and they charge up to 154,000 points, or 54,000 more points. [More on the deal here.](#)

## AUSTRALIA

### BOXING KANGAROO—BOOK QANTAS BUSINESS CLASS TO AUSTRALIA

You can transfer Amex Rewards to Qantas and fly U.S. to Australia for 192,000 miles round-trip in Business Class from the West Coast. FCF often publishes Qantas Sweet Redemptions alerts showing routes and dates with award space. More on the deal [here](#) and [here](#).

Chase is *not* a transfer partner with Qantas, but British Airways is. However, BA almost never has any award space for Qantas flights.

**Sure, you can get a handful of Chase and other cards to eke out a bit more points than with Amex with some categories of spending—to compensate for some of the lost opportunities—but why kill yourself for less overall opportunities?**

### THIS KNOCKOUT GETS EVEN MORE EPIC

As promised, there's a way to jazz up this deal even more using the British Airways 40% transfer bonus. Up until October 1, you'll get 40% bonus points when transferring American Express Membership Rewards to British Airways and Iberia.

This is seriously great as it equates to getting two Business Class tickets within North America for less than one for many travelers—or one for less than the cost of coach.

### 24,000-POINT FLIGHTS ON AMERICAN

Get Business Class on American Airlines for a 24,000-point transfer to British Airways for travel within North America, and to Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean on many non-stop flights. **That's 6,000 fewer miles than American charges for coach.**

Another way to look at this opportunity is that it amounts to getting two Business Class tickets (48,000 miles) for less than the cost of one ticket with AA miles (50,000). Jab. Whack. Pow!

One Example: Los Angeles-San Jose del Cabo, Mexico, in Business Class on American costs 50,000 AAdvantage miles round-trip. But using British Airways miles, that flight costs as few as 33,000 miles round-trip; and with the transfer bonus through Oct. 1., it requires only 24,000 points.

It also means you can score domestic short-haul flights for 1,000 miles less than coach, flights to Hawaii for just 11,000 more miles than coach, and connecting flights for only 3,000 more miles than coach.

## PUT ME DOWN FOR THE COUNT – HOW DO I GET THESE PRECIOUS AMEX POINTS IF I DON'T HAVE THEM?

**Remember Uppercut #2 from above:** If you don't have any (or enough) Amex Rewards points you can simply buy them for 2.5¢ per point. Furthermore, you can only buy points when you're going to transfer them immediately to an Amex Membership Rewards partner airline.

## Free Upgrades Using British Airways Miles Instead of American Miles to Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean

U.S. Departure Cities	Destinations	American Miles Round-Trip in Business Class	American Miles Round-Trip in Coach	British Airways Transferred Miles Round-Trip in Business Class
Charlotte	Cancun, Nassau			
Dallas	Cancun, Cozumel, Guadalajara, Puerto Vallarta, San José del Cabo			
Los Angeles	San José del Cabo			
Miami	Cancun, Grand Cayman, Montego Bay (and Kingston), Nassau, Providenciales (Turks and Caicos), Aruba, Belize City, Guatemala, Port-au-Prince, Puerto Plata, Punta Cana, San Juan, San José (CR), Santo Domingo, St. Thomas	50,000	30,000	24,000
New York	Bermuda			
Philadelphia	Nassau			

## THE HITS KEEP ON COMING

HAWAII. Go to the land of luau in Business Class for only 11,000 more miles than coach *or* get two Business Class tickets for the price of one.

Los Angeles-Honolulu on American costs 110,000 AAdvantage miles round-trip. But using British Airways miles the flight costs 77,500 miles round-trip, and **with the transfer bonus, it's only 56,000 transferred points.**

In other words, you get an upgrade to Business Class for only 11,000 miles more than economy.

## THAT ONE REALLY CONNECTED—WHAT ABOUT CONNECTING FLIGHTS?

For connections, the best value lies in transferring from Amex Rewards to Iberia, not British Airways. British Airways is best for non-stop flights.

For example, consider Atlanta to Cancun connecting via Miami: with American Airlines it's 50,000 miles, while with Iberia it's 46,000. Work in the bonus (remember, you get it when transferring Amex to British Airways *or* Iberia) to make it 33,000. Again, **only 3,000 more miles than economy with American Airlines.**

## TRANSATLANTIC BUSINESS CLASS FLIGHTS ON IBERIA

Iberia charges 85,000 miles round-trip in Business Class from Chicago and Miami to Madrid for off-season travel, plus ~\$205 in award taxes, and **via the transfer deal it's only 61,000 miles.**

Iberia charges 102,000 miles round-trip in Business Class from Los Angeles and San Francisco to Madrid for off-season travel, plus ~\$205 in award taxes, so via the transfer deal it's only 73,000 miles.

## NEXT IN THE RING: BA VS. IBERIA

When should you go with British Airways and when should you go with Iberia? Follow this simple rule of thumb: British Airways points are best used on **short distance flights** like the San Jose del Cabo trip mentioned above. This is because BA charges high taxes for its own flights. Iberia is best for transatlantic Business Class on their own flights and for routes in North America that require connections.

[Let us know](#) how you see it.



# United Beating American 3 to 1 in the Upgrade Bowl

September 2019

**Avoid tears. Use your miles and/or Chase points to save 40% to 62% from all over the U.S.**

While going about our usual research here at FCF, something quite unusual surfaced. Over the last six months, [FCF's alerts](#) on United Airlines had *three times as many* upgrade opportunities as American Airlines to Europe. Three times.

Questions: Just what does American have to hide? Why does United look so smug?

## WHY DOES AMERICAN WANT TO HIDE?

As we reported [here last month](#), American Airlines mileage award availability recently has been scarce to most long-haul destinations.

Just over a year ago, 14 routes to South America had good availability. Some had months with four to six seats in a single day. Now we're only seeing seven routes with any upgrade availability.

It's an American Airlines drought. We had some options for you last month, and we're happy to say, we've dug up even more now with United. Here are a few of the highlights...

### NOT ONE, BUT TWO HAPPY ENDINGS

#### First Stop: Frankfurt (Save 52%)

For whatever reason, let's say you're traveling from Washington, DC, to Frankfurt, often an expensive Business Class route, even when booked way in advance. The lowest United upgradeable economy fare is currently \$762, while Business Class is \$3,859. So, even with the \$1,100 co-pay, you can save \$1,997 (52%) off the published fare by using miles. See upgrade award availability survey below.

*United.com screenshot showing upgrade math and space:*

From **Washington, DC, US (IAD)** To **Frankfurt, DE (FRA)**

Departure date **Jan 29, 2020** Return date **Feb 18, 2020** Search by:  Price

**Update** [Advanced search](#)

**Departure:** Washington, DC, US → Frankfurt, DE

Nonstop **\$762**  With stops **\$762** [Choose connecting airports](#) You have filters selected. [Clear all filters](#)

**Sort flights by:** Best match ▾

Depart	Arrive	Stops	Duration
Wed, Jan 29 5:20 pm	Thu, Jan 30 7:10 am	Nonstop	7h 50m
		 <a href="#">Details</a>	<a href="#">Seats</a>
MileagePlus earnings (each way, per person): PQM   PQS   PQD			
Base award miles			

Washington, DC, US (IAD) to Frankfurt, DE (FRA)

 UA 989 | Boeing 777-200

 Wi-Fi

 Depart IAD: Wed, Jan 29  
Arrive FRA: Thu, Jan 30  Red-eye flight

**Business (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)**

 Roundtrip **\$762**  
+20k miles  
+\$550 co-pay each way, per person

[Select](#)

United Polaris business (PZ) (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)

Dinner

 Upgrade available

## Second in Line: London (Save 57%)

New York/Newark to London is one of United's popular routes, currently starting at \$989 round-trip for travel in October, while Business Class is \$4,881. Even with the \$1,100 co-pay you can save \$2,792 (57%) off the published fare by using miles to upgrade from economy. See upgrade award availability survey below.

*United.com screenshot showing upgrade math and space:*

**Sort flights by:** Best match ▾

Depart	Arrive	Stops	Duration
8:30 am	8:40 pm	Nonstop	7h 10m
		 <a href="#">Details</a>	<a href="#">Seats</a>
MileagePlus earnings (each way, per person): PQM   PQS   PQD			
Base award miles			

**Business (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)**

 Roundtrip **\$989**  
+20k miles  
+\$550 co-pay each way, per person

[Select](#)

## Availability vs. Free Awards for 4+ Passengers

Route	Month of Travel	Upgrade Award	Free Award
Chicago - Paris	July	14	0
Newark - London	Oct.	11	0
Newark - Madrid	July	14	0
Washington, DC - Brussels	Feb.	19	0
Washington, DC - Geneva	April	11	0

## DON'T FORGET U.S. CONNECTING CITIES — SAVE 40%

From the U.S., that means you should consider buying an economy through-fare ticket, meaning a fare that includes the entire itinerary on one ticket. If upgrade space is available on the domestic segments, grab it, of course, as the cost is the same.

On the Orlando-Amsterdam route, the lowest upgradeable through-fare ticket (connecting via Newark or Washington, DC) costs \$688 in economy, as opposed to \$2,985 in Business Class. Even with the \$1,100 co-pay to upgrade the long-haul segment (flight to Amsterdam), you still save \$1,197 (40%) off the published fare by using miles to upgrade from economy.

## WHAT ABOUT EUROPE'S CONNECTING CITIES? SAVE 62%

European connections can also be easy if you stick with United's partners and book the entire trip on one ticket, and just upgrade the United transatlantic segments. Book the routing in coach based on the availability of Business Class upgrades.

Say you want to fly from Washington, DC, to Athens. On United, that could mean making a connection in Munich and then flying onward on partner airline Lufthansa.

The lowest upgradeable economy through-fare is \$914 round-trip for travel in February versus \$5,316 in Business Class. So, you upgrade the bridge legs of the trip, Washington, DC-Munich-Washington, DC. We've made this easy with our cheat sheet below, which reveals the best months for upgrade availability.

Even with the \$1,100 co-pay (plus 40,000 miles), you can save 62% (\$3,302) off the published fare by using miles. Note that the connecting leg (Munich-Athens) will be in economy on partner airline Lufthansa, as the screenshot below shows. Also note that the upgrade availability will show as "Mixed Upgrade" and you need to click on "Details" to see that the upgrade is available on the Washington, DC, to Munich flight, and that the Lufthansa flight from Munich to Athens is not eligible for the upgrade. That's also the reason why United has the "Mixed Upgrade" message in red.

Sort flights by: Best match ▾

Depart	Arrive	Stops	Duration	Business (upgrade- eligible Economy fare)
Tue, Feb 4 5:30 pm	Wed, Feb 5 12:05 pm	1 stop	11h 35m	Mixed Upgrade ?
Includes Travel Operated By Lufthansa				Roundtrip \$914 +20k miles +\$550 co-pay each way, per person
				Select
MileagePlus earnings (each way, per person):				--
Base award miles PQM   PQS   PQD				United Polaris business (PZ) (upgrade- eligible Economy fare)
Washington, DC, US (IAD) to Munich, DE (MUC) 5:30 pm - 7:40 am (8h 10m)				Dinner
UA 106   Boeing 777-200				Upgrade available
Wi-Fi				
Depart IAD: Tue, Feb 4 Arrive MUC: Wed, Feb 5				
1h connection				
Munich, DE (MUC) to Athens, GR (ATH) 8:40 am - 12:05 pm (2h 25m)				Economy (L)
UA 9311   Airbus A321				Snack
Operated By Lufthansa				Not eligible for upgrade
Red-eye flight				

## UNITED PARTNERS FOR ONWARD TRAVEL IN EUROPE

: Example flights to other destinations in Europe from Berlin, Frankfurt, and Munich include: Athens, London, Cyprus, Moscow, Prague, and countless others.

[SWISS](#): Example flights from Zurich include: Amsterdam, Bucharest, Dublin, Malta, Oslo, and countless others.

[Brussels Airlines](#): Example flights from Brussels include: Lyon, Milan, Nice, Stockholm, Venice, and many others.

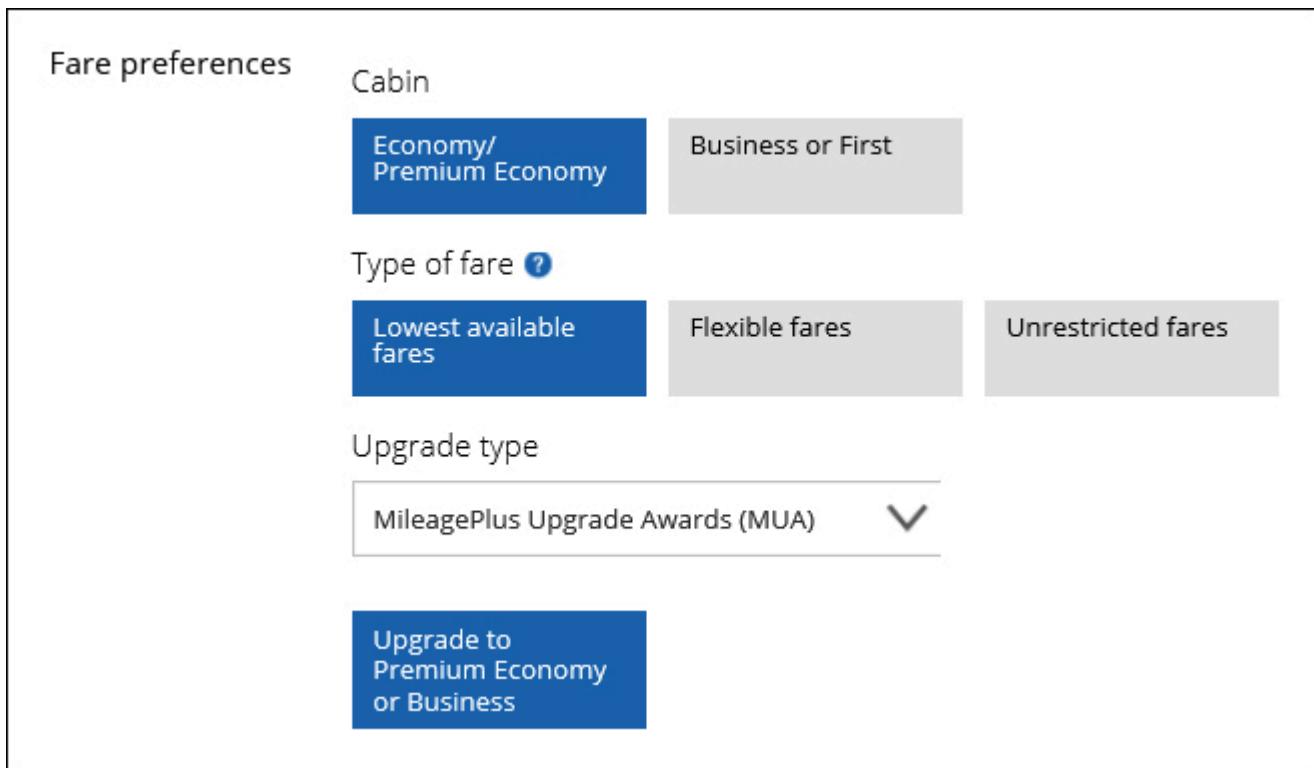
## WHAT TO DO WHEN AN UPGRADE IS ONLY AVAILABLE ONE WAY?

United lets you combine economy and Business Class fares, so you can upgrade the flight segment that has upgrade space and book the other leg in Business Class. On Chicago-Frankfurt, the combined coach-

Business Class fare is \$2,145, while round-trip Business Class is \$3,659 for travel in October. So, even with the \$550 one-way co-pay to upgrade from coach to Business Class, you can still save \$964 (26%) by using miles one way. Call United at (800) 421-4655 to make these kinds of bookings.

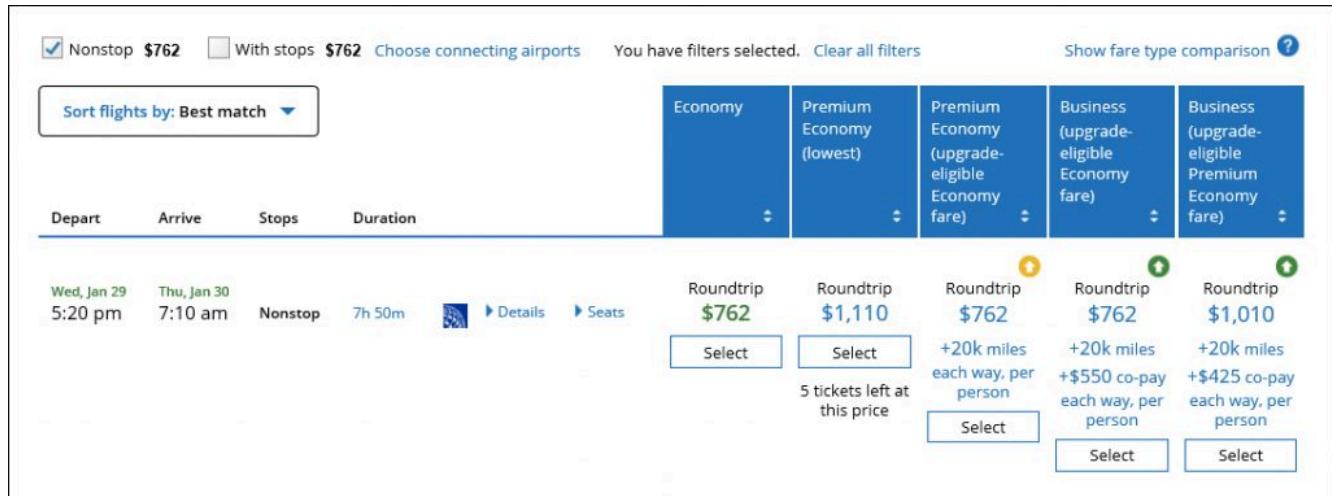
## HOW TO BOOK MILEAGE UPGRADES ON UNITED

1. Get a sense of availability date-clusters online (perhaps using our survey chart below).
2. Select the “Buy Economy and upgrade” option to [search for upgrade space](#) to Business Class from economy in the “Fare preferences” section, after you click on “Upgrade type.” See below:



The screenshot shows the 'Fare preferences' section of the United website. It includes fields for 'Cabin' (selected: Economy/Premium Economy), 'Type of fare' (selected: Lowest available fares), and 'Upgrade type' (selected: MileagePlus Upgrade Awards (MUA)). A large blue button at the bottom says 'Upgrade to Premium Economy or Business'.

When your search results comes back, it will not only show fares and flight schedules, it will also show what flights offer an upgrade, and what the cost is.



The screenshot shows flight search results for a roundtrip from Wednesday, Jan 29 at 5:20 pm to Thursday, Jan 30 at 7:10 am, nonstop. The results are sorted by 'Best match'. The search filters are set to 'Nonstop \$762' and 'With stops \$762'. The results table includes columns for 'Depart', 'Arrive', 'Stops', 'Duration', 'Economy', 'Premium Economy (lowest)', 'Premium Economy (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)', 'Business (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)', and 'Business (upgrade-eligible Premium Economy fare)'. The 'Economy' and 'Premium Economy (lowest)' rows are blue, while the others are grey. The 'Premium Economy (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)' row shows a price of \$1,110, a note about co-pays, and a 'Select' button. The 'Business (upgrade-eligible Premium Economy fare)' row shows a price of \$1,010, a note about co-pays, and a 'Select' button.

Nonstop \$762 With stops \$762 Choose connecting airports You have filters selected. Clear all filters Show fare type comparison ?

Sort flights by: Best match ▾

Depart	Arrive	Stops	Duration	Economy	Premium Economy (lowest)	Premium Economy (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)	Business (upgrade-eligible Economy fare)	Business (upgrade-eligible Premium Economy fare)
Wed, Jan 29 5:20 pm	Thu, Jan 30 7:10 am	Nonstop	7h 50m	Roundtrip \$762	Roundtrip \$1,110	Roundtrip \$762	Roundtrip \$762	Roundtrip \$1,010
				Select	Select	+20k miles each way, per person	Select	Select
				5 tickets left at this price				
				Base award miles PQM   PQS   PQD	1,510 4,081   1   \$302	2,380 6,122   1.5   \$476	--	--
Washington, DC, US (IAD) to Frankfurt, DE (FRA)  UA 989   Boeing 777-200  Wi-Fi Depart IAD: Wed, Jan 29 Arrive FRA: Thu, Jan 30				United Economy (K) Dinner	United Premium Plus (R) (lowest) Dinner	United Economy (K) (upgrade-eligible Economy fare) Dinner	United Polaris business (PZ) (upgrade-eligible Economy fare) Dinner	United Polaris business (PZ) (upgrade-eligible Premium Economy fare) Dinner
						Upgrade waitlist	Upgrade available	Upgrade available

Click on “Details” to find out if the upgrade space is available.

## GET WHAT'S COMING: HOW ANYONE CAN SCORE UA MILES

### Number of Days with Business Class Upgrade Availability vs. Free Awards for 4+ Passengers

Routes	Depart			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Newark - Berlin	Dec., March	Jan., Feb.		April	March	Dec. through Feb.
Chicago - Frankfurt	Oct., Nov.			Oct., Nov., Jan. through March, May through July	Sept., April	Dec.
Chicago - Munich	Nov., April, July			Sept., Nov., April, July	Dec.	
Chicago - Paris	Oct.		July	Dec., Feb., May, July		
Chicago - Amsterdam	Oct., Dec. through Feb.	July		Sept., Nov., May., July	Feb. through April	Dec.

Routes	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
	Sept., Nov.	Oct., June	July	Oct., Nov., March	Sept., May., June	Dec., April, July
Newark - Madrid	Jan.		July	Nov., Jan., Feb.	Sept.	Dec., March, July
Newark - Dublin	Dec., Jan., March			Sept., Nov., Dec., March	Jan., April	Feb.
Washington - London	Sept., Jan.		July	May through July	Sept., March	Dec. through Feb., April
Washington - Brussel	Sept., July	Oct., April	Nov. through March, May	Jan., April through June	Oct., Dec., March	Sept., Nov., Feb.
Houston - Amsterdam	Jan., Feb.			Sept., Oct., Jan., Feb., April, May	Dec., March	
Newark - Manchester	Sept., July			Nov., Dec., Feb., March, May, June	Sept., June	Oct., April, July
Newark - London	Sept., Nov., Jan.	Oct., Dec.	Feb.		Sept., Nov., June	Oct., Dec. through May
Newark - Amsterdam	Sept., Oct., Jan., Feb.	Dec.	July	Sept. through Nov., Jan., Feb., May, June	March	Dec., April, July
Washington - Amsterdam	Sept., Nov., March, April	Feb., May	Oct., Dec., Jan., July	Oct., Nov., Feb., April through June	July	Sept., Dec., Feb., March
Washington - Geneva	Feb.	Oct., April, July		Sept., Oct., Dec., Feb., May, July	April	
Washington - Frankfurt	Oct. through Jan., March, April	Feb., July		Oct., July	Sept., Nov., May, June	Dec. through April

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



# FCF Special Fares Monitor

September 2019

Here's a survey of the best current special airfare deals we've published in the last month—**on major airlines**—that remain live. In case you missed them, forgot about them, or are just now ready to pounce, have at 'em...

## ASIA

[Great New \\$2,328 Biz Class Fares to Asia from All Over the U.S.](#)

[\\$2,368 R/T Biz Class Fares to Asia Found From San Diego and Three Other Great Fares from Chicago, Philadelphia, and Seattle](#)

## **EUROPE**

[West Coast to Europe Business Class starting at \\$2,353 \(Nov. '19 to Apr. '20\)](#)

[First Class Fares from San Francisco to Europe in First Class Starting at \\$2,962](#)

[First Class Winter Fares from \\$2,932 R/T to Europe from Dallas, Houston & Miami](#)

[First Class \\$2,962 R/T to Europe from Boston, New York, and Washington, DC](#)

[From Cities All Over the U.S., Special London Winter Business Class Fares From \\$1,969 R/T, Six Major Airlines](#)

## **AFRICA**

[New Africa Business Class Fares Found Starting at \\$2,515 from All Over the U.S.](#)

[Special First Class Fares to Africa With British Airways 60% Less](#)

## **MIDDLE EAST / INDIA**

[Beirut \\$2,224 R/T Business Class with American from All Over the U.S.](#)

[New India Business Class Fares Found Starting at \\$2,452 from All Over the U.S.](#)

[New First Class Fares from All Over the U.S. to India on British Airways ~\\$3,869](#)

[First Class Fares Found From Miami, New York and Washington, DC to Tel Aviv Starting at \\$3,319](#)



# Advance Planners: Net Sumo-Sized Opportunities in First Class to Asia

September 2019

## **Amex Membership Rewards Transfer Partner, All Nippon, Bucks the First Class Availability Dry Spell.**

The chances of finding First Class award availability to Asia are about the same as showing up at the gate with flowers hoping to get an upgrade from coach to First.

In other words, needle-in-a-haystack. Not good.

There are a few reasons for this. The basic trend is that airlines are releasing fewer award seats in First, fewer airlines have First Class cabins these days anyway, and the flood of miles on the market from credit card sign-

up bonus people.

United Airlines is a good example of an airline that's abandoned the First Class cabin.

Needless to say, our team of needle finders has been scouring haystacks with humongously big magnets.

Yes, we've found some sharp specimens—on All Nippon (and bookable using All Nippon, United and Virgin miles).

In fact, we've found good First Class award availability for up to two passengers to Tokyo from Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston and Washington, DC, as these recent FCF Sweet Redemptions alerts demonstrate:

[69% Off All Nippon First Class from Los Angeles to Asia, 2+ Seats](#)

[66% Off All Nippon First Class to Asia from Chicago, Houston and Washington, DC, 2+ Seats](#)

Our chart below compares flying All Nippon using All Nippon miles (get from Amex), United miles, and Virgin miles for award travel in First Class to Asia across a range of criteria including cost and availability.

## **WHAT'S ON IN TOKYO?**

Oh, only a little sports competition called "The Olympic Games." It's where people run and swim *very fast*. Yes, the Olympics are coming and you get the feeling the Japanese will make them special. When they make a national apology for a bullet train [leaving 20 seconds early](#), you know they'll get the Olympics right. The Games start on July 24 next year, and what better way to do them justice than to arrive via the comfort of First Class?

Tokyo is special at any time of the year, Olympics or not. And speaking of sport, here's one that won't be at the Olympic Games: the Grand Sumo Tournaments in Tokyo from May 10 to 24 and September 8 to 22 at the famed Ryogoku Stadium. This is a fascinating, deeply ritualistic event that you'll be telling friends and family about for years. Those guys are rock stars in Japan.



Of course there's so much to do in Tokyo, from great shopping to delicious sushi to quirky neighborhoods that all offer something different and memorable, whatever your predilection.

And then there's Japan with its wonderful cities, beautiful countryside, renowned ski slopes—and the aforementioned bullet trains to get you there right on time.

As you can see from the All Nippon connections map below, your First Class experience can extend to Asia with any number of unique locations in the vicinity including Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, Bangkok, Singapore and more.



## HOW TO BOOK

Like we said, there are a few ways to snag these First Class seats to Asia—using All Nippon miles, United Airlines miles, or Virgin Atlantic miles. Follow the step by step instructions in FCF Sweet Redemeems for specifics with each airline.

## TWICE THE AVAILABILITY IN FIRST AS IN BUSINESS?

Our recent research found that your chances of scoring a First Class seat on All Nippon were *twice* that of a Business Class seat. As Mr. Spock might say: "Highly irregular, Captain." [Read our report here](#), including how to get ahold of All Nippon miles.

**One good way to get All Nippon miles is via Amex Points.** To learn more about buying Amex Points when you are short, check out our special report: [How to Buy American Express Membership Rewards Points](#).

## Compare All Nippon's First Class Booking Options

	With All Nippon Miles	With United Miles	With Virgin Atlantic Miles
<b>Stopover in Tokyo allowed</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>Partner award availability</b>	N/A	Similar to All Nippon's own award space, if two or more passengers, then availability is less	Similar to All Nippon's own award space, even for two passengers
<b>Transfer partners</b>	Amex and Marriott	Chase and Marriott	Amex, Marriott, Citi, Chase. Plus Amex often offers a transfer bonus to Virgin, the most recent one was 30%.
<b>Cost Los Angeles to Tokyo</b>	150,000 to 165,000	220,000	110,000 miles (from western U.S.) to 120,000 miles (from eastern U.S.)
<b>Cost Washington, DC to Tokyo</b>			
<b>Cost to book beyond Tokyo</b>	Cost varies depending on destination: 15,000 to 45,000 more miles	Cost varies depending on destination: up to 60,000 more miles	Only for travel to Japan, no other regions
<b>Cost to book U.S. connecting cities</b>	Cost varies: 15,000 more miles	No extra cost	Requires a second ticket
<b>Award taxes (based on LAX departure)</b>	\$354	\$55	\$100