



Who Says You Can't Hop Down Under Using Miles?

November 2018

FCF's truffle-sniffing wombats have found some extraordinary [First Class award availability to Australia in June and July](#) of next year with Qantas.

That's our summertime, but Australia's winter. But I have to say: "You call that a *winter*?!" Melbourne and Sydney can get chilly but snow is something they just don't know about. And cool, sunny days make for great sightseeing weather.

In Melbourne in July you're looking at a temperature range of between 43 and 57 degrees, while in Sydney it's about 4 degrees warmer across the board. A lot of Aussies prefer their winter to summer, as mid-summer temperatures can be extreme.

It's a big country—about the same size as the continental USA. Farther north, you'll never know it's winter. Far North Queensland; Darwin, the capital of the Northern Territory; and the Kimberly, in Western Australia, are at their best at that time of year when temperatures can climb above 80 degrees, especially in Darwin.

Also, you can't swim in the ocean in northern Australia during their summer because of what the locals call "stingers"—dangerous jellyfish. But in winter, it's safe, and the water is still warm.

It's also a great time to visit the Red Centre, a huge outback region in Central Australia. It features some of aboriginal Australia's most sacred sites, such as the massive sandstone monolith of Uluru, also known as Ayers Rock; Kings Canyon, a gorge with 300-foot-high cliffs; and the ancient red rock formations of Kata Tjuta.

If you're a sports fan, it's a good time to head Down Under with the rugby and Australian rules football seasons in full tilt. You simply have to see an Australian Football League (AFL) game at the Melbourne Cricket Ground according to an FCF fanatic sport friend.

Great Bucket-List Busting Opportunities:

[Qantas First Class Trips Found to/from Melbourne and Sydney](#)

[Handful of Qantas Business Class Trips Found to/from Sydney and Brisbane](#)



How to Use United Upgrades (With Amazing Availability) to Save Up to 75% to Must-Do Peru

November 2018

Chase, Starwood/Marriott, and United members all can score.

Deep, rich history and incomprehensible architectural feats. Daredevil adventure spots and sophisticated culture. Dramatic landscapes and some of the best food in the world.

Peru has it all.

But did you know that this South American country, almost twice the size of Texas, boasts eye-popping world records that are bound to surprise? Five reasons to visit:

Archaeology: Peru boasts iconic ancient ruins you can check off your bucket list, from the “lost city” of Machu Picchu to the mysterious geoglyphs in the Nazca Desert.

Adventure: Peru has astonishing adventures. You can ride the second-highest sand dune in the world, 3,860-foot-high Cerro Blanco, and surf the longest left-breaking wave in the world at 2.5 miles. You can hike in the second-deepest canyon in the world (nearly twice as deep as the Grand Canyon), the 11,600-foot-deep Cotahuasi Canyon. You can climb a mountain that literally looks like a rainbow. You can explore the Amazon on land, by boat, by canopy walkway, and by zipline. And you can paraglide from cliffs—even in downtown Lima.

Culture: Peru is rich in cultural offerings, from its 3,000 different festivals to its beautiful colonial cities, such as Cusco, and its sophisticated capital, Lima, with cutting-edge shops and museums.

Scenery: Peru is one of the most bio-diverse countries in the world, with about 90 different microclimates. You can see snow-capped mountains and floating grass islands, endless beaches and plunging canyons, coastal deserts and an Amazonian rainforest, which covers 60% of the land.

Animals: Peru has the second-largest number of bird species on the planet, at 1,800. And yes, there are llamas and alpacas and vicuñas. But you can also swim with pink dolphins in the Amazon and see penguins in the Paracas National Reserve.

Ready to go? Here's how, using United upgrades.

Oftentimes, it's smart to forget about free mileage awards, because they don't earn elite credit and are much more difficult to find anyway. Instead, consider using miles to upgrade because availability is much greater, and the ticket earns miles and elite credit, to boot.

The savings can be as much as 75%.

UNITED'S UPGRADE PROGRAM TO PERU

To upgrade to Business Class to Peru, [United](#) requires 25,000 miles plus a co-pay of \$125 each way on the lowest upgradeable economy fares (S, T, K, L, and G). When Business Class fares are high, using miles for an upgrade can offer a great return.

HOW TO SAVE 75% ON HIGH-FARE ROUTES

Say you're traveling Houston to Lima, often an expensive Business Class route, even when booked way in advance. The lowest United economy fare is currently \$614, while Business Class is \$3,473 (\$2,859 more).

So, even with the \$250 co-pay (round-trip) on top of the coach fare, you can save \$2,609 (75%) off the published fare by using 50,000 miles.

See chart below for our upgrade award availability survey.

United.com screenshots showing fare difference between economy and Business Class plus upgrade math:

Trip summary [► View checked baggage charges](#)

Wed, Feb 06, 2019

4:25 pm	✈	11:55 pm	Nonstop
Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental)		Lima, PE (LIM)	6h 30m total
 UA 854 Boeing 767-300			
Revise flight			► Details

Fri, Feb 15, 2019

1:30 am	✈	6:55 am	Nonstop
Lima, PE (LIM)		Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental)	6h 25m total
 UA 855 Boeing 767-300			
Revise flight			► Details

Roundtrip (1 traveler) [Edit search](#)

Wed, Feb 06, 2019 [Revise](#)
IAH - LIM 4:25 pm - 11:55 pm

Fri, Feb 15, 2019 [Revise](#)
LIM - IAH 1:30 am - 6:55 am

Fare	\$505.00
Taxes and fees	\$109.18
MileagePlus Upgrade Awards	50,000 miles
Upgrade Award service charges	\$250.00
TOTAL	\$864.18
	+ 50,000 miles

Wed, Feb 06, 2019

4:25 pm	✈	11:55 pm	Nonstop
Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental)		Lima, PE (LIM)	6h 30m total
 UA 854 Boeing 767-300			
► Details			

Fri, Feb 15, 2019

1:30 am	✈	6:55 am	Nonstop
Lima, PE (LIM)		Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental)	6h 25m total
 UA 855 Boeing 767-300			
► Details			

Roundtrip (1 traveler) [Edit search](#)

Wed, Feb 06, 2019 [Revise](#)
IAH - LIM 4:25 pm - 11:55 pm

Fri, Feb 15, 2019 [Revise](#)
LIM - IAH 1:30 am - 6:55 am

Fare	\$3,414.00
Taxes and fees	\$109.18
TOTAL	\$3,523.18

BRIDGE ROUTE CONNECTIONS CAN SAVE UP TO 63%

Smart travelers use the long-haul Business Class flight as a “bridge,” which means getting the premium seat on the international leg and using economy to reach the gateway(s), if you have to (and you often don’t).

From the U.S., that means you should consider buying an economy through-fare ticket that includes the entire itinerary on one ticket. Then use miles just to upgrade from the gateway to your international destination, as the worst case. If upgrade space is available on the domestic/short segments, grab them, as the cost is the same.

Example: On Chicago-Lima, the lowest through-fare ticket (connecting via Houston) costs \$620 in economy versus \$2,358 in Business Class. Even with the \$250 co-pay to upgrade the Houston-Lima leg (and depending on space, also the Chicago-Houston leg), you save \$1,488 (63%) off the published fare by using miles.

Use our survey below to get an idea of upgrade availability on the long-haul segment—what you want to plan around.

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 one that doesn't in Business Class. On Houston-Lima the combined coach-Business Class fare is \$2,169 including the \$125 one-way co-pay, while round-trip Business Class is \$3,473. So, you can still save \$1,304 (38%) by using miles one way.

TRAVELING ONWARD IN PERU, BUT NOT ON UNITED?

It's easy if you stick to United's partners and book the entire trip on one ticket, either coach or Business Class. Just upgrade the United transpacific segments. Book the routing in coach based on the availability of Business Class upgrades.

For example, from Lima, use [Avianca](#) for flights to other destinations in Peru, such as Arequipa, Cusco, and Trujillo. Makes things very convenient.

HOW TO BOOK MILEAGE UPGRADES ON UNITED

Determine availability date-clusters online using our survey below.

- Confirm that the flights/dates you want are available for the upgrade using miles by requesting upgrade award space on the “[All search options](#)” page.
- Make sure you have the miles required in your account.
- Click on the “Upgrade type” search in the middle of the page.

- In the “Fare preferences” section, select the “Buy Economy and upgrade” option to search for upgrade space in Business Class. Your search result will not only show fares and flight schedules, but also the flights offering an upgrade and the cost.
- Click on “Details” to find out if the upgrade space is available.
- Select your flights and book your ticket.

This can all be done online. (For detailed screenshots of the steps go [here](#).) If you want to book over the phone, call 1-800-421-4655.

By the way, many of **these tactics also work for anyone** who can't find a low Business Class fare, and for those who don't even have many United miles.

HOW ANYONE CAN PLAY THIS UPGRADE GAME

Don't have any or enough United miles? No problem. **Just buy United miles when they go on sale** (recent opportunity [here](#)), or transfer Marriott points to redeem points with [Marriott's Travel Packages](#) (for more information go [here](#)), or transfer points from Chase to United.

OTHER RECENT UPGRADE REPORTS

Just look at these similar examples with American and United. In the past 11 months, FCF has written eight special reports for oneworld (American) and Star Alliance (United) members looking to deploy miles to achieve or maintain elite status *while flying up front*.

In December we focused on [American to Europe](#), in January to [Asia on American](#), in February to [South America on American](#), in March on [American's Transcon](#), in April to [Hawaii on American](#), in May to [Asia on United](#), in June to [South America on United](#), in July to [Europe on United](#), and in August to the [South Pacific on United](#), and this month to [the Caribbean on American](#).

Bridge 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 to Lima	Jan., April, May, June, Aug., Sept.	May	May	Dec., May, July		
Houston to Lima	Dec., Feb., March, May, Sept.	Nov., March, Aug.	Nov., Jan., April	Nov., Dec., Jan., July, Aug.	Nov., Dec., March, May, June	Feb., April, May

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



The Power of American Upgrades to the Caribbean, Plus Surprising Availability

November 2018

**Elite, non-elite, business, and leisure travelers can now
save big on Caribbean routes—up to 57%.**

Ah, the Caribbean. Who can resist its blissful beaches, crystalline waters, and alluring tropical vibes? There's no better place to relax, re-charge, and renew. Happily, American Airlines serves more than 20 islands throughout the region—with more **opportunities to upgrade** than you can shake a pineapple at.

WHY USE MILES TO THE CARIBBEAN?

Beaches: Shimmering sandy strands that seem to go on forever.

Water sports: Few places can compare to the Caribbean for its bathtub warm water, bountiful marine life and colorful reefs, swimming, snorkeling, and diving.

Scenery: From lush parrot-laden jungles to palm-fringed beaches, the Caribbean's natural beauty is legendary, along with the fiery sunsets.

Luxury accommodations: Choose your perfect lodging—everything from a stylish all-inclusive resort with private plunge pools to a luxury beachfront villa with personal staff.

Ready to go? Here's how to do it using American upgrades.

AMERICAN'S UPGRADE PROGRAM

To the Caribbean, [American](#) requires 15,000 miles plus a \$75 co-pay each way on the lowest upgradeable economy fares (H, K, M, L, V, G, Q, N, O, S classes) to Business Class.

LOW ECONOMY ROUTE SAVES 52%

Charlotte to Nassau is one of American's lowest economy fare routes, currently starting at \$333 round-trip, while Business Class starts at \$1,019. Even with the \$150 co-pay you can save \$536 (52%) off the published fare by using 30,000 miles to upgrade. (See chart below for a survey of upgrade-award availability.)

WHEN NOT TO USE MILES FOR AN UPGRADE

Miami to Nassau is one of American's lowest Business Class fare routes, currently starting as low as \$466 round-trip, while coach starts at \$202. Add in the \$150 co-pay and you are looking at \$352 plus 30,000 miles to upgrade. This gives you a savings of only \$114 and a return on your miles of next to zero. So always check published Business Class for travel to the Caribbean because it is a region that, at times, offers very low Business Class fares, making the use of miles for an upgrade not a good deal.

CONNECTIONS CAN SAVE UP TO 57%

Savvy travelers use the longer-haul Business Class flight as a "bridge." All they have to do is get to and from the U.S. bridge gateway.

That means you might even buy an economy through-fare ticket, which gets you to and from the U.S. gateway on one ticket rather than requiring two separate ones. Upgrade all the flight segments if space is available.

Example: Los Angeles-Punta Cana. The through-fare ticket, via Charlotte or Miami in coach is \$487 versus \$1,479 in Business Class. Even with the \$150 co-pay, you can save \$842 (57%) off the published fare by using miles.

Use our cheat sheet, below, to know when you can easily upgrade the long-haul segments; fly the short connecting flight/s in coach if you must—although it doesn't cost any more to upgrade those flights either. All you need is for them to be available for the miles upgrade.

HOW TO BOOK MILEAGE UPGRADES WITH AMERICAN

Before buying your economy ticket, call American at 1-800-433-7300 (upgrades cannot be booked online) to find out if the specific flights/dates you want are available for a mileage upgrade. Book the economy ticket online—keep the American rep on the phone—then have the reservationist book the upgrade. You can also book the ticket and the upgrade by phone, but there's a booking fee of \$35 for international flights.

If the upgrade on the flights/dates you want is not available, have the agent check dates/flights on the days before and after.

Use our survey below to get an idea of months with great upgrade space to get off to a flying start.

HOW ANYONE CAN PLAY THIS UPGRADE GAME AND WHEN TO BUY MILES

Don't have enough American miles and need to top off your account? No problem. Just buy AA miles when they go on sale (recent opportunity [here](#)).

Don't have any American miles but do have Starwood/Marriott points? Then transfer Starwood/Marriott points.

OTHER RECENT UPGRADE REPORTS

Just look at these similar examples with American and United (Delta's upgrade award program is worthless). In the past 11 months, FCF has written 10 special reports for oneworld (American) and Star Alliance (United) members looking to deploy miles to achieve or maintain elite status *while flying up front*.

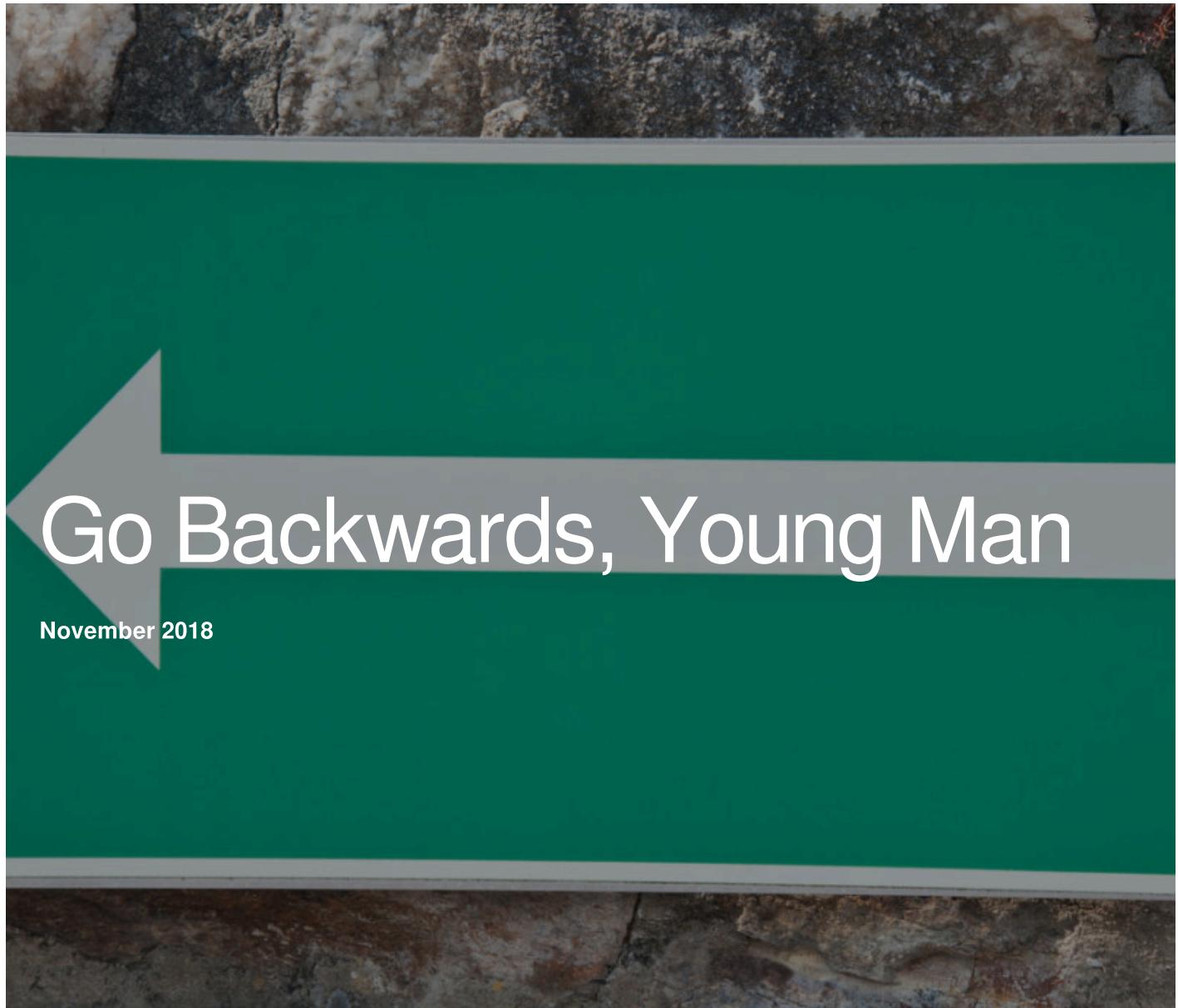
In December we focused on [American to Europe](#), in January to [Asia on American](#), in February to [South America on American](#), in March on [American's Transcon](#), in April to [Hawaii on American](#), in May to [Asia on United](#), in June to [South America on United](#), in July to [Europe on United](#), in August to the [South Pacific on United](#), and this month [to Peru on United](#).

Sweet Redeem Survey: American Mileage Upgrades to the Caribbean

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
Charlotte - Montego Bay	Jan., Feb., March, May, June, July, Dec.	May, June, Aug.	March, April, Aug.	Jan., March., April, May, July, Nov., Dec.	March, May, June	April
Charlotte - Nassau	Jan. through March, May	Feb., April	March, June, July, Aug.	Jan., Feb., March, April, June, July, Aug., Nov., Dec.	Jan., Feb.	March, June, July
Charlotte - Punta Cana	Jan., March, April, July, Aug., Dec.	April, May	June, July, Aug.	March, April, May, June through Aug.	May, June	April, July, Aug.
Chicago - Montego Bay	Jan., Feb., March, April, Dec.	April		Jan., Feb., April	March	
Dallas - Montego Bay	Jan., March, Aug., Nov.			Jan., March, May., Aug., Nov.		
Miami - Grand Cayman	Jan., Nov., Dec.			Jan., Nov.		
Miami - Havana	Jan., Feb., June, Dec.	Jan., March, April, May., Nov.	Jan. through Dec.	May, June, July, Aug., Nov., Dec.	Feb., March, June, July, Aug.	Jan. through Dec.
Miami - Montego Bay	Jan., Feb., April, June, Aug., Nov., Dec.	March, May, July, Nov., Dec.	Jan., March though May, June, July, Aug.	Jan., Feb., April, May, July, Aug., Nov.	Jan., Feb., June, Aug., Dec.	March through July, Aug., Nov., Dec.
Miami - Nassau	Jan., Feb., June, July, Aug.		March	Jan., Feb., March, June, July, Aug.		June
Miami - San Juan	Jan., March, April, June, July, Aug., Nov.	Feb., May, Aug.	May, June	Jan., Feb., March, Aug., Nov., Dec.	Jan., April, May, Nov.	Feb., April, May, June., July, Aug.
Miami - Santo Domingo	Feb., March, April, May, June through Aug., Nov., Dec.	April, May, Dec.		Jan., March, April, May, July, Aug., Nov.	Feb., March, April, June, Nov.	April, May, June, July, Aug., Dec.
Miami - Sint Maarten	June, July	July	Aug.	July, Aug.	July	
New York - Antigua	March	Aug.		June, July		
New York - Punta Cana			July through Aug.			July through Aug.

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
Philadelphia - Montego Bay	Jan., March , April, Aug.	April , May, June, July, Aug.	May through July	Jan., March through May , June, July, Nov.	July, Aug., Dec.	May , June through Aug.
Philadelphia - Nassau	Jan., March			March, April, June		
Philadelphia - Punta Cana	Jan., March , April, May , Aug., Nov., Dec.	June , July	May, June, July , Aug.	Jan., Feb., March	May , June , July, Aug.	June , July , Aug.

Months in black at least one seat available; in [blue](#) at least two seats; in [green](#) at least four seats.



How to make cheap Europe-U.S. fares work for you.

This report at a glance:

- Why buy Business Class tickets **from Europe** to the U.S.?
- Current deals from Europe to the U.S.
- When going “backwards” saves you money
- Going backwards doesn’t work for you?

WHY BUY BUSINESS CLASS TICKETS FROM EUROPE TO THE U.S.?

Conventional thinking says if you want to go to Europe, you buy a round-trip ticket from the U.S. to Europe. But if you go “backwards” — that is, if you buy a ticket *to* the U.S. *from* Europe — you can take advantage of substantial savings. Right now, fares from Europe to the U.S. can be MUCH lower than the reverse. So, if you travel to Europe two or more times a year, buying low Business Class tickets from Europe to the U.S. can save you 38%+. Just reverse your thinking.

Overall, Business Class fares starting at sub-\$2,000 levels from the U.S. to Europe are harder to find this year than they were in 2017, making this tactic of buying low Europe-to-U.S. Business Class fares an even better deal than last year.

GO BACK AND CONQUER WITH THIS DEAL

Business Class fares tend to be lower from Europe to the U.S., as evidenced here with some recent finds:

[Europe to U.S. \\$1,286 R/T Business Class Fares](#)

[New London to U.S. \\$1,625 R/T Business Class Fares / £1,241](#)

As you can see, fares from Europe to the U.S. are still available for less than \$1,700. Plus, it appears that Europe departures have more fare promotions to the U.S. than from the U.S. to Europe in 2018.

Let's take London-Newark on United, for example. If you buy a ticket in Europe, the cost in Business Class is **\$1,812** (£1,415) right now, but if you buy a ticket from Newark to London the price increases to **\$2,919**, a difference of **\$1,107 (47%)**.

London-Newark

Trip summary [► View checked baggage charges](#)

Tue, 07 May, 2019

10:05	✈	13:05	Nonstop
London, GB {LHR - Heathrow}		New York/Newark, NJ, US {EWR - Liberty}	8h total
 UA 15 Boeing 767-300		► Details	

Tue, 21 May, 2019

8:30	✈	20:40	Nonstop
New York/Newark, NJ, US {EWR - Liberty}		London, GB {LHR - Heathrow}	7h 10m total
 UA 934 Boeing 767-400ER		► Details	

Fare	£1,149.00
Taxes and fees	£266.24
TOTAL	£1,415.24

5 tickets left at this price

Newark-London

Trip summary [► View checked baggage charges](#)

Tue, May 07, 2019

Tue, May 7	7:00 pm	✈	Wed, May 8	7:10 am	Nonstop
	New York/Newark, NJ, US (EWR - Liberty)			London, GB (LHR - Heathrow)	7h 10m total
	UA 14 Boeing 767-400ER			!	► Details

Tue, May 21, 2019

10:05 am	✈	1:05 pm	Nonstop
London, GB (LHR - Heathrow)		New York/Newark, NJ, US (EWR - Liberty)	8h total
UA 15 Boeing 767-300			► Details

Fare	\$2,576.00
Taxes and fees	\$342.53
TOTAL	\$2,918.53

3 tickets left at this price

WHEN GOING “BACKWARDS” SAVES YOU MONEY

This approach obviously works best if you’re making a couple of trips to Europe, because you have to return to Europe to make the fare work. The idea is to bookend the deal with a one-way ticket to Europe like this:

- U.S. to Europe: To get started, you might get to Europe using a [one-way ticket with miles](#).
- Europe to U.S.: Purchase a round-trip ticket from Europe to the U.S. and use the first leg or departure of incredibly low round-trip deal. (For example, London-Newark with United, as shown above.)
- U.S. to Europe: This is the second leg or return of incredibly low round-trip deal (Newark-London).
- Decision time: You can return home on another one-way ticket with miles OR you can start the process again, and buy a round-trip from Europe to the U.S.

GOING BACKWARDS DOESN’T WORK FOR YOU?

If you are only traveling to Europe for a one-time visit then this method might not work for you. If that is the case, here are some other options you should think about:

Be An Opportunity Traveler: Beware of destination blindness and go where the deals are. For low-fare route deals see [FCF's daily deals](#).

Consider Open-Jaw Itineraries: Remember, the aim of FCF fare alerts is to highlight the routes, departure cities, and destinations that offer the best deal or the lowest fare at that moment. So, you might consider open-jaw tickets, because they can save you a lot of money when flash low fares rear their beautiful heads.

Save Hundreds Through Amex: The Amex's International Airline Program (IAP) offers a fare discount of 8% to 15%+ on many published First Class, Business Class, and Premium Economy fares.

British Airways Visa Card Discount: 10% discount in any cabin, including First Class, for up to eight people traveling on the same flight.

Using Miles for Free Award Travel: For low-cost mileage routes availability see [FCF's daily deals](#).

Using Miles for an Upgrade: For routes which offer upgrade availability using miles see [FCF's daily deals](#).

Why Use American Express Cards and a Look at Its Latest One that Might Be For You

November 2018

This report at a glance:

- The top 10 reasons to like American Express Membership Reward points
- Why have multiple American Express cards?
- Transfer/partner opportunities
- Comparing Amex earning opportunities

Amex has just come out with a new card and it's definitely worth taking a look at. Consider the Amex Points program, especially if you've had Chase blinders on or are having a hard time moving on from Starwood. Let's first note some of the many reasons we love this points currency:

10 REASONS TO LIKE AMEX POINTS (IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

The Ultimate Mileage Award Ticket with All Nippon Airways (ANA): With this ticket you can fly around the world for 105,000 miles in Business Class—67,000 miles LESS than Delta charges for a simple round-trip to Asia and 65,000 miles LESS than a simple round-trip to Europe. Or get a First Class around-the-world ticket for just 160,000 miles. (Chase credit card holders do not have access to ANA's lucrative award program.)

Transfer bonuses (part A): The most recent transfer bonus offered a 40% bonus with British Airways, which got you two Business Class tickets within North America for less than one—or one [Biz Class ticket for less than the cost of coach](#).

Transfer bonuses (part B): Virgin Atlantic point-transfer bonus of 30%, which got you All Nippon [First Class for only 15,000 miles more than coach with Delta](#)—almost a double upgrade. Another way to look at how good this deal is: You can get two First Class tickets for the price of one ticket in Business Class on Delta. (Chase credit card holders do not receive these bonuses.)

Transfer airline partners: Amex Rewards has [17 airline transfer partners](#)—Chase only has six major ones. More transfer partners open up more opportunities.

Access to Etihad Airways awards: See FCF's [report](#) for why we think that Etihad's First Apartment surpasses First Class, and [here](#) for a sense of Etihad's First Apartment availability.

Access to Emirates awards: Go [here](#) for FCF's most recent mileage awards in First Class with Emirates to the Middle East, and [here](#) for travel to Athens and Milan with miles in First Class.

Access to all alliances: Amex offers access to Star Alliance airlines via three major partners: All Nippon, Air Canada, and Singapore; to SkyTeam airlines via three partners: Air France/KLM (Flying Blue), Alitalia, and Delta; and to oneworld airlines via three major partners: British Airways, Cathay Pacific (Asia Miles), and Iberia, plus, major non-alliance airlines Emirates, Etihad, and Virgin Atlantic.

More points at the ready: If you need or want to, you can [buy up to 500,000 Amex points annually](#) when you go to transfer them to a Membership Rewards partner airline. (Chase credit card holders cannot buy points, so you're limited to only what you can earn by spending money.)

Transfer time: Many transfers are instantaneous, including such airlines as Air Canada, Air France/KLM, Alitalia, British Airways, Delta, Emirates, Etihad, and Virgin Atlantic. That means if you find award space with any of these airlines, but have no miles with them, you could transfer them fast and book your award before the availability changes.

First Class access: AMEX offers direct access to First Class on All Nippon, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Emirates, Etihad, and Singapore. Plus, via alliance partnership, you also have access to partner airlines in

First Class such as American, Asiana, Japan Airlines, Lufthansa, Qantas, and Thai.

THE NEW AMERICAN EXPRESS CARD: GOLD

It replaces the American Express Premier Gold card and is enticing because you now get 4X Membership Rewards points for U.S. restaurant and supermarket (up to \$25,000) purchases. [The card](#) also earns 3X points for flights booked directly with airlines or on [amextravel.com](#). Annual fee: \$250. Plus, you get \$125 dining credit and \$100 airline fee credit, which offsets the cost. Details [here](#). (See how it compares with the other cards below.)

WHY HAVE MULTIPLE AMERICAN EXPRESS CARDS?

Because you can combine the points you earn from multiple cards into one powerful aggregated account. For example, you can earn 5X for airline tickets and hotel stays with the American Express Platinum card, earn 4X for restaurants and supermarkets with the new American Express Gold card, and earn 2X on all purchases up to \$50,000 with the American Express Blue Business Plus card, then redeem them together in your single Membership Rewards account. (See earning power for top American Express cards in the chart below.)

[TRANSFER AIRLINES WITH AMEX REWARDS FROM POINTS TO MILES](#)

AeroMexico, Air Canada, Air France/KLM, Alitalia, All Nippon Airways, Cathay Pacific (shown as Asia Miles), British Airways, Delta, El Al Israel Airlines, Emirates, Etihad Airways, Hawaiian Airlines, Iberia, JetBlue, Singapore, and Virgin Atlantic.

Spend Categories & Bonuses for American Express Cards

Super-Point Currency	American Express Blue Business Plus	American Express Everyday Preferred	American Express Gold	American Express Platinum	American Express Business Gold Rewards
Airline	2X	1.5X	3X	5X	See below
Hotel			1X		
Gas		2.5X		1X	
Supermarket		3.5X	4X		
Dining		1.5X			
Entertainment			1X		
Phone / Internet					

Super-Point Currency	American Express Blue Business Plus	American Express Everyday Preferred	American Express Gold	American Express Platinum	American Express Business Gold Rewards
Office Supply					
Other Spending					
Anual Fee	\$0	\$95	\$250	\$550	\$175
Link for Details	American Express Blue Business Plus	American Express Everyday Preferred	American Express Gold	American Express Platinum	American Express Business Gold Rewards
Observations	Earn 2X points on everyday business purchases up to \$50,000 with no category restrictions, 1X points on purchases thereafter.	Earning includes 50% extra points when you use your card 30 or more time in a billing period.	4X on supermarkets on up to \$25,000 per year in purchases.	5X on on flights booked directly with airlines or with American Express Travel and hotels booked on amextravel.com .	Choose from 1 of 5 categories to earn 3X points, plus earn 2X on the remaining 4 categories. Categories are: Tickets purchased directly from airlines; advertising in select media; gas stations; shipping; computer hardware, software, and cloud computing from select providers, all other purchases are 1X. Details here.

HOW ANYONE CAN GET A BUSINESS CREDIT CARD

More than a third of FCF's members are business owners, and it's not hard to get one of these cards. For non-business owners, in California for example, registering a sole proprietorship is inexpensive and can be done quickly online. It's my understanding that in most states the rules are similar to California's—so depending on your spending levels, it takes almost no effort to qualify for the business cards.

Related Reports

[FCF's 2018 Credit Card Big Picture For The Lazy Upgrader](#)

[Elite Status Earning Credit Cards](#)

World's Most Amazing Airfare Strategy: Back, Strong as Ever

November 2018



Delta's Two-for-One Leg Stretch Double Play

We've gotten a lot of mileage out of our [Leg Stretch Strategy](#) and so have many readers. When our team first concocted this Hall of Fame strategy, fares started at less than \$2,500 in Business Class. In the shifting sands of the airline world, some of those fares have expired, some have flown the coup, and some even became lower.

And now our spotters report that low fares are back on some routes, starting at \$2,531. So, do you lie back and ponder how clever you are to read FCF and know about this? **No**—you get onto it now because these fares come and go like a Craig Kimbrel fastball (that's fast).

DOES THE LEG STRETCH STRATEGY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY PHYSIOTHERAPIST?

Absolutely not. Here's a quick recap: FCF's Leg Stretch Strategy (LSS) works best for the person who will travel (or would like to travel) to Europe at least twice in one year, and South America once. If you're not considering those travel plans, maybe you should, because the prices are lower than coach in many instances (**think free upgrade**).

The strategy makes use of round-trip itineraries between two continents (in this case Europe and South America) with stopovers each way in a third continent (in this installment North America, specifically the U.S.). This last one is the "connecting continent."

Now, one thing about the Leg Stretch Strategy is that it starts in Europe. So, obviously, you have to get yourself to Europe. A rowboat is problematic so we suggest getting a one-way ticket using miles. We've made that part easy with a special report, go [here](#) for One-Way Awards to Europe.

This itinerary has four discreet legs on one ticket (equivalent to two round-trips): Europe > U.S. > South America > U.S. > Europe, starting at \$2,531 in Business Class on Delta.

It goes like this, starting with the U.S. departure:

1. Book a one-way ticket to Europe (details [here](#)).
2. Purchase a round-trip ticket on Delta from Europe to South America **via the U.S. (the stopovers are free) and you can stop over for as long as you like.** That is, as long as all travel on the ticket is completed within one year from your departure date.
3. Then it's off to South America.
4. Back to the U.S. (the second stopover).
5. Back to Europe, the final leg of the ticket.
6. **Decision Time:** You can return home on another one-way ticket **OR** you can start the process again, returning to the U.S. as leg one of your next Leg Stretch Strategy ticket.

AN ELASTICALLY LOW-PRICED STRATEGY

Business Class for the price of coach or just a bit more than coach: A New York-to-Zurich return ticket in economy ranges from ~\$600 to \$1,100; and a New York-to-Rio de Janeiro return ticket in economy ranges from ~\$1,100 to \$1,800 on Delta. That's \$1,700 at a minimum to fly economy—and possibly \$2,900 depending on your dates—while the Leg Stretch nets those same destinations in Business Class for **\$2,531.**

Business Class two-for-one or better savings: Another way to look at the savings is that a New York-to-Zurich return ticket in Business Class ranges from ~\$2,200 to \$6,500; and a New York-to-Rio de Janeiro return ticket in Business Class ranges from ~\$3,300 to \$5,800 on Delta. That's \$5,500 at a minimum to fly Business Class—and \$12,000 depending on your dates—while the LSS can net those same destinations in Business Class for **\$2,531.**

Flights		SKY PRIORITY			
TUE 05 FEB	ZRH ➔ ATL	DL 407, DL 2675 1:15 PM 10:48 PM	15h 33m 1 Stop	Delta One® (Z) First Class (F) Changeable / Nonrefundable Delta Air Lines Baggage Information	Price per Passenger CHF 2,340.00 Taxes, Fees and Charges CHF 190.50
MON 15 APR	ATL ➔ GIG	DL 61 11:22 PM 10:00 AM	9h 38m Nonstop ARRIVES NEXT DAY	Delta One® (Z) Changeable / Nonrefundable Delta Air Lines Baggage Information	
MON 22 APR	GIG ➔ ATL	DL 60 10:00 PM 06:45 AM	9h 45m Nonstop ARRIVES NEXT DAY	Delta One® (Z) Changeable / Nonrefundable Delta Air Lines Baggage Information	
WED 14 AUG	ATL ➔ ZRH	DL 66 5:32 PM 08:30 AM	8h 58m Nonstop ARRIVES NEXT DAY	Delta One® (Z) Changeable / Nonrefundable Delta Air Lines Baggage Information	
				Total Price (CHF) CHF 2,530.50	

CHF = Swiss Franc; Delta's currency conversion to U.S. dollars:

 X

Currency Calculator *REQUIRED

* Amount:

* From Currency:

* To Currency:

CALCULATE

Result: \$2531.14 USD *

Approximate exchange rate: 1 CHF = 1.000253 USD

IT'S NO STRETCH TO SAY THIS IS AMAZING

We've looked at a range of Europane/South American itineraries and found a stack of options. Here are 12 examples that come in at \$3,000 or less, each with a link to the Google Flights page showing the deal. Easy to book from there is just a few clicks.

THE LEG STRETCH STRATEGY EXTRAPOLATED

We've crunched the numbers on a number of Europe/South America trips and found many options. Here are 12 examples that come in at \$3,000 or less, each with a link to the Google Flights page showing the deal.

N.B. *If links send you to a fare that's much higher, play around with the dates, and more than likely you'll find the same fare we did.*

Start Your LSS Ticket In:	Your U.S. Stop (Both Going and Coming):	Your South American Destination:	Fare for Four Legs (in effect, two round-trips)	Quick Links:
Zurich	Atlanta	Rio de Janeiro	\$2,536	Expired
Zurich	New York	São Paulo	\$2,534	Expired
Amsterdam	Washington, D.C.	São Paulo	\$2,759	Expired
Stockholm	New York	São Paulo	\$2,749	Expired
Lisbon	New York	São Paulo	\$3,120	Expired
Stockholm	Atlanta	Buenos Aires	\$3,307	Expired
Copenhagen	Atlanta	Rio de Janeiro	\$2,847	Expired
Munich	Atlanta	São Paulo	\$2,937	Expired
Frankfurt	Atlanta	São Paulo	\$3,001	Expired
Oslo	Boston	Buenos Aires	\$2,835	Expired
Zurich	New York	Santiago	\$3,461	Expired
Madrid	New York	Rio de Janeiro	\$2,895	Expired



Upgrade to Premium Economy for as Little as \$7 per Flight Hour/\$100 One-Way

November 2018

... or perhaps for free, once you add in the extra-leg room in coach.

This report at a glance:

- Where to look for American's low-cost Premium Economy (PE) upgrades, starting at \$7 per flight hour
- Perspective of free upgrade to PE once extra leg-room seat is added
- Benefit of American's PE seat compared to coach
- What routes offer a free elite upgrade to PE on AA

- Routes and aircraft with PE seats

American Airlines kicked off the Premium Economy (PE) juggernaut last year in the U.S. (the Europeans have been at it for 20 years). AA offers PE on routes to Asia, South America, the South Pacific, Hawaii, and Europe.

With United joining the PE fray later this year, stand by for some premium powered competition. Last month we looked at [Delta's PE offering](#) and found that it's a hot topic among First Class Flyer readers. For less per hour than the price of a Skinny Vanilla Latte and a Cheese Danish at Starbucks, you can get a very tasty upgrade out of cattle class.

THE \$7-AN-HOUR UPGRADE

Dallas to Shanghai and back is about 28 hours in the air. We've found a low-cost upgrade that equates to about \$7 an hour, given coach is \$858, and PE is \$1,058. Divide the difference (\$200) by flight hours (28), and there you go.

FREE UPGRADE TO PE ONCE EXTRA LEG-ROOM SEAT IS ADDED

Now, if you fly "Main Cabin Extra" on American, which is economy with a bit of extra legroom, then the upgrade to a Premium Economy seat is free. The screenshot shows "Main Cabin Extra" on American, priced at \$1,251.

Cost summary	
Your total	\$1,251.61
Includes all taxes and carrier-imposed fees	
Passenger x 1	\$570.00
Taxes	\$76.33
Carrier-imposed fees	\$212.00
Subtotal	\$858.33
Main Cabin Extra	\$393.28
AAdvantage® benefits	
Priority	\$0.00
Total (all passengers)	\$1,251.61

As already mentioned, the cost for Premium Economy on American is \$1,058 (see below), or \$193 cheaper than Main Cabin Extra—a seat that only gives you a bit more leg-room.

<p>Premium Economy Flexible Round trip (Flexible) \$1,059 per person Total \$1,058.33 (all passengers) Price and tax information [?]</p> <p>More room ■ Wider seat with more legroom ■ Up to 1.5 EQMs per mile flown on eligible flights ■ Changes or refunds allowed (fee may apply)</p> <p>Includes taxes and carrier imposed fees. Bag and optional fees [?]</p>	<p>Depart Dallas/ Fort Worth, TX to Shanghai, China Thursday, March 7, 2019</p> <p>10:40 AM → 4:10 PM 15h 30m Nonstop Premium Economy Flexible AA 127 ■ 789-Boeing 787 </p> <p>Details Change</p> <hr/> <p>Return Shanghai, China to Dallas/ Fort Worth, TX Thursday, March 21, 2019</p> <p>6:10 PM → 6:30 PM 13h 20m Nonstop Premium Economy Flexible AA 128 ■ 789-Boeing 787 </p> <p> Overnight flight or connection</p> <p>Details Change</p>
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EXAMPLE ROUTES WITH LOW-COST UPGRADES

Asia: AA has lots of routes to Asia with Premium Economy. Three examples with with low-cost upgrades: Dallas-Shanghai (see sample [above](#)) and Los Angeles-Beijing, where the upgrade is about \$150 each-way in PE starting at [\\$885](#) round-trip. And for Los Angeles-Shanghai, the upgrade is about \$200 each-way in PE starting at [\\$947](#) round-trip.

South America: Miami-Santiago is only about \$175 more each-way in PE with fares starting at [\\$1,442](#) round-trip.

Hawaii: AA has two routes that offer a low-cost upgrade: Dallas-Honolulu, where the upgrade is about \$150 each-way in PE with fares starting at [\\$1,228](#) round-trip; and Dallas-Maui, where the upgrade is about \$200 each-way in PE starting at [\\$1,346](#) round-trip.

Europe: Philadelphia-Dublin costs only \$175 more each way in PE with fares starting at [\\$888](#) round-trip.

CURRENT AMERICAN ROUTES THAT OFFER PE

Here's a list and map of every current American Airline non-stop route that offers Premium Economy. Please note that they can change quickly, especially since airlines frequently adjust aircraft schedules. Also note that you can connect to—or beyond—these cities as well to get a better seat for the all-important transoceanic legs.

Asia: Dallas to Beijing, Seoul, Shanghai, and Tokyo; Los Angeles to Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Tokyo

South America: Los Angeles-São Paulo; Miami to Buenos Aires, Santiago, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo; Dallas-Buenos Aires; and New York-Buenos Aires

Hawaii: Dallas to Honolulu and Maui

Europe: Charlotte to Barcelona, Dublin, Frankfurt, Madrid, and Paris; Chicago-Paris; Dallas to Amsterdam, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Rome, and Paris; Miami to Barcelona, London, Madrid, Milan, and Paris; Philadelphia to Barcelona, Dublin, Frankfurt, Madrid, Manchester, Munich, Rome, and Paris

South Pacific: Los Angeles to Auckland and Sydney



WHAT'S SO PREMIUM ABOUT PREMIUM ECONOMY?

- Comfort: additional recline and an adjustable footrest and leg rest
- Wider seats: PE is 18.5 to 19 inches, while coach is 17 to 18 inches; that's up to 2 inches more depending on the aircraft
- Legroom: up to 7 inches more than coach
- Extras: an amenity kit, and pillow and blanket created by sleep technology company Casper; you get checked bags first when you land; [Priority privileges](#) includes a faster check-in, security and boarding process
- Upgraded [Premium dining](#)
- Other improved items: larger monitors, noise-reducing headphones and expedited baggage handling and security (the same as offered in Business Class)
- Earn award miles: this varies, as earning is based on fare paid; so, because the PE fare costs more, it will earn more miles
- Elite bonus: elites earn [150% EQMs](#) (Elite Qualification Miles), general economy only gets 100% EQMs

ROUTES THAT OFFER A FREE ELITE UPGRADE TO PE ON AA

For flights to and from Dallas and Honolulu and Maui, Executive Platinum and Platinum Pro members may receive complimentary upgrades if seats are available from coach to PE on the day of departure.

Aircraft with PE seats: B777-300, B787-9, A330-200, and some B777-200.

American Airlines will be adding the Premium Economy product to 787-8s early next year. Expect those retrofits to be completed mid-2019, we're told.

Side Note: American has been offering special low PE fares to Asia over the last few months. Take the Los Angeles-Tokyo route for example: AA is undercutting oneworld partner Japan Airlines by almost \$900. It's \$1,215 on AA, while JAL charges \$2,097, a difference of \$882. Who's going to win that battle? You.

Same holds true for the South Pacific, on the Los Angeles-Sydney route for example: AA is undercutting oneworld partner Qantas by \$731. It's \$1,813 on AA, while Qantas charges \$2,544.