

More Secrets on Exploiting the Delta-Virgin Amex-Chase Loophole, Part II

April 2019



Last month we told you about a [doozy of a loophole](#): how you can use the miles of Delta partner Virgin Atlantic to buy Delta flights very cheaply. We're talking 5 times less than using Delta's own miles, *and* at times with 20+ times the availability. It's an amazing find (thanks, FCF research team) so we'll recap it below and include important information about the routes that can be booked online or by phone only.

A RECAP OF THE DELTA LOOPHOLE

Delta only releases a limited amount of low-cost mileage award seats. Often, you only see the full price ones when using Delta miles. But **using Virgin Atlantic miles for the same Delta flights/routes** can open up low-cost award space that Delta doesn't offer. For whatever reason, Delta releases a different amount of mileage award seats to its partner Virgin Atlantic than it does to its own SkyMiles members using Delta miles.

And we're not talking *a bit of a discount*, we're talking a lot. One example: Minneapolis-London saves you 232,500 miles, **and** with better availability. That's loopy. We found lots more examples as well, shown [here](#).

USING VIRGIN ATLANTIC MILES. PHONE OR ONLINE?

Here's the thing, it depends on the route. But we have everything you need to know and do, with step-by-step instructions.

DELTA ROUTES THAT CAN BE BOOKED USING VIRGIN ATLANTIC MILES, BY PHONE:

Not all routes can be booked online with Virgin Atlantic because its booking engine doesn't have some Delta routes loaded for some reason. So, you may need to call Virgin Atlantic (800-365-9500) to check for Delta partner space. **Non-stop Delta routes that can be booked using Virgin Atlantic miles by phone:**

To/From Atlanta: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Frankfurt, Madrid, Munich, Rome, Santiago São Paulo, Seoul, Stuttgart, Zurich

To/From Detroit: Frankfurt, Munich, Rome, Seoul

To/From Minneapolis: Seoul

To/From New York: Accra, Athens, Berlin, Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Dakar, Frankfurt, Lisbon, Nice, Prague, Rome, Tel Aviv, Venice, Zurich

To/From Seattle: Osaka, Seoul

NON-STOP DELTA ROUTES THAT CAN BE BOOKED USING VIRGIN ATLANTIC MILES ONLINE:

To/From Atlanta: Dublin, Dusseldorf, Honolulu, Johannesburg, Lagos, Lima, London, Paris, Shanghai, Tokyo

To/From Boston: Amsterdam, Dublin, London

To/From Cincinnati: Paris

To/From Detroit: Amsterdam, Beijing, Honolulu, London, Nagoya, Paris, Shanghai, Tokyo

To/From Los Angeles: Honolulu, Kona, Maui, Shanghai, Sydney, Tokyo

To/From Minneapolis: Amsterdam, Honolulu, London, Paris, Tokyo

To/From New York: Amsterdam, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Milan, Paris

To/From Portland: Amsterdam, London, Tokyo

To/From Raleigh: Paris

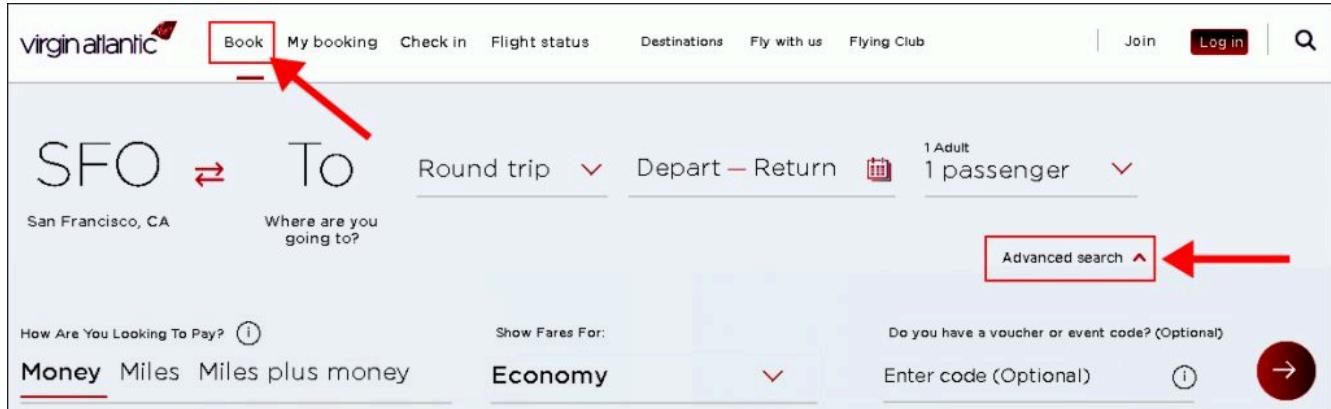
To/From Salt Lake City: Amsterdam, Honolulu, London, Paris

To/From Seattle: Amsterdam, Beijing, Honolulu, Kauai, Kona, Maui, Paris, Shanghai, Tokyo

HOW TO SEARCH FOR DELTA FLIGHTS THAT CAN BE BOOKED ONLINE USING VIRGIN ATLANTIC MILES

There's no need to create a Virgin Atlantic mileage account to check for space. However, if you are booking award space, then you'll have to log in.

Just go to "Book" and click "Advanced search".



Enter your departure and return route and dates, number of seats, and in the "How Are You Looking To Pay" section, click on "Miles," and then in the "Show Fares For" section, click "Upper Class." On the next screen you want to make sure that under the "Stops" section you have "Direct only," and under the "Pricing" section you should show "Miles." The calendar should then show to search "+3" or "-3" days for both the departure and the return, so you can search other days surrounding your selected departure and return dates.

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		Return							
		Mon 05 Aug	Tue 06 Aug	Wed 07 Aug	Thu 08 Aug	Fri 09 Aug	Sat 10 Aug	Sun 11 Aug	
- 3 days	Mon 29 Jul	No Upper Class seats available	100,000 miles +\$95.63	No Upper Class seats available	100,000 miles +\$95.63	No Upper Class seats available	No Upper Class seats available	No Upper Class seats available	
	Tue 30 Jul	No Upper Class seats available	100,000 miles +\$95.63	No Upper Class seats available	100,000 miles +\$95.63	No Upper Class seats available	No Upper Class seats available	No Upper Class seats available	
	Wed 31 Jul	No Upper Class seats available							
	Thu 01 Aug	No Upper Class seats available	100,000 miles +\$95.63	No Upper Class seats available	100,000 miles +\$95.63	No Upper Class seats available	No Upper Class seats available	No Upper Class seats available	
	Fri 02 Aug	No Upper Class seats available							
	Sat 03 Aug	No Upper Class seats available	100,000 miles +\$95.63	No Upper Class seats available	100,000 miles +\$95.63	No Upper Class seats available	No Upper Class seats available	No Upper Class seats available	
	Sun 04 Aug	No Upper Class seats available	100,000 miles +\$95.63	No Upper Class seats available	100,000 miles +\$95.63	No Upper Class seats available	No Upper Class seats available	No Upper Class seats available	
+ 3 days									

You can also go to “refine search” to search by “Within 5 weeks.” Either way, make sure you have the “Payment” as “Pay with miles.” and the “Cabin” as “Upper Class” checked when searching for space.

Once you click on the dates you want to book, the next screen shows flight options. Select “departure” and “return.”

Select your departure flight

Pricing: \$ USD Miles Total price: Per adult (16+) Sort: Best Match 'Recommended' may list Virgin Atlantic operated flights first.

Departing: Thu 01 Aug 2019

Delta One®

ATL → DUS 18:07 → 08:50 +1 day 100,000 miles + \$ 95.63 Total per adult

8h 43m Direct
Operated by Delta Air Lines
Flight and cabin information →

Departure Thu 1 Aug 2019 ATL → DUS

Return Thu 8 Aug 2019 DUS → ATL

Additional baggage fees may apply →

Flight Summary

Depart Thu 1 Aug 2019

Atlanta (ATL), US to Dusseldorf (DUS), DE

ATL → DUS 18:07 → 08:50 +1 day 100,000 miles + \$ 95.63

8h 43m Direct
Delta One®
Operated by Delta Air Lines

Delta One®

Return Thu 8 Aug 2019

Dusseldorf (DUS), DE to Atlanta (ATL), US

DUS → ATL 10:35 → 14:23 +1 day 100,000 miles + \$ 95.63

9h 48m Direct
Delta One®
Operated by Delta Air Lines

Delta One®

1 adult
Total 100,000 miles + \$95.63

[Next step →]

Price is for all passengers and includes taxes, fees, charges and carrier imposed surcharges

Fare breakdown
Fare conditions
Currency calculator
Baggage allowance

Departure
Thu 1 Aug 2019
ATL → DUS
18:07 → 08:50
8h 43m Direct
Delta One®

Return
Thu 8 Aug 2019
DUS → ATL
10:35 → 14:23
9h 48m Direct
Delta One®

On the “Flight Summary” screen you’ll see the flights confirmed and your total cost:

Hit “Next step” to provide payment details and you’re there.

NEW FOUND SECRET: BEST UNPUBLISHED ROUTES

Below are some new gold nuggets we’ve not posted—and what’s more—Delta didn’t have them available at their low-cost mileage rate, but Virgin Atlantic did for 100,000 miles round-trip flying Delta to Europe...

Sweet Redeem Survey: Delta Flights using Virgin Miles

Route	Depart			Return		
	4 to 8 days per month	9 to 12 days per month	13+ days per month	4 to 8 days per month	9 to 12 days per month	13+ days per month
Atlanta to Dusseldorf	Sept., Oct., Nov., Feb.	Aug., Jan.	July, Dec.	Sept., Oct., Nov., Feb.	Aug., Nov.	Dec., Jan.
Boston to Amsterdam	July, Dec., Jan.	July		July, Sept., Nov.	Jan.	Aug., Dec.
Cincinnati to Paris	July, Aug., Oct., Nov.	July, Dec., Jan.	Dec.	July, Nov.	Jan.	Aug., Dec.
Detroit to Amsterdam	July, Aug., Oct., Jan.	Dec.		Feb.	Jan.	Aug., Dec.
Detroit to Paris	July, Aug., Oct., Jan.	Dec.		Jan.	Dec.	Aug.
New York to Amsterdam	July, Oct.	Dec., Jan.		Aug., Nov.	Dec.	Dec., Jan.
New York to Dublin	July, Nov., Feb.	July, Dec.	Jan.	Jul., Aug., Feb.	Oct., Nov.	Dec., Jan.
New York to Milan	Nov., Dec., Jan., Feb.,			Nov., Jan., Feb.		Dec.
Minneapolis to Amsterdam	July., Aug., Oct.	July, Dec., Jan.		July, Sept., Jan.	Aug., Dec.	
Minneapolis to Paris	Jan.	Dec.		Nov., Jan.	Dec.	
Portland to Amsterdam	July, Oct., Nov., Jan.	Dec., Jan.	Dec.	Aug., Dec., Jan.		
Raleigh Durham to Paris	July, Oct., Dec., Feb.	Jul., Aug.		July, Sept., Oct., Feb.	Nov.	Aug., Dec., Jan.

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

Keep in Mind

As we touched on last month, the main downside to Virgin Atlantic miles is that you can only use them for Delta's nonstop routes. All connecting flights would require you to purchase a second mileage ticket, which would ultimately increase your total cost when using Virgin Atlantic miles. In this case, it still might be a really good idea to just buy a separate ticket to the gateway with the amazing opportunity.

Further FCF Delta Reading

- [The Secret You Need to Know About Booking Delta Flights With Miles or Points](#)
- [How You Can \(And Why\) Bust Out of Delta SkyMiles Bondage for Travel to Asia, Europe, and South America.](#)



Bangkok for Your Buck: Why Thailand's Capital Now Opens Up Asia.

April 2019

This month the B cities are standing up to be counted with amazingly low Business Class fares. First Bologna, Italy (as covered in this month's Adviser [here](#)), and now Bangkok, Thailand. This is great for FCF devotees because both are right smack in the middle of their respective continents, and so offer **great low-cost entry points for further exploration**. They're also great places to visit in their own right.

A THAI-TANIC FARE REDUCTION AND THAI-RIFFIC FOR ELITES

Examples: Chicago—Bangkok fares start at \$2,876 r/t; Los Angeles at \$2,904; New York \$2,886; Toronto \$2,575; and from Vancouver \$2,873.

THAI TAKEAWAYS

Nestled near the southern coast of the country, Bangkok is a bustling city of noisy street activity, delicious aromas, floating markets, ancient temples, grand palaces, museums, and shopping galore.

It has topped the MasterCard Global Destinations Index as the world's most visited city for five of the past seven years.



BEYOND BANGKOK

Many sites outside of Bangkok are quick and easy to get to, for example:

- The tropical paradise islands of Phuket (1 hour 20 minute flight).
- The cultural delights of quieter Chiang Mai to the north. (1 hour 15 minute flight).
- The Golden Triangle – where the Mekong meets the Ruak, and Thailand meets Myanmar and Laos.

BEYOND THAILAND

Part of Bangkok's appeal right now is that it gets you to the Asian continent for a low(er) fare than other destinations. You can add on cheap Business Class tickets to other countries—some examples:

Hong Kong: \$429 round-trip, 3-hour flight one-way

Kathmandu: \$642 round-trip, 3-hour and 15-minute flight one-way

Phnom Penh: \$530 round-trip, 1-hour and 30-minute flight one-way

Saigon: \$414 round-trip, 1-hour and 40-minute flight one-way

Singapore: \$485 round-trip, 2-hour and 30-minute flight one-way



Singapore: \$485 round-trip, 2-hour and 30-minute flight one-way



How and Why to Book Etihad First Apartment Now

April 2019

The most amazing First Class experience might not be around at the cheap rates. Now is the time to book one of the 100+ available dates at a significant discount with your AAdvantage miles.

There's a rumor going around that Etihad is leaving the oneworld alliance to possibly join Star Alliance. This would be a bummer for all AAdvantage miles collectors as you wouldn't be able to lock in their First Apartment flight at a great price anymore. However, **there is still time**. For you First Class enthusiasts out there, Etihad's First Apartment is a flight experience of a lifetime. Now might be your last chance to book one of these flights while you can still get it for a great rate with your AAdvantage miles.

Here's What's Included in this Report:

- A quick summary of why you want to Fly Etihad's First Apartment
- Routes that offer the First Apartment—and have **a volume of dates** to use your miles on cheap American Airlines mileage awards
- How you can get the \$16,000+ flight one-way for just \$2,416
- The trick to booking the ticket with AAdvantage miles

HERE'S WHY WE LOVE ETIHAD'S FIRST APARTMENT

Famous for its onboard shower, Etihad's First Apartment is about as luxurious as First Class gets. Each suite contains a comfortable seat, 6'10" long couch that converts into a bed, and a vanity unit to freshen up or hang your suit for the flight. At 39 square feet, Etihad's First Apartment is much bigger than any other First Class experience that I've seen (for reference, that's **74% bigger** than the airline's 'Diamond' First Class Suite).

The First Apartment also boasts a dining table; perfect for a couple—or if you want to have a meeting with another apartment dweller. You can close the apartment's 5-foot sliding doors for privacy.

WHAT DOES AN ETIHAD FIRST APARTMENT SEAT NORMALLY COST?

Take a look at the fare chart below. These seats are NOT cheap...

First Apartment Cost Round-Trip

From	To	Published Lowest Fare
New York	Abu Dhabi	\$27,951
Sydney		\$13,080
Abu Dhabi	Sydney	\$9,434
London	Abu Dhabi	\$6,368
Paris		\$6,874
Abu Dhabi	London	\$9,243
	Paris	\$9,052

HOW MANY AMERICAN MILES DOES IT TAKE TO FLY FIRST APARTMENT?

Through American Airlines and Etihad's relationship with Oneworld, you can use your AAdvantage miles on Etihad flights at the following rates (each way):

- U.S. to Middle East: 115,000 miles
- Europe to Middle East: 62,500 miles
- Australia to Middle East: 100,000 miles

ROUTES WITH AVAILABILITY

As you can see in the FCF alert links below, date availability can be very hit-or-miss. If you're thinking about planning a trip now, try to incorporate these routes and dates to snag a \$16,000+ one-way ticket for just 115,000 American miles from the U.S.

[100+ Dates to Fly Etihad's 'First Apartment' With Miles Between Sydney and Abu Dhabi](#)

[Some First Apartment Availability for Two Travelers Found Between Middle East and New York One Way](#)

[First Apartment Wide Open Between Paris and Abu Dhabi](#)



NO AMERICAN MILES? NO PROBLEM

If you don't have any American miles but still want to save up to \$14,384 (86%) on a First Apartment flight one-way, you can buy miles anytime [here](#) for 3.2 cents each. Even better, keep your eyes peeled (we'll help you there) and pick them up when they're on sale for between 1.8 and 2 cents each. The [current sale](#), which ends April 30, offers them as low as 1.9 cents. The following table will show you just how much you can save...

First Apartment Cost One-way

From	To	Published One-way Fare	One-way With Buying Miles (At Current Sale)	Savings
New York	Abu Dhabi	\$16,800	\$2,416	\$14,384 / 86%
Sydney		\$9,356	\$2,257	\$7,099 / 76%
London		\$4,152	\$1,338	\$2,814 / 68%
Paris		\$4,402	\$1,338	\$3,064 / 70%
Abu Dhabi	London	\$7,554	\$1,338	\$6,216 / 82%
	New York	\$9,830	\$2,416	\$7,414 / 75%
	Paris	\$8,303	\$1,338	\$6,965 / 84%
	Sydney	\$6,866	\$2,257	\$4,609 / 67%

THE TRICK TO HOW TO BOOK

For some reason, Etihad's best availability is not readily available on American's website—nor its U.S.-based call center agents. So, it's best to check by calling AAdvantage Australia customer service, at +61 291011948. Seems weird, but it really works.

First, here's how to check availability for specific dates:

1. First get a sense of available dates from FCF alerts (links above)
2. Then search for specific dates on Etihad's [website here](#) (no login required)
3. Find specific dates with "Guest First" award space (see image below) and write down the date and flight number

Search Flights Passengers Extras Seats Payment Confirmation

London (LHR) → Abu Dhabi (AUH) Guest(s): 1 Price: 0.00 Show Summary ▾

Eihad Guest Login
Please log in to book your flight with miles.

Select your flights Modify search ▾

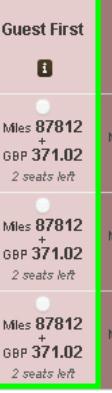
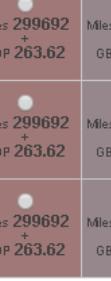
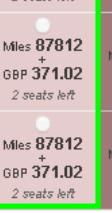
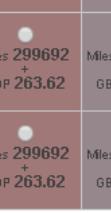
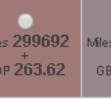
Outbound flight details

From London, United Kingdom (LHR) To Abu Dhabi, UAE (AUH)
Price for all guests including estimated taxes, fees and surcharges. After selecting your preferred flights, please refer to the booking summary for the exact cost.

Get the best value for your Eihad Guest Miles with our GuestSeat flight rewards. Book a GuestSeat for the same or less miles than you would normally expect to pay with any other airline programme and enjoy the benefits of regular travel with us - and with no blackout periods. Kindly note that you will not be able to combine OpenSeat and GuestSeat reward in the same booking.

 Prev 7	Sat 04 May Miles 304830 + GBP 263.62	Sun 05 May Miles 299692 + GBP 263.62	Mon 06 May Miles 87812 + GBP 371.02	Tue 07 May Miles 87812 + GBP 371.02	Wed 08 May Miles 87812 + GBP 371.02	Thu 09 May Miles 87812 + GBP 371.02	Fri 10 May Miles 87812 + GBP 371.02	 Next 7
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Sort by Non-stop flights

						GuestSeat	OpenSeat		
From	✈	To	Stops Trip duration	Flight number	Operated by	Aircraft	Guest First  Miles 87812 + GBP 371.02 2 seats left	First  Miles 299692 + GBP 263.62	The Residence  Miles 1328928 + GBP 219.62
LHR 09:35	✈	AUH 19:55	0 7hr 20min	EY 12	Eihad Airways	A380 			
LHR 15:00	✈	AUH 01:10 (+1)	0 7hr 10min	EY 20	Eihad Airways	A380 			
LHR 20:45	✈	AUH 06:55 (+1)	0 7hr 10min	EY 18	Eihad Airways	A380 			

All times are Local timings, (+1) = Arrival next day

4. The last step is simply to call American Airlines' Australian call center (+61-2-91011948 / easy with Skype) to put on hold for 5 days, or book. If you have dates and a decent agent, this can take 7 minutes. If your phone agent doesn't sound very experienced, you might want to just hang up (politely) and hit redial.



April 2019

I was asked the other day why fares to certain cities suddenly get nice and low. I answered that I am often as confounded as anyone about how airlines price routes. I suspect big data has a say as numbers get crunched to infinitesimal combinations of computations that spit out **destinations in the pursuit of incremental profit.**

But that's a terrible answer.

So I had a better one: *seguire la corrente.*

That's Italian for "go with the flow".

There's no point in understanding why the airlines do what they do, but there is a point in taking advantage of it. And first you need to be ready to do that. Hello FCF.

Case in point: 44.4949° N, 11.3426° E, better known as the historic Italian city of Bologna. And yes, it's where Bolognese sauce comes from.

Oh, and low fares.

Right now.

Really. Low. Fares.

BELLISSIMO BOLOGNA BARGAIN

Fares to Bologna from the U.S. [West Coast start from \\$2,273](#) on American and British Airways, and even lower once you add in [the AARP discount](#), which brings the fare down to **\$2,073** on San Diego—Bologna with British Airways, and from the [East Coast starting at \\$2,208](#) for Philadelphia—Bologna on American and Iberia.

Think of it this way: If you have a 10-day Italian vacation planned with a companion, and you save \$1,500 per ticket, that's \$3,000 between you—or \$300 a day—to do great, memorable things like dine at Michelin-rated restaurants, upgrade your hotel/resort to a suite, rent a Ferrari—whatever.

It's your money. Keep it or spend it on airfare. I know what I'd do.

THE BOLOGNA BOUNCE – ITALY AT YOUR CALL

Look at Bologna, sitting high up on Italy's thigh, merely a hop, skip, or jump away from Milan, Rome, Venice, and Florence. Put those low fares to use by getting over your jet lag in Bologna while seeing the novel city, then branching out to discover the rest of Italy.



Bella Bologna, Let Us Count the Ways

Bologna boasts a long and fascinating history, world-renowned cuisine, and the world's oldest university (aptly, The University of Bologna) founded in 1088.

It's an easy city to walk, and it's not too crowded with many tourists who generally stick to better-known destinations like Venice and Florence. There's so much to do here.

Rising above the city's terra cotta roof skyline is the 300-foot Asinelli Tower, built in the 1100s. It's also Italy's tallest "leaning tower" and the views of the surrounding city are sublime.

And, even if you wouldn't spend your extra \$300/day on a fancy car, how could you resist visiting the Ferrari World Headquarters in Maranello, just 30 miles from Bologna?

Some say Bologna is Italy's best-kept secret. Not any more with FCF's exposé of low-fare flights!

BRANCHING OUT FROM BOLOGNA

By train or car, not very far:

- 75 Miles to Florence
- 96 Miles to Venice
- 134 Miles to Milan
- 233 Miles to Rome

NON-STOP FLIGHTS FROM BOLOGNA TO OUTSIDE OF ITALY

Use Bologna's low cost arrival fare to bounce beyond Italy.

Bologna to Amsterdam, 2 hours

Bologna to Paris, 1 hour and 45 minutes

Bologna to Munich, 1 hour

Bologna to Frankfurt, 1 hour and 30 minutes

For more information on airlines and routes that fly from Bologna go [here](#).



The Stopover Loophole Strategy (SLS): Two Ways To Win

April 2019

Last month we spoke about the [Stopover Loophole Strategy](#), a cunning way to score an amazingly cool deal, especially if you're looking to go somewhere warm.

Quick recap: a stopover is a planned stop of more than 4 hours (domestic) or 24 hours (international) between flight segments on a trip.

BUT, these stopovers are sometimes allowed for free or a very small fee, AND you can have a stopover that lasts a day or even weeks.

And to our mind, that means **Hello Holiday!**

In our example we showed how a Los Angeles—New York return flight in Business Class typically runs \$1,767, but when Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, is included, the overall price can actually drop to \$1,295, [a savings of \\$472 despite adding an extra destination](#).

Low-fare-fabulousness can come in various ways; one is by trips priced as multiple single tickets, meaning each leg of the trip is priced as a one-way ticket.

Here's an example:

Multi-city trip	Total price from	\$1,759
Book with American	\$1,759	Select
Book with American	\$5,274	Select

Here's an example:

Above we see a trip booked as several multi-city trips on one ticket, versus three one-way tickets. The difference is an astounding—\$3,515 cheaper the multi-city way.

Sounds incredible, right? Airlines price multiple destinations differently—it's what is often referred to as "breaking the fare." Sometimes breaking the fare into separate tickets is best, and sometimes combining them into one ticket is best. Best for you, that is.

FCF, WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?

You may be asking, "Bennett, who cares how airlines price tickets as long as I get a great deal?"

Fair enough. But we wanted to point out that when you see the comment, "The X tickets in your itinerary must be booked separately," don't panic.

You'll often hear it suggested to not mix tickets because bags could get lost or late flights can cause chaos and the like. But those problems don't apply here because you're staying in one place—you're not connecting through and changing flights on top of one another.

Just note that **fees can apply per ticket**, so buying separate tickets would mean paying change or cancellations fees on each ticket. That means you want to be confident you don't need to do this as the savings would be lost.



*Play your cards right and get a free vacation on your next trip,
to places like Cabo San Lucas.*



How the United Airlines Stopover Loophole Strategy (SLS) Nets Free Vacations

April 2019

Do This and Get Your Next Vacation for Free, or Better...

Our 'Stopover Loophole Strategy' is built around something that many airlines use called a 'stopover allowance.' A stopover is defined as a planned stop of more than 4 hours (domestic) or 24 hours (international) between flight segments on a trip. The trick is that **these stopovers are sometimes allowed for free or a very small fee.** But here's the best part – **you can have a stopover that lasts a day or even weeks.**

Are you seeing what's possible yet? You can sneak an entire vacation into this stopover allowance. This means you can visit an awesome destination (ahem, your stopover) for a fraction of the price. And, to boot, the

cost of your flight to the destination you originally targeted in the first place will be cheaper as well. Here's a quick sample trip for how this could work:

Let's say you need to travel from Los Angeles to New York for a business trip and the typical Biz Class fare is \$1,767 round-trip. For **\$299 less**, you can **add** a stop in **Cancun**, Mexico on your way and get a cheap side vacation. You still get to New York, but you also get the beauty and relaxation of Mexico—for less dinero. And no, you won't have to sacrifice your flight experience—all flights are in Business or First Class.

WHO THIS STRATEGY IS IDEAL FOR

The SLS strategy is a great option to consider for the following two cases:

1. Leisure travelers who have the flexibility to add on side trips to exciting destinations or to visit friends and family.
2. Business travelers on a specific travel budget who are interested in sneaking side trips into their business plans.

WHEN YOU OPEN YOURSELF UP TO THIS STRATEGY, HERE'S WHAT'S POSSIBLE

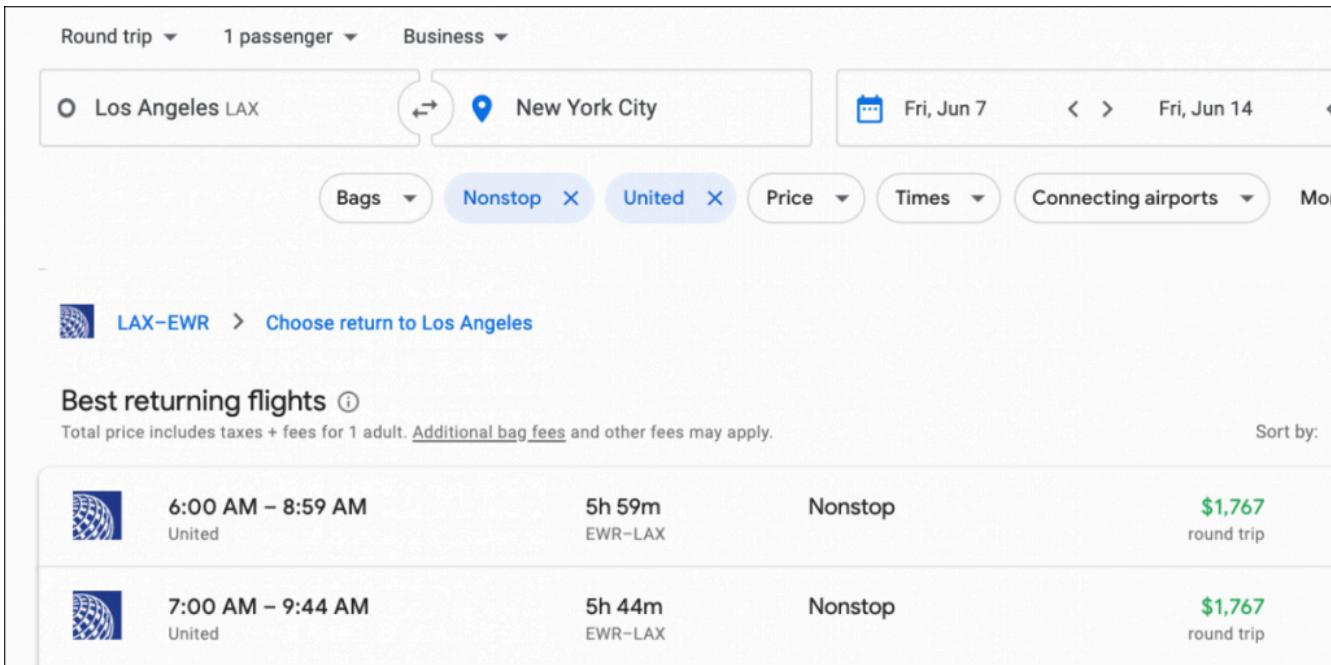
There are two common outcomes you'll find when you use our SLS strategy:

1. You'll be able to get your side trip for free.
2. You can actually **get money back for taking a side trip**.

Let me repeat—**often adding a side trip can lower your total airfare cost**. That means you're actually *getting paid* to sneak in a great vacation in the middle of your trip! Sometimes, your side trip will come at a *small* additional cost (which still makes it worth it). Sound too good to be true? Check this out...

NORTH AMERICA STOPOVERS WITH UNITED

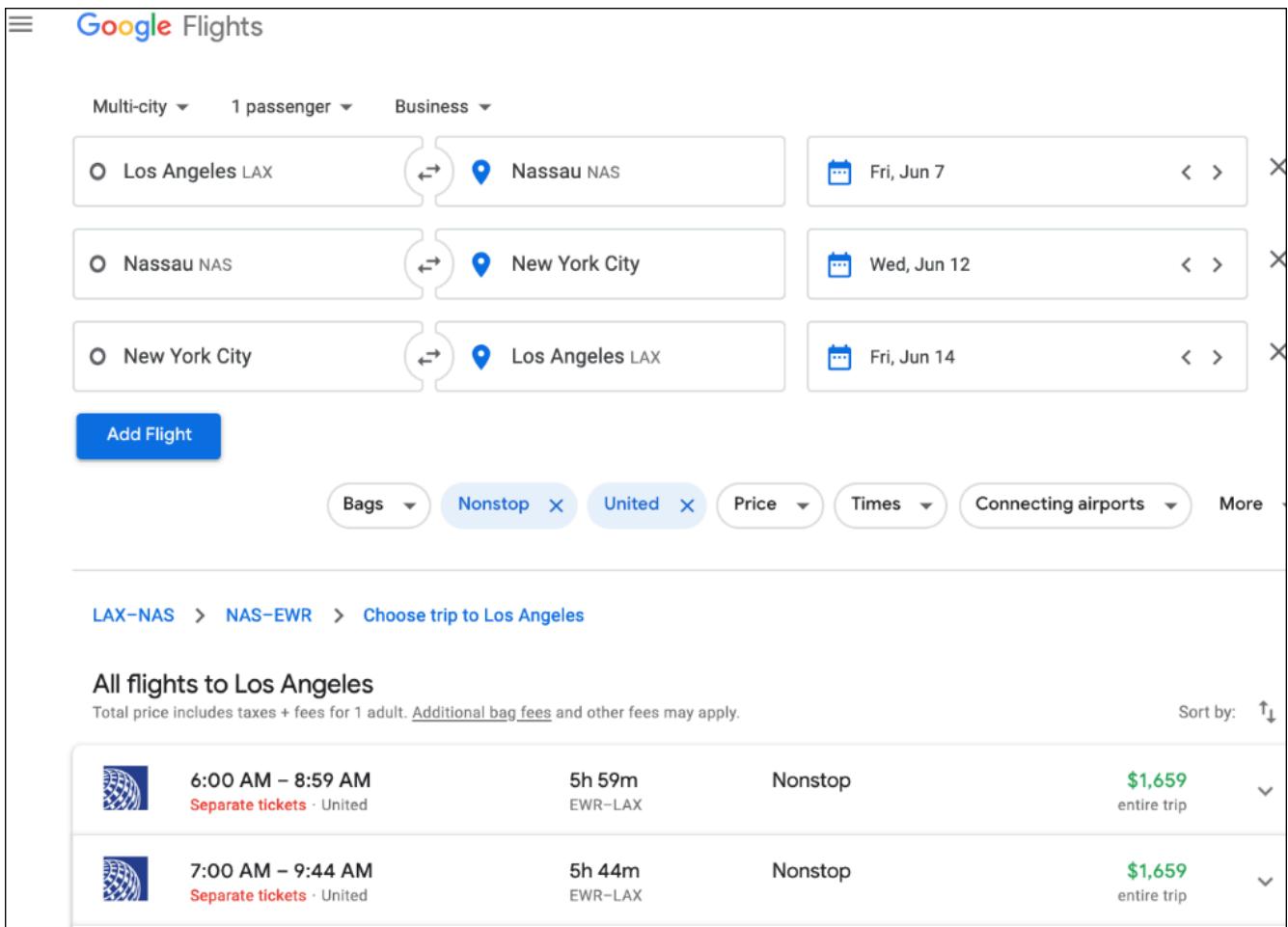
Take a look at this flight from Los Angeles to New York City. A round-trip Business Class ticket is \$1,767.



The screenshot shows a flight search interface with the following details:

- Round trip: Los Angeles (LAX) to New York City (EWR)
- 1 passenger
- Business class
- Departure: Fri, Jun 7
- Return: Fri, Jun 14
- Filter: Nonstop (selected)
- Sort by: Price (selected)
- Flight results:
 - 6:00 AM – 8:59 AM: 5h 59m EWR-LAX, Nonstop, \$1,767 round trip
 - 7:00 AM – 9:44 AM: 5h 44m EWR-LAX, Nonstop, \$1,767 round trip

But when you **add** in a stopover in the **Bahamas**, the total cost is **\$108 less**:



The screenshot shows the Google Flights interface for a multi-city trip. The search parameters are:

- Multi-city: Los Angeles LAX to Nassau NAS to New York City
- 1 passenger
- Business class
- Dates: Fri, Jun 7 to Fri, Jun 14

Flight filters applied:

- Nonstop
- United

Flight results:

Flight Details	Duration	Nonstop	Price
6:00 AM – 8:59 AM Separate tickets · United	5h 59m EWR-LAX	Nonstop	\$1,659 entire trip
7:00 AM – 9:44 AM Separate tickets · United	5h 44m EWR-LAX	Nonstop	\$1,659 entire trip

Our researchers have also found that SLS often works for travelers starting in **Chicago to Las Vegas, San Francisco to New York, Denver to New York, and many others**. We say it a lot, and it never fails—be flexible and creative, and you can be rewarded immensely.

DOMESTIC STOPOVERS WITH UNITED

Domestic stopovers are great if you want to sneak in a trip to visit family or friends, or even just explore a part of the country you've never seen before. Add a stopover in Chicago on the New York-Los Angeles example and **the price drops \$586**. Add in a stopover in **New Orleans** and the total cost is **\$376 less**.

Multi-city ▾ 1 passenger ▾ Business ▾

○ New York City ↔ San Francisco SFO

○ San Francisco SFO ↔ New Orleans MSY

○ New Orleans MSY ↔ New York City

○ Wed, Jul 3 < > X

○ Fri, Jul 12 < > X

○ Wed, Jul 17 < > X

Add Flight

Fri, Jul 12
Flights ▾
United X
Price ▾
Times ▾
Connecting airports ▾
More ▾

10:50 PM – 5:15 AM⁺¹
Nonstop · 4h 25m · United

EWR–SFO > Change > Choose trip to New York City

All flights to New York City

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

Sort by: ↑↓

6:00 AM – 9:54 AM <small>Separate tickets · United</small>	2h 54m MSY–EWR	Nonstop	\$1,391 entire trip
			▼

It is always worth testing out the Stopover Loophole Strategy when you're booking domestic round-trip flights. There are incredible deals to be found all the time. Now that you're aware of the possibilities, we hope you're able to sneak in a great vacation on your next trip.

Here are more samples to stimulate ideas:

Normal Trip	Side Trip City	New Premium Fare w/Side Trip	Free Side-Trip Savings
New York - Los Angeles	Chicago	\$1,226	\$541
New York - Los Angeles	Houston	\$1,291	\$476
New York - Los Angeles	San Juan	\$1,560	\$207
Los Angeles - New York	Denver	\$1,235	\$532
Los Angeles - New York	San Jose del Cabo	\$1,442	\$325
Los Angeles - New York	Cancun	\$1,468	\$299
Los Angeles - New York	Puerto Vallarta	\$1,575	\$192
San Francisco - New York	Kansas City	\$1,499	\$268
San Francisco - New York	Grand Cayman	\$1,538	\$229

Normal Trip	Side Trip City	New Premium Fare w/Side Trip	Free Side-Trip Savings
San Francisco - New York	Nassau	\$1,568	\$199
San Francisco - New York	Montego Bay	\$1,683	\$84



Troubleshooting Lucrative United Upgrade Opportunities with Connecting Flights

April 2019

Over the last year FCF has delivered lots of special reports on upgrading with United miles for travel to all parts of the world: [Asia](#), [South America](#), [Europe](#), and [the South Pacific](#). Moreover, we've uncovered countless, [specific pre-baked trip alerts](#) showing availability for non-stop, long-haul flights, such as Los Angeles to Sydney.

THE FLY IN THE LONG HAUL AVAILABILITY OINTMENT

But here's the thing. If you live in, say, Houston, and you spot that juicy Los Angeles-Sydney opportunity, you might run into a small, but not insurmountable glitch. (*Glitch. noun: an unexpected setback*).

You need to know that if you try to add your home airport's connecting flight to the international nonstop long-haul flight, and if the connecting flight has no upgrade space, then the international flight will also show no upgrade space.

For a Houston resident wanting to see a koala, that's heartbreaking. And we can't have that. Koalas are awesome. So don't despair. FCF has a plan of action.

In this special report, we take a closer look at how to use FCF's Sweet Redeem upgrade alerts with United—when you have to make a connection via other U.S. cities to the international long-haul flight.

ADDING A U.S. CONNECTING FLIGHT TO THE LONG-HAUL INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

From the U.S., you should consider buying an economy through-fare ticket (i.e., Houston-Los Angeles-Sydney) that includes the entire itinerary on one ticket. Then use miles to upgrade from the gateway to your international destination, at a minimum. If upgrade space is available on the domestic segments, grab it, as the cost is the same.

WORKAROUND TO BOOKING PROBLEMS FOR CONNECTING FLIGHTS

Here's what you need to do about United upgrade award space when you add connecting flights and use miles for an upgrade:

Step 1: Find the long-haul flight/segment first. Get fresh availability on the non-stop long-haul and find the dates you want for the departure and the return. But **don't include** the connecting flight from your home airport just yet.

Step 2: Check availability on the domestic segment. Change the departure to your home airport, for example Houston-Sydney.

Step 3: Add the domestic connecting flight. Without losing the upgrade space for the long-haul on one ticket, you'll need to **search for the upgrade by using United's multi-city search**. This is really important to enable United's computer system to view each flight segment separately, rather than as a whole.

Do you want to book a
MileagePlus® award
ticket?

No

Yes

Trip type

Roundtrip

One-way

Multi-city

Locations and dates

Destination 1

IAH

Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX - All Airports)

Jul 09, 2019

Anytime

Connections

Nonstop 1 2 +

Destination 2

Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX)

Sydney, NSW, AU (SYD)

Jul 9, 2019

Anytime

Connections

Nonstop 1 2 +

Step 4: United will price the miles and co-pay needed for the upgrade as two tickets (total cash ticket cost is not affected by this as long as your connecting flight is booked in the same class of service and has a connection of 24 hours or less for an international flight). When you purchase your ticket, United will take out miles based on two tickets.

Review trip itinerary

Trip summary [View checked baggage charges](#)

Tue, Jul 09, 2019

7:40 pm → 9:25 pm Nonstop
 Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental) to Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX) 3h 45m total

UA 1791 Boeing 737-800

MileagePlus earnings: 665 base award miles
 1,379 PQM | 1 PQ5 | \$133 PQQ

Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental) to Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX) 7:40 pm - 9:25 pm (3h 45m)
 United Economy (V)
 Meals for purchase
 Upgrade waitlist

UA 1791 | Boeing 737-800

Multi-city (1 traveler)		Edit search
Tue, Jul 09, 2019 IAH - LAX 7:40 pm - 9:25 pm		Revise
Tue, Jul 09, 2019 LAX - SYD 10:50 pm - 6:55 am		Revise
Fare \$854.00		
Taxes and fees \$55.30		
MileagePlus Upgrade Awards 47,500 miles		
Upgrade Award service charges \$575.00		
TOTAL \$1,484.30		
	+ 47,500 miles	

Tue, Jul 09, 2019

Tue, Jul 9 10:50 pm → Thu, Jul 11 6:55 am Nonstop
 Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX) to Sydney, NSW, AU (SYD) 15h 5m total

UA 839 Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner

MileagePlus earnings: 3,610 base award miles
 7,487 PQM | 1 PQ5 | \$722 PQQ

Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX) to Sydney, NSW, AU (SYD) 10:50 pm - 6:55 am (15h 5m)
 United Polaris business (PZ)
 Dinner
 Upgrade available

UA 839 | Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner

Depart LAX: Tue, Jul 9 Red-eye flight
 Arrive SYD: Thu, Jul 11

Step 5: Call United at 1-800-864-8331 and ask for a supervisor (this might take a couple of calls as at times agents will not transfer you to a supervisor or even check with a supervisor as how to help you). United will manually have to override the preset cost and make the correction to show the upgrade cost from your departure city to your destination city. You need a senior agent to understand this.

At this point, United will do a full refund of the co-pay and miles, and then recharge the correct amount, for miles and co-pay, while you are on the phone. You have to do it this way because you will have a waitlist on your domestic flight (a good thing) and you will have the upgrade confirmed for the long-haul international flight.

Tue., Jul. 9, 2019 Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental) to Sydney, NSW, AU (SYD)				
Depart: 7:40 p.m. Tue., Jul. 9, 2019 Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental)	Arrive: 9:25 p.m. Tue., Jul. 9, 2019 Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX)	Flight Time: 3 hr 45 min	Flight distance: 1,379 m/2,219 km	Flight:UA1791 Aircraft: Boeing 737-800 Fare Class: United Economy (V) Meal: Meals for purchase No Special Meal Offered.
Change Planes. Connect time in Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX) is 1 hr 25 min.				
Depart: 10:50 p.m. Tue., Jul. 9, 2019 Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX)	Arrive: 6:55 a.m. +2 Day Thu., Jul. 11, 2019 Sydney, NSW, AU (SYD)	Flight Time: 15 hr 5 min	Flight distance: 7,487 m/12,049 km	Flight:UA839 Aircraft: Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner Fare Class: United Polaris business (PZ) Meal: Dinner
Tue., Jul. 9, 2019 Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental) to Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX)				
Depart: 7:40 p.m. Tue., Jul. 9, 2019 Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental)	Arrive: 9:25 p.m. Tue., Jul. 9, 2019 Los Angeles, CA, US (LAX)	Travel Time: 3 hr 45 min	Flight distance: 1,379 m/2,219 km	Flight:UA1791 Aircraft: Boeing 737-800 Fare Class: United First (PZ) Meal: Dinner No Special Meal Offered.
This flight segment is waitlisted.				
\$ Reservation Value				
Price Details — Fare				
1 Adult (18-64) 1 Upgrade Award(s) Additional Taxes/Fees	\$854.00 30,000 Award Miles \$55.30			
Total	\$909.30			
Payment Information				
Name of Cardholder:		MATTHEW BENNETT Visa		

Step 6: Pat a koala. Bear in mind that as cute as they are, their claws are kind of sharp.

Not crazy about being on the phone with United but OK with the domestic flight in coach? Then you should still book via the multi-city search, but don't request a waitlist. Just confirm the domestic United flight in economy, book the upgrade for the long-haul, and you won't have to call United, because your domestic flight is not waitlisted. The miles and co-pay charged are just for the international leg of your flight.

Final thought: What you want to avoid is having all your flights on a waitlist, as outlined in step two.

Cost *not* to follow the workaround booking solution:

- Buying two separate tickets may involve rechecking in and possible baggage issues
- Paying mileage and co-pay charges for both tickets
- Missing out on the long-haul upgrade in a premium cabin

Side notes:

- United does not hold an upgrade seat without mileage in your account.

- United does allow a fare-lock hold on an upgrade seat.
- United does not allow a fare-lock on waitlisted flights.

WHY USE MILES FOR AN UPGRADE OVER FREE MILEAGE AWARD TICKETS?

FCF often likes using miles for an upgrade over free mileage award tickets, which don't earn elite credit and are difficult to find anyway. It's better to use miles to upgrade because availability is much greater and the ticket earns miles and elite credit.

To take advantage of FCF's Sweet Redeem upgrade awards, you use the long-haul Business Class flight as a "bridge," which means getting the premium seat on the international leg and using, if you have to, economy to reach the gateway(s).

Recent Examples of Lucrative United Upgrades:

[United Upgrades from California to China and Japan, for Up to Four Seats](#)

[Fly to Australia Business Class 45% to 75% Off With United Miles](#)

[Spring and Summer Upgrades On United Just Found to Europe, Four Seats](#)

[Upgrade Opportunities to Buenos Aires, Lima, Rio, Santiago, and Sao Paulo](#)



West Coast Awakening: Premium Fares to Europe Drop to East Coast Levels

April 2019

We [first reported](#) on the new lower Business Class fare trend from the West Coast to Europe back in January 2017. FCF's research team was euphoric, tightly clasping the evidence: fare-drops by as much as 35% when booked 150-days in advance. And why wouldn't they be excited? Fares to Europe from the West Coast have historically ranged from \$4,500 to \$7,000 on major carriers.

Fast forward to today, and we're seeing the lower Business Class fare trend to Europe from the West Coast continue, but this time, you can sometimes snag those fares without purchasing 150 days in advance, and fares vary by route (and at times even by season). This means more variety—and more options.

But not only are we seeing ticket restrictions changing for low-hanging Business Class fares, the gap between East and West Coast fares is closing rapidly and, in some cases, has reversed—meaning West Coast fares

are actually lower!

THE COASTAL GAP IS CLOSING

On the West Coast, there does seem to be a mindset at play that ignores European options a lot more than happens on the East Coast. Of course, you say, Europe is closer to the East Coast. But the gap between the West Coast and Europe is wider in other ways: time zones, climate, and perhaps even cultural.

There's often no better way to close a gap (geographically, climatically, or culturally) than with cold, hard cash—and that's what's happening.

We're frequent seeing Business Class fares from the West Coast to Europe around the \$2,000 mark. Compare that with the cost of flying to New York from Los Angeles—around \$1,700. For just \$300 to \$500 more, West Coasters can take their vacation to Europe.

PAID BY THE HOUR

Case in point—the travel time between Seattle and London is actually the same as Seattle to Tokyo. One way to look at travel is “cost per flight hour.” It can be very revealing. West Coasters take note: Just look at the cost per flight hour traveling from Seattle to Europe and Asia: Seattle to London is currently \$2,760 (add in the [\\$200 savings for AARP](#) and the fare is even lower at \$2,560) and has a round-trip flight time of about 19 hours and 35 minutes, which comes out to be about \$145 per flight hour.

Compare this to a Seattle-Tokyo fare at \$3,933 nonstop with the same flight time (19 hours and 30 minutes) and a cost per flight hour of \$207. As we've said before, a mile is not a mile in the air; it's all relative. Proof that the West Coast to Europe jaunt is quite a good value.

THE COASTS ARE GETTING CLOSER

[Denver-London](#): American Airlines and British Airways currently have published fares starting at \$2,530 round-trip. Compare that to [Boston-London](#) starting at \$2,570 with Delta. Did you catch that? Fly Denver-London for \$40 *less* for an extra 1,400 miles in the sky.

[San Francisco-London](#): American and British Airways currently have published fares starting at \$2,680 round-trip. Compare it to [Washington, DC-London](#) starting at \$2,630 with American and British Airways. Again, just a \$50 difference—yes, this time you're *paying* \$50 more for those extra flight miles but the concept still stands up in court!

[San Diego-Bologna](#): American Airlines and British Airways currently have published fares starting at \$2,273 round-trip. Compare that to [Boston-Bologna](#), starting at \$2,223 with Iberia. That's a difference of just \$50 for what is essentially a trancontinental USA trip.

Other recent West Coast-Europe special fares found:

[Flash California-Europe Business Class Fares Starting at \\$2,073 R/T, Major Airline/s](#)

[Flash Biz Class Fares to Europe from Las Vegas, Portland, Salt Lake City, and Seattle from \\$2,475 R/T, Major Airline/s](#)

[Fly From All Over the U.S. to London this Summer/Fall On New Discounted Business Class Fares from \\$2,519 R/T With British Airways](#)

Round trip San Diego, CA to Bologna/ Florence, Italy

Wednesday, August 7, 2019 to Thursday, August 22, 2019

Your trip total

\$2,272.63

Price for all passengers

[Price and tax information](#) 

Plus, with the British Airways [AARP discount](#) the cost drops to \$2,073. More about how that works [here](#).

  AARP member discounts on BA

1 Dates and flights 2 Price 3 Passengers 4 Payment 5 Confirmation

Price

Check your flight details

Airplane -- Wednesday 07 August 2019						Price
20:45 07 Aug	15:20 08 Aug	Lindbergh Field (CA) (S. California)	Heathrow (London)	BA0272 British Airways	Club World	\$2,072.49 1 passenger
20:20 08 Aug	23:30 08 Aug	Heathrow (London)	Bologna	BA0544 British Airways	Club Europe	Baggage allowance Currency calculator
Airplane -- Thursday 22 August 2019						
08:10 22 Aug	09:30 22 Aug	Bologna	Heathrow (London)	BA0543 British Airways	Club Europe	
15:25 22 Aug	18:40 22 Aug	Heathrow (London)	Lindbergh Field (CA) (S. California)	BA0273 British Airways	Club World	

TAKE IT UP TO FIRST

HOLD THOSE GREAT FARES

Remember that

. So, if you're not sure about your trip details, lock in great airfare deals when you see them. Spectacular low fares come and go all the time—you've got to strike while the iron's hot.

MANY AIRLINES, ALL THREE ALLIANCES

All alliances are participating in this trend because deals are available on a wide range of airlines that are offering low-route fares. Everything from oneworld (with American and British Airways) to SkyTeam (including Air France, Delta, and KLM), to Star Alliance (with Lufthansa and United).

LOW-FARE WEST COAST DEPARTURE CITIES

Good low fares can be found from Denver, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, San Diego, and Seattle.

LOW-FARE WEST COAST DESTINATION CITIES

Good low-fare destinations are more spread out—even into all corners of Europe. Fares vary by departure city—and currently include Bologna, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Madrid, Moscow, London and Prague, to name a few. But keep in mind that this can change quickly.

WEST COAST FARES

To be clear, not all flights between a West Coast city and all European cities are \$2,200 to \$2,700. Fares are not low across the board. It's more like a third of the routes are under \$3,000, a third under \$3,500 and a third are \$3,500 to \$4,000+.

Exhibit A: The San Diego to Bologna route discussed above goes for as little as \$2,273 round-trip. Compare that to a high fare route such as Barcelona: \$5,034, a difference of \$2,761 (55%). So, you'll see us posting about San Diego—Bologna. Best news? If you had your heart set on Barcelona but can't stomach the price, take the international long-haul flight to Bologna, relax for a day or three, then grab a one-way to Barcelona—and save money.

BECOME AN OPPORTUNITY WEST COAST TRAVELER

As FCF has already pointed out, not all routes offer these great deals, so you want to be an [opportunity traveler](#)—to get these kinds of fares, you *cannot* succumb to destination blindness.

For instance, if you don't see a deal to Munich in Business Class, but you do see a deal to Bologna, why not check out Bologna? Then hop over to Munich. It's just 250 miles away.

Travel in Europe is cheap. Fly, drive, or travel by train your way between these two beautiful cities. They're just over an hour's flight apart. This is just one more time we have to get that mindset in check—many famed European cities are quite close to each other in reality, we just *think* they are far apart in our minds. Let's stick with reality. It's a better deal.

The chart below will help West Coasters **determine if they should buy or hold out when searching for fares**. If your question is "What is a good fare to Europe nowadays?" This will give you the answer.

Fare Grade	Fare Range	Sample Routes
Amazing	\$2,200 to \$2,700	San Diego to Bologna, Prague, or London; San Francisco to Madrid, Helsinki, or London; Seattle to London; Denver to London; Los Angeles to Moscow; Salt Lake City to Malaga, Istanbul, or Zurich; Las Vegas to London or Brussels
Very Good	\$2,700 to \$3,100	Los Angeles to London; Seattle to Amsterdam
Decent	\$3,100 to \$3,500	San Francisco to Paris; Los Angeles to Barcelona
Normal / Everyday	\$3,500 to \$4,000+	San Diego to Frankfurt; Seattle to Barcelona

HOW TO FIND LOW FARE ROUTES

Finding and picking a low-fare route is easy if you keep an eye out for [FCF's alerts](#), or find them yourself. It's not for everyone, but if you are up to it—with FCF's help—you *can* find low-fare routes.

One of the best tools FCF has found for finding low fares is [Google Flights](#). Most, if not all, our members are familiar with Google Flights. We include a link for Google Flights in almost all FCF fare alerts, which, when clicked, will take you to the date and flight selection.

FARE ▾	ORIGIN ▾	DESTINATION ▾	AIRLINES	NEXT STEP
\$2,273	San Diego	Bologna	 BRITISH AIRWAYS	How to Book Get Deal ←

Now, what many of you most likely do not know is that you can **search for low-fare destinations in Europe** by entering “Europe” as your destination instead of a city (like London) for example. Google Flights will then display fares for your preferred travel dates to cities all over Europe.

The screenshot below shows what you will see. If you've been wondering *how* to be an opportunity traveler—this is one of the key components.



From here you can zoom in and see more fares as shown below:

If you don't care when you travel, are flexible with your days, or can travel any time in the month of August for example, you have options too. Try a search over the next 6 months, or by a certain month, with a stay of either one or two weeks.

Click on the departure date, and then clicking on "Flexible dates." If you want to check fares over a six-month travel period, leave it on "All," and if you want a certain month, click on that month.

≡ Google Flights

Round trip ▾ 1 passenger ▾ Business ▾

1 stop or fewer 

Specific dates

Flexible dates



1-week trip in the next 6 months

All

March

April

May

June

July

August

Weekend

1 week

2 week