



Overtime Winner: Why the Upgrade Game Doesn't End When You Book a Flight

October 2018

Seven ways to upgrade your ticket *after* you've booked and confirmed.

So you've booked your vacation and closed your laptop. Game over? No way.

If you booked using miles, you can still *upgrade* right up until flight time with the simple methods outlined below. The more time you can make use of, the more opportunities might appear **that may not have been available at the time of booking.**

UPGRADE MEANS IMPROVEMENT

To be clear, we define an “upgrade” as *improving* the cost, comfort, and/or convenience of your flight experience.

It might be moving up a cabin—the classic upgrade—or it might be improving your situation by saving more money or time, or by scoring a more desirable date or an itinerary with fewer stops. There is also the opportunity to get a better seat in the same class of service. You can take advantage of all this by knowing which programs offer better, currently available deals.

“Winners often succeed in the last five minutes.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

THE 3 Cs OF UPGRADEABILITY

By continuing to keep your options open *after* you book and *before* you fly, you open yourself up to the 3 Cs of upgrade options: **convenience**, **comfort**, and **cost**.

CONVENIENCE UPGRADES

There are three different types of convenience upgrades.

1. Route upgrade: You might be booked on a ticket that was *not* your first-choice destination. For example, you wanted to go to Bordeaux, France, but when you booked your ticket, the only mileage award space available was to a second-choice destination, say, Paris. But at a later date, closer to your departure, space opens up for a flight to Bordeaux.

2. Schedule upgrade: This type of upgrade comes in two varieties: connecting to a nonstop schedule and improving a schedule.

Imagine that when you booked your ticket, the only option available was a connecting flight to Tokyo, but at a later date, space opens up for a nonstop flight to Tokyo.

Or, for example, when you booked your ticket the only option available was a connection to Tokyo with possibly a forced overnight layover. At a later date, however, space opens up for a same-day connection.

3. Date upgrade: This comes up when the date you booked your flight for wasn't your first-choice travel date. You may have wanted to arrive on October 20, but the only award space available at the time was October 22. And then later, after you booked, the airline opens up award space for the 20th. That's still a better time for you, and by our definition, an upgrade.

COMFORT UPGRADES

There are two different types of comfort upgrades.

1. An airline upgrade in the same cabin: This means you are able to get a better seat, in the same cabin, but on a different airline.

Let's say you book a ticket that was *not* on your first choice airline. For example, you wanted to travel New York-Frankfurt on Singapore Airlines in First Class. But when you booked your ticket, the only mileage award space available was on Lufthansa in First Class. And then at a later date, space opens up for Singapore Airlines in First Class.

2. Cabin upgrade: This means you're able to get a better class of service, like going from Business Class to First, or even from Premium Economy to Business.

COST UPGRADES

There are two different types of cost upgrades.

1. Partner mileage cost upgrade: This means you're able to get a lower mileage cost with a mileage partner program.

For example, you could book using American miles on a ticket from New York to Barcelona for 115,000 AA miles. But you'd like to get a lower mileage award ticket by using Japan Airlines, an AA partner, for 63,000 miles.

So why not book your original ticket with Japan Airlines (JAL) miles? Two reasons:

1. You might not have any JAL miles in your account and need time to transfer points to JAL, *and/or*
2. At the time of booking your ticket, partner award space was not available when using JAL miles.

So, you booked using AA miles to have a ticket confirmed, but after your points are transferred and posted to your JAL mileage account you can now book with JAL miles, *and/or* partner award space opens up with American for using JAL miles at a later date.

2. Low-cost upgrade: An example of this type of upgrade is being booked on an anytime/everyday/standard (airlines have different names for this) ticket. It can often be double the price of a low-cost mileage award. And then at a later date, space opens up for that low-cost mileage award. Time to pounce.

HOW MUCH DO THESE KINDS OF UPGRADES / IMPROVEMENTS COST?

As you might expect, there can be a cost involved with overtime upgrades.

The seven different overtime upgrades detailed above all involve different processes, so they will vary by airline, by elite status level, by when changes are made, and by cost, ranging from no fees to \$200. (Look for a detailed report on award change fees for major airlines coming soon.)

Of course, there is a time cost, too. I often spend five or ten minutes a day searching for overtime upgrades for various trips I have booked.

The amount of time I spend trying to upgrade my current bookings usually depends on how happy/unhappy I am with the original booking I had to make.

What's your approach like to improving tickets you've already booked?



Online or On Phone: Redeeming Miles with United

October 2018

Time to dispel the myth that booking over the phone is necessarily a drag or lacks rich opportunity.

You've been asking—so we're delivering: Here are easy steps to booking FCF's "[sweet redeem](#)" mileage-award alert deals that we find, starting with United and United's partners. (Other airlines to come.)

HOW TO BOOK AN AWARD TICKET WITH UNITED MILES

First, you have the option to book online or by phone, but which is best?

Is one method better in some cases and less so in others?

The chart below lays it out in an easy comparison.

	Online	On Phone: (800) 864-8331
Access to award data	View availability: 7 or 30 days with online calendar.	Waiting for reservationist to manually check days is not nearly as fast as online.
You can easily look at what options are available for routes by checking space one way or round-trip, as well as for Star Alliance partner award space.		
Accuracy of availability	Data can be inaccurate and there's no way to know when this happens.	You may encounter kinks with the online calendar. When this happens, call and have an agent check the award data for you.
		All United airline partners can be booked online, BUT at times, not all airline partner award space shows up online. By calling, no airline partner space options are missed.
		Online partner space may not be updated online.
Displays upgrade award availability	You can easily see what flights have upgrade space available online and book on the spot.	A reservationist can just as easily tell you about upgrade space on the phone.
Book advanced or complex trips	You can't book open jaws, longer/overnight layovers, or multi-city stops online.	If allowed per United's terms and conditions , you can book over the phone.
		Best to call when there are more than three segments in your trip.
Mileage award hold	Three or seven days on United flights only, not partner flights, for a small fee.	
Booking fees	None.	\$25 booking fee per ticket (no fees for Premier Platinum and Premier 1K). If you plead that the itinerary could not be priced online, the fee is usually waived.
Wait-listing	Not possible.	Permitted in premium cabins on flights operated by United.
Elite membership advantages	Premier Platinum and Premier 1K have access to better availability for United Saver Awards in select premium cabins.	
Short on United miles	Buy up to 150,000 miles per account/per calendar year over the phone or online.	
	United is a credit card point transfer partner with Chase and Marriott/Starwood.	



Re-thinking Holiday and Seasonal Travel Planning: Using Miles or Buying a Ticket

October 2018

Why you need a change of mindset as much as a change of scene.

Airlines used to be so predictable when it came to holiday fares: If you traveled during a certain season of the year in Business Class to Europe, you were almost guaranteed a big discount. Like clockwork they reduced Business Class fares during those seasons: **Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, Easter, even Valentine's Day.**

But planning travel around those seasons—because fares were especially low then—is now ancient thinking. The **new paradigm is not** when is the best time of the year to travel, instead it's where is the lowest place to

travel to. How do we know this? Because we've been finding a bunch of random routes for sale, for travel most any time of year.

Now, that is not to say that seasonal fares are not going to surprise us at the last minute—that is anyone's guess. But at this point, if you want the sure thing, instead of gambling on what might or could possibly happen, here is what you should do: **Think route and not season when it comes to using miles or cash.**

IT'S THE PLACE NOT THE TIME

An example of this can be seen with the Detroit to Munich route. It goes for [\\$2,184 round-trip](#) in Business Class on Delta. Compared to other high-fare routes, such as Detroit to London at \$3,786, that's a savings of \$1,602 (42%). Discounted routes are now the rule, not the exception.

HOW YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT HOLIDAY / SEASONAL TRAVEL WHEN IT COMES TO USING MILES

It's the place not the time also holds true when it comes to using miles, not only cash.

Book free mileage awards now IF you can find low-mileage award space availability, such as [up to four-seats on Iberia Business Class](#) award availability from Miami or New York to Europe starting at 68,000 miles round-trip; [Virgin Atlantic Business deals](#) from Atlanta, Orlando, or Washington, DC; or [American Business Class deals](#) to Europe from New York and Philadelphia.

Book upgrade mileage awards now IF you can find upgrade-mileage award space availability, such as United Business Class [upgrades availability to London, Frankfurt, and Paris](#); and for United Business Class [upgrades availability to Germany and Italy](#).

HOW YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT HOLIDAY/SEASONAL TRAVEL WHEN IT COMES TO USING CASH

Book a low-fare route you're happy with now IF you can find low-fare routes for sale in Business Class, such as a recent FCF fare alert for travel from Atlanta, Detroit, and Minneapolis to Europe with [fares starting at \\$2,184](#) round-trip (Detroit to Munich); or [low fares to Poland](#) starting at \$1,956.

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS

1. Get **10% off on British Airways** when using the [BA Visa card](#).
2. Get **\$200 off through AARP** for Business Class fares on British Airways.
3. **Save hundreds through Amex** on already-low tactical Business Class fares on Delta, Air France, and Virgin Atlantic to Europe.
4. **Take advantage of lower West Coast fares:** The good news is that West Coast to Europe Business Class [fares have decreased](#).

5. **Opportunity travelers are still winners:** FCF's philosophy is simply to have a broad [bucket list of destinations](#). So, when the [opportunity arises](#) to get to one of them for peanuts, you can take advantage.



The Aircraft Cabin Loophole to Hawaii

October 2018

How to get to Hawaii on Delta in a much better seat without paying more.

This special report at a glance:

- **The difference between domestic and internationally configured aircraft**
- **How knowing the difference between aircraft cabins means you can get a better seat without paying more**
- **A Los Angeles to Hawaii example**
- **How to know what flights have better seats**

- **What if you need a connecting flight?**
- **Get best seats with miles or money**

How can you make a vacation to Hawaii better? By getting there more comfortably without paying more for the privilege. The way to do this is by knowing about a loophole that arises when internationally configured planes are used on domestic routes.

DOMESTICALLY VERSUS INTERNATIONALLY CONFIGURED AIRCRAFT ON DELTA

Airlines configure their aircraft better for international routes. It is, in effect, an “in-class upgrade.” So, if you know what those “upgraded” flight numbers are, you’ll be hula-whooping all the way to Hawaii.

On an international Business Class flight on Delta (as on most U.S. carriers), you’re truly getting Business Class-worthy service. And then there’s Business Class on domestic flights—outrageously titled “First Class.” It’s a huge comedown (apart from several transcon routes) in comfort and experience, and yet the price is the same.

SAMPLE FLIGHT OF FANCY: LOS ANGELES TO HONOLULU

Let’s take the Los Angeles-Honolulu route as a quick example. Some flights offer a normal domestic seat; others, a seat at the table of paradise.

On October 20, Delta has four non-stop flights on the almost-six-hour flight to Honolulu, three of which offer a boring old domestic seat, and one, a bright, shiny, snuggle-back-and-smile lie-flat international seat.

That winning flight number is DL1283. It uses a B767-300, which has an international Business Class cabin. Beautiful, isn’t it?



Delta's International Business Class Seat

The runner-up (or runner-down) prizes go to flight numbers DL1719, DL1149, and DL1559, all of which use a domestic aircraft, a B757.



Delta's Domestic First Class Seat

HOW TO KNOW IF YOUR FLIGHT HAS A FANCY SEAT

Airlines move aircraft around and change flight numbers all the time. So what might be offered today or next Tuesday can easily change. So how can you tell during the booking process that you're getting an international lie-flat seat with Delta?

It's easy. During your flight selection on Delta's website look for this rather utilitarian "bed" icon.



Only flights with the lie-flat seat will show the icon. If you don't see the icon on flights to Hawaii, then you're on an aircraft with a domestic standard First Class seat. Here's that icon in context.

Compare Cabin Experiences >

Price includes taxes and fees. Additional [baggage](#) fees may apply. 'Best Match' may list Delta-operated flights first. In-flight services and amenities may vary and are [subject to change](#).

DL 1283

5H 48M

8:25 AM

✈

11:13 AM






LAX

NONSTOP

HNL

DETAILS ▾

SEATS



DL 1719

5H 51M

10:35 AM

✈

1:26 PM





LAX

NONSTOP

HNL

DETAILS ▾

SEATS



DL 1559

5H 37M

2:55 PM

✈

5:32 PM





LAX

NONSTOP

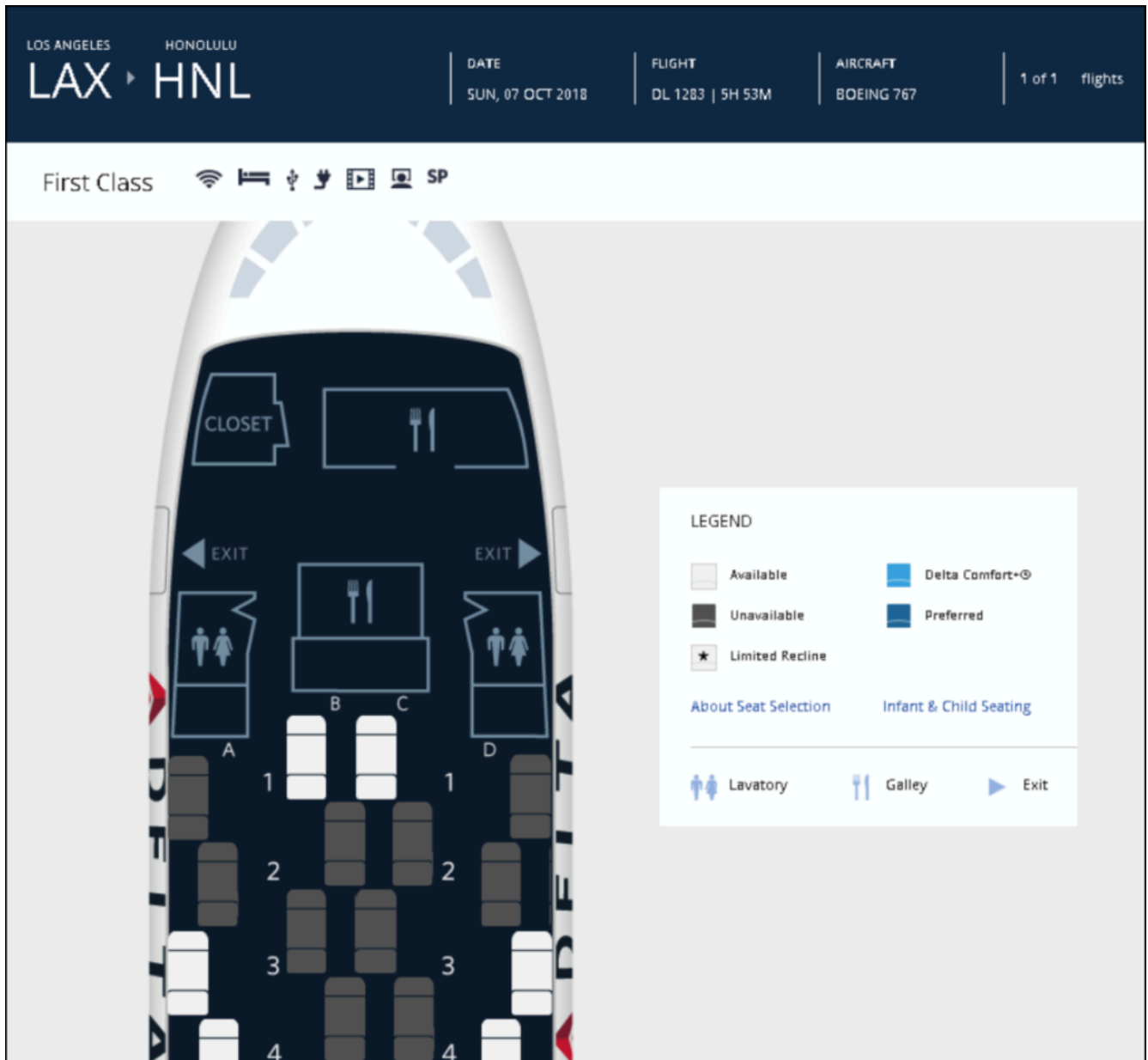
HNL

DETAILS ▾

SEATS



For more details click on the "seats" and Delta will show aircraft seating/cabin layout for the cabin class selected.



Finding the international aircraft, with the international seat, is the same when shopping for a paid ticket with cash as with a mileage award ticket.

NETWORKING, CONNECTIONS, AND FREE UPGRADES

Mainland Connections to Hawaii: If you live in Boston, you need to make a connection to Honolulu somewhere. So why not book Delta via Atlanta or Salt Lake City instead of via Seattle? That way you get the international Business Class seat and therefore the **free in-class upgrade**.

To see if your home airport connects with Delta's international aircraft for flights to Hawaii go to Delta's route map [here](#).

HOW DO I BOOK MY ITINERARY AROUND THE BEST SEATS?

Just know where to find Delta's international Business Class seats on routes to Hawaii. Happily, more are becoming available. For example, Delta just announced that Detroit will also get an international aircraft

starting on June 29 with a B767-300ER aircraft equipped with 25 lie-flat seats. For details go [here](#).

FCF Cheat Sheet: Routes With Free Delta In-Class Seat Upgrades to Hawaii

Route	Departure Flight	Days of Operation	Return Flight	Days of Operation	Aircraft*
Atlanta - Honolulu	DL 837	Sun. to Sat.	DL 836	Sun. to Sat.	B767**
Los Angeles - Honolulu	DL 1283	Sun. to Sat.	DL 1284	Sun. to Sat.	B767***
Minneapolis - Honolulu	DL 577	Varies	DL 576	Varies	B777/A330
Salt Lake City - Honolulu	DL 2767	Sun. to Sat.	DL 2768	Sun. to Sat.	B767****

*Always recheck aircraft type at the time of booking as aircraft can change by the day or week. **Aircraft change in November to a B777. ***Aircraft change in November to an A330. ****Varies at times in October.



Now get two Business Class tickets within North America for less than one—or one for less than the cost of coach.

This special report at a glance:

- How to get Business Class for short-haul domestic, Central America, Mexico, and Caribbean flights for 22,000 points on American—3,000 fewer miles than AA charges for coach
- Domestic mid-haul flights are only 4,000 miles more than coach
- Hawaii flights are only 9,000 more miles than coach
- Get connecting flights for only 8,000 more miles than coach

This deal is a dynamic double pairing.

It takes advantage of a strategy using award chart discrepancies *plus* a sizzling credit card bonus-transfer deal.

FIRST SERVE: AWARD CHART DISCREPANCIES

Award charts come in two versions: “zone” and “flight-distance.” The former divides the world into regions, such as the 48 contiguous U.S. states and Canada, for example. In this case, every destination within the zone costs the same number of miles. A flight-distance chart, on the other hand, charges miles based on the distance flown.

Opportunity knocks when one airline’s alliance partner uses a zone chart (American) and a partner (British Airways and/or Iberia) uses the flight-distance method. Happily for you, they can be played against each other. Whack! Ace!

SECOND SERVE: CREDIT CARD TRANSFER DEAL

British Airways and Iberia and their point-transfer partner, American Express Rewards, are once again offering a **40% points-transfer bonus** deal, valid through November 15 (details [here](#)).

How good is the deal combo?

22,000-POINT FLIGHTS ON AMERICAN

Get Business Class on American Airlines for a 22,000-point transfer to British Airways for travel within North America, to Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean on many non-stop flights (see below). **That’s 3,000 fewer miles than American charges for coach.**

Another way to look at this opportunity is that it amounts to getting two Business Class tickets (44,000 miles) for less than the cost of one ticket with AA miles (50,000). Game. Set. Match.

One Example: Los Angeles-San Jose del Cabo, Mexico, in Business Class on American costs 50,000 AAdvantage miles round-trip. But using British Airways miles, that flight costs as few as 30,000 miles round-trip; and with the transfer bonus through November 15, it requires only 22,000 points.

“You cannot be serious!”

—John McEnroe

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

U.S. Departure Cities	Destinations	American Miles Round-Trip in Business Class	American Miles Round-Trip in Coach	British Airways Miles Round-Trip in Business Class via Amex Reward Transfer
Charlotte	Cancun, Nassau	50,000	30,000	22,000
Dallas	Cancun, Cozumel, Guadalajara, Puerto Vallarta, San José del Cabo			
Los Angeles	San José del Cabo			
Miami	Cancun, Grand Cayman, Montego Bay (and Kingston), Nassau, Providenciales (Turks and Caicos), Aruba, Belize City, Guatemala, Port-au-Prince, Puerto Plata, Punta Cana, San Juan, San José (CR), Santo Domingo, St. Thomas			
New York	Bermuda			
Philadelphia	Nassau			

Example of Free Upgrades Using British Airways Points Instead of American Miles for Domestic Short-haul Flights

From / To	From / To	American Miles Round-Trip in Business Class	American Miles Round-Trip in Coach	British Airways Miles Round-Trip in Business Class via Amex Reward Transfer
Atlanta	Chicago, Dallas, Miami, Philadelphia	50,000	25,000	22,000
Chicago	Albuquerque, New Orleans, Orlando, Philadelphia			
Dallas	Albuquerque, Charlotte, Chicago, Miami, Phoenix			
Denver	Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles			

From / To	From / To	American Miles Round-Trip in Business Class	American Miles Round-Trip in Coach	British Airways Miles Round-Trip in Business Class via Amex Reward Transfer
New York	Atlanta, Chicago, Cincinnati, Miami, Orlando			

Low-Cost Upgrades Using British Airways Points Instead of American Miles for Domestic Mid-haul Flights

From / To	From / To	American Miles Round-Trip in Business Class	American Miles Round-Trip in Coach	British Airways Miles Round-Trip in Business Class via Amex Reward Transfer
Charlotte	Denver, Las Vegas, Salt Lake, Phoenix	50,000	25,000	29,000
Dallas	Boston, Los Angeles, New York, Portland, San Diego, San Francisco, Washington, DC			
Miami	Boston, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Phoenix			
Philadelphia	Austin, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Salt Lake			

LOB INTO HONOLULU FOR ONLY 9,000 MORE MILES THAN ECONOMY

Los Angeles-Honolulu on American costs 80,000 AAdvantage miles round-trip. But using British Airways miles that flight costs 75,000 miles round-trip, and with the transfer bonus, is only 54,000 transferred points.

In other words, you get an **upgrade to Business Class for only 9,000 miles** more than economy. That's a smash.

HOW ANYONE CAN PLAY THIS GAME

Don't have any (or enough) Amex Reward points? No problem. Just buy them for 2.5¢ per point, but you must buy them in increments of 1,000 points (\$25). Also, you can only buy points when you are going to transfer them immediately to a Membership Rewards partner airline. In doing so, you can get a Business Class ticket from Los Angeles to San Jose del Cabo, Mexico, for example, for \$550 (cost to buy 22,000 points and \$98 for award taxes) compared to buying the ticket directly with American for \$1,080, a savings of \$432 (40%). Go [here](#) for details on how you buy up to 500,000 Amex Reward points.

HOW TO TRANSFER AMEX REWARD POINTS TO MILES

Step 1: Log into your Amex Reward account.

Step 2: Select the airline partner and input the number of points you want to transfer.

Step 3: Make sure you add the airline mileage account number you are transferring to (if not a British Airways or Iberia member, then you have to create a mileage account first, before doing the transfer).

Step 4: Make sure to review all information (double check mileage account number and points transferring) as transfers are final.

HOW TO BOOK AMERICAN ON BRITISH AIRWAYS

Step 1: You can book space online by logging into your British Airways account [here](#), or you can also call, (800) 452-1201.

Step 2: Next, click on “Spending Avios” and then on “Book a reward flight.”

Step 3: On the “Book with Avios” page, fill in your “From”, “To”, “Depart”, and “Return” dates, “Class” of service, and number of passengers, then click on “Get flights.”

HALF VOLLEY: WHAT ABOUT CONNECTING FLIGHTS?


For connections, the best value lies in transferring from Amex Rewards to Iberia, not British Airways. (British Airways is best for nonstop flights.)

For example: Denver to Atlanta via Dallas on American is 50,000 AA miles.

With Iberia it is 46,000, but factor in the 40 percent transfer bonus and it comes down to 33,000 miles—**only 8,000 miles more than what you pay for economy** for itineraries with connecting flights.

Or consider Atlanta to Cancun connecting via Miami: With American Airlines it's 50,000 miles, while with Iberia it's 46,000. Work in the bonus to make it 33,000. Again, **only 8,000 more miles than economy** with American Airlines. Think really cheap upgrading.

Available airports:
 (ATL) - Hartsfield-Jackson Int, Atlanta. (CLT) - Douglas International, Charlotte. (CUN) - International, Cancun.
 (DFW) - Dallas Ft Worth International, Dallas. (MIA) - Miami International, Miami. (PHL) - Philadelphia International, Philadelphia.

 1 Adult Price per adult 46,000 Avios + \$ 99.70	Avios & Money payment options per adult (to select in the next step) 46,000 Avios + \$ 99.70
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Total price

46,000 Avios + \$ 99.70

[Continue](#)

Third example: Chicago to Nassau connecting via Charlotte. On American it costs 50,000 miles, while with Iberia it's 46,000; and with the transfer bonus, 33,000. That number again is **just 8,000 more than economy.**

“I play each point like my life depends on it.”

—Rafael Nadal

HOW TO BOOK AMERICAN ON IBERIA

Step 1: You can book space online by logging into your Iberia account [here](#), or you can also call (800) 772-4642.

Step 2: Next click on “Using my Avios”, then click on “Go to Book flights with Avios” and choose “Booking with Avios.”

Step 3: Here, under the header of “Where can we take you?”, fill in your “From” and “To” travel dates, and number of passengers, then click on “Flight Search.”



Upgrade to Premium Economy for as Little as \$9 per Flight Hour / \$125 One-Way

October 2018

Premium Economy is the hot new ticket and Delta is now on board, even undercutting American.

This report at a glance:

- **Why Premium Economy?**
- **Delta Pricing Down PE: Just \$9 more per flight hour and lower than American**
- **Delta's new PE offering, Premium Select**
- **PE versus economy**

- **Is Premium Economy (PE) the new Business Class?**

We're certainly getting asked a lot more about Premium Economy here at FCF. Members are particularly interested in PE for day flights (where you're working not sleeping), and for traveling with kids and in-laws, etc.

With Delta joining American on the PE bandwagon (United comes on board later this year), PE is more top-of-mind than ever before—and there are more options. The Europeans, by the way, have been PE-ing for almost two decades now.

Finally, as we'll explore below, the value of PE can be quite good. Per hour, for about the price of a coffee and a donut, you can enjoy a true upgrade from cattle class.




DELTA PRICING DOWN

Most routes with Delta's new aircraft featuring Premium Economy are priced quite high, often almost double than coach. So, it was interesting to see recent changes to how Delta is pricing its PE product on its routes.

Delta has lowered its PE prices so that an upgrade from coach to PE can cost as little as \$9 per flight hour. On one route, Delta is even undercutting American's PE product by \$200.

UPGRADING FROM ECONOMY TO PREMIUM ECONOMY ON DELTA TO ASIA

Cheap upgrades starting at \$9 per flight hour: On Los Angeles-Shanghai (26 hours round-trip) it only costs \$250 round-trip to upgrade to PE. The lowest coach fare is \$492, while PE is \$742. That's \$125 one-way to upgrade, or about \$9 per flight hour—and at the same time, it's \$3,500+ less than Business Class.

✈ Flights					
WED 07 NOV	LAX → PVG	DL 89 14h 24m Nonstop	Main Cabin (V) Changeable / Nonrefundable Delta Air Lines Baggage Information	Price per Passenger	\$415.00
	12:11 PM 6:35 PM ARRIVES NEXT DAY			Taxes, Fees and Charges	\$76.41
	DETAILS ▾ SEATS				
WED 14 NOV	PVG → LAX	DL 88 11h 40m Nonstop	Main Cabin (V) Changeable / Nonrefundable Delta Air Lines Baggage Information		
	9:35 PM 5:15 PM				
	DETAILS ▾ SEATS				
<div><div></div><div><p>A NEW INTERNATIONAL CABIN DELTA PREMIUM SELECT</p><p>\$125.00 Per Person Each Way</p><div><div>UPGRADE</div><div>See Details</div></div></div></div>					
Total Price (USD)					\$491.41

Almost Free Upgrades: Instead of paying for a better economy seat—one that offers a bit more leg-room (which Delta calls “Preferred Exit” and can cost up to \$200 more round-trip), you can get a much better seat by booking PE for a bargain—just \$50 more than an exit row seat. “Preferred Exit” is well named, because it would be preferable to exit it.

LOWER PREMIUM ECONOMY FARE WITH DELTA THAN WITH AMERICAN AIRLINES

American has been offering special low PE fares to Asia over the last few months. However, on the Los Angeles-Shanghai route, Delta is undercutting AA by over \$200. It’s \$742 on Delta, while AA charges \$947, a difference of \$205.

Round trip ▾
1 passenger ▾
Premium Economy ▾

Los Angeles LAX
Shanghai PVG
Thu, Nov 8
Thu, Nov 15

Choose departure to Shanghai
Return to Los Angeles
Trip summary

Bags ▾
Nonstop ✕
Airlines ▾
Price ▾
Times ▾
Connecting airports ▾
More ▾

Flight insights

DATES
Selected dates are among the cheapest
SEE MORE

PRICE GRAPH
Explore price trends for 7-day trips to Shanghai
SEE MORE

AIRPORTS
Compare prices for airports near Shanghai
SEE MORE

TIPS
Plan your visit to Shanghai
SEE MORE

Track prices
Monitor the lowest price for this trip, and receive price alerts and travel tips by email

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

	12:11 PM – 6:35 PM^{*1} Delta	14h 24m LAX–PVG	Nonstop	\$742 round trip	▾
	9:35 AM – 3:55 PM^{*1} American	14h 20m LAX–PVG	Nonstop	\$947 round trip	▾

DELTA DAWN—HERE COMES PREMIUM SELECT

Delta’s Premium Economy offering is called Premium Select, and it’s currently available on all new A350 aircraft. Delta is also updating its B757-200 and B777 aircraft with Premium Economy.

THE A350 PREMIUM SELECT SEAT IS OFFERED ON THESE ROUTES NOW:

Detroit – Tokyo

Detroit – Seoul

Detroit – Beijing

Detroit – Amsterdam

Atlanta – Seoul

Detroit – Shanghai

Los Angeles – Shanghai

WHY FLY PREMIUM ECONOMY?

For the Business Class traveler: This is the best option for people accustomed to flying Business Class who don't want to spend between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to sit up front, especially on a day flight when they'd probably rather work than sleep. These seats, often in a separate cabin, include elite ground and onboard benefits such as separate check-in, priority boarding, seats with a leg and/or foot rest, and even upgraded meal service. (See the bullets below.)

THE BENEFITS OF PREMIUM ECONOMY OVER ECONOMY



- Seat comfort: a wider seat and more recline, and an adjustable footrest and leg rest, when compared to economy. For a deeper Delta PE dive, click [here](#):
- More legroom: up to 8 inches more than economy
- Dedicated overhead bin space
- A Tumi amenity kit, the same as Business Class, not offered in economy
- Boarding: same as Business Class (SkyPriority)
- Meals: better
- A dedicated in-cabin flight attendant
- TV screen: 13.2 inches on the A350
- Noise-cancelling headphones like in Business Class
- SkyPriority check-in, same as Business Class
- Expedited baggage handling and security, same as Business Class
- Delta elites earn 150% MQMs (Medallion Qualification Miles), general economy only gets 100% MQMs



A First Class British Miles Mystery: Use It for Free Tickets or Upgrades?

October 2018

Should I use British Airways miles (actually they call them points) to upgrade to First Class on BA or for 'Free' First Class Awards?

This special report at a glance:

- When to use BA's Avios points for free First Class award tickets
- When to use Avios points to upgrade to First Class
- What to do if you don't have Avios points

- **When not to use points**
- **Easy booking instructions**

**Agatha Christie would have loved this situation:
Intrigue, exotic locales, and an unexpected plot twist.**

Do you always travel First Class, Mr. Hardman? Yes, sir. The firm pays my travel expenses. He winked.

—Agatha Christie, Murder on the Orient Express

When there are points to burn, most flyers opt to use them for a free flight. But here's the twist: it's not always the best option. Depending on the circumstances, you may find that using points to *upgrade* to First Class is a much better value proposition.

BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW?

You simply read our British Airways Avios points rules of thumb below. Case closed.

WHEN TO USE AVIOS POINTS FOR FREE MILEAGE AWARDS

Scenario #1: Travel on short notice

Let's say you only have two weeks advance notice and are traveling from Washington, DC to London. Immediately, you're faced with a \$9,500+ First Class ticket price.

A "free" mileage ticket will cost you 136,000 to 200,00 Avios points (depending on season and route) and about \$1,300+ in award taxes. Yes, those taxes are rather high, but you are saving up to \$8,200 in cash. That means your return on miles is about six cents, which is a decent return. For more about how to calculate when to use your miles go [here](#).

Scenario #2: You have a Wembley Stadium full of Avios points

If you have more miles than you know what to do with, or even credit card points, why sit on them? Cash them in for a free First Class award. It's been rumored that BA will devalue Avios next year. Spend now.

Scenario #3: When First Class mileage award prices are lower on British Airways to Europe

British Airways mileage cost varies by season and flight distance, and ranges from 136,000 Avios points (off-peak season) from the East Coast to 200,000 (peak season) from the West Coast. (Other airlines, such as American, Lufthansa, and United, charge 160,000 to 170,000 miles, so depending on when you travel and the route, the savings can be up to 34,000 miles.)

WHEN TO USE AVIOS POINTS TO UPGRADE

Scenario #1: When you need to maintain elite status

For American elites, flying on British Airways in Business Class earns [125% base miles](#), [1.50 EQMs \(Elite Qualifying Miles\)](#), and [25% EQDs \(Elite Qualifying Dollars\)](#).

Scenario #2: Miles needed for an upgrade are fewer than a free award ticket

To upgrade on BA to London from Business Class to First, the airline charges from 22,500 Avios points (off-peak) to 25,000 (peak) one-way from Los Angeles, and 18,000 (off-peak) to 20,000 (peak) from New York. It costs even fewer Avios points if you figure in the points earned on the trip. **Plus, BA does not charge a co-pay for upgrades; American's and United's are \$1,100.**

Scenario #3: When you come across low Business Class fares

For example, BA's fare from Boston to London at \$2,467 would require 36,000 points round-trip to upgrade to First Class, with NO co-pay. Plus, add in the [AARP \\$200 discount for Business Class](#) travel and your fare drops down to \$2,266. That's very good value as First Class fares on this route start at \$4,707.

Check your flight details

✈ Logan International (MA) - Heathrow (London) - Tuesday 09 April 2019					Price		
Departs	07:40	09 Apr	Carrier	British Airways	\$2,266.06	1 passenger	
Arrives	19:15	09 Apr	Cabin	Club World			
Flight	BA0238						
✈ Heathrow (London) - Logan International (MA) - Tuesday 16 April 2019					Email price quote		
Departs	11:15	16 Apr	Carrier	British Airways	Baggage allowance		
Arrives	13:35	16 Apr	Cabin	Club World	Currency calculator		
Flight	BA0213						

Scenario #4: When you want to travel beyond London, and only want First Class on the long-haul segment

If you are traveling within Europe, British Airways does not offer a First Class cabin, so you can only upgrade the long-haul segment into London on your paid Business Class ticket and fly intra-Europe in Business Class.

Scenario #5: Avoid high award taxes

One major complaint about the BA miles program, as with other European mileage programs, is that free mileage award tickets have high award taxes—\$1,300+. You avoid that with an upgrade to First Class.

NO BRITISH AIRWAYS MILES? NO PROBLEM.

British Airways not only gives you [the option to buy miles](#) (up to 100,000), but it's also a [credit card transfer point partner with three programs](#): Amex Rewards, Chase, and Starwood/Marriott.

With Amex Rewards you can even [buy up to 500,000](#) points.

WHEN NOT TO USE AVIOS POINTS

Scenario #1: When BA is offering low First Class fares

Last month FCF did a report on British Airways low First Class fares to Europe ([details here](#)). Both a free mileage award and an upgrade would be of little value when you have low First Class fares.

Scenario #2: When Business Class fares are high, an upgrade with Avios points to First Class would not be the best value

Take Washington, DC, to London: The lowest Business Class fare with a two-week advance purchase starts at \$8,363. Plus, it would require 36,000 Avios points round-trip (off-peak travel dates). For 100,000 miles more, you would save the cost of the Business Class ticket, minus the award taxes (\$1,300), which is a savings of \$7,000. Here, a free award ticket is a much better value.

HOW TO BOOK

Free award tickets: Simply log in to BA online [here](#) and book the space under the "Book with Avios" header. Or if you prefer, you can also call (800) 452-1201.

Upgrade award request: To upgrade with points when you book your flight, use the "book and upgrade" header, search for availability, and make your booking. The option will show "Book with money and upgrade with Avios." Here you can select either one-way or round-trip upgrades. Select the class of travel you want to upgrade from when searching.

Book with Avios

Book and upgrade

☒ Book with money and upgrade with Avios

Upgrade

☒ Outbound ☐ Inbound

Travel class before upgrade ⓘ
(We'll search for upgrades in the next available class)

Business/Club

Note that BA's inventory for free mileage award travel and upgrades comes from the same bucket, meaning the same inventory.

First Class on British Airways Using Avios Points: Free Tickets or Upgrades