

How and Why to Bust Out of United MileagePlus Bondage—for Travel to Asia, Europe, and South America (Part 2)

April 2018

Fly United and its partners in Business and First Class for up 80,000 fewer miles to Asia, Europe and South America—or save enough for a free domestic First Class round-trip for every long-haul booked.

In February, FCF wrote about why [United-focused travelers should earn Amex or Starwood Starpoints and transfer them to an All Nippon mileage account to fly on United](#). That's because All Nippon gives you a **much better value-per-mile** than that offered by using United co-branded cards. Use the United card to hit your elite-status spend bonus, then switch over.

This month FCF is taking a closer look at the United-Asiana partnership as a possible back-up to United MileagePlus. Stock-up on Asiana miles through purchases or transfers so you have an alternative wallet.

THE SAME RULE APPLIES

Spend enough on your United card to get your elite status bonus, **then switch cards** to one earning Starpoints, then transfer the points to an Asiana mileage account. Voila!

WHY?

Asiana's mileage program often has **lower mileage award rates for United-operated flights than United's own rate**. Plus, award availability using Asiana's mileage program is usually the same as United's own, so no issue there.

Bonus upside: Asiana also has MUCH lower mileage award rates for Star Alliance partner operated flights than United's rate, and it offers one-way awards at 50% of the round-trip cost.

One drawback: Award taxes are a bit higher than those United charges.

UNITED FIRST CLASS BONDAGE BUSTER #1:




Sample trip to Asia saves enough to get more than a free domestic First Class flight (80,000 miles): Based on past FCF research, United almost never has First Class award space for its own flights, but sometimes it offers First Class seats on partners' flights. However, **with United miles, partner travel incurs a nasty surcharge.**

So, the best solution is to book Asiana's First Class using Asiana miles—which you can get easily. On the New York-Seoul route, United's lowest First Class partner award costs 240,000 miles and \$48 in taxes, whereas Asiana charges 160,000 miles and \$266 in taxes.

United.com @ 240,000 Miles...

Trip summary		TOTAL	240,000 miles
Mon, Sep 03, 2018			+ \$48.11
Mon, Sep 3	Tue, Sep 4	Nonstop	
1:50 pm	5:10 pm	14h 20m total	
New York, NY, US (JFK - Kennedy)	Seoul, KR (ICN - Incheon)		
OZ 221 Airbus A380-800		①	
Operated By Asiana Airlines			
		Revise flight	Details
Mon, Sep 17, 2018			
10:30 am	11:50 am	Nonstop	
Seoul, KR (ICN - Incheon)	New York, NY, US (JFK - Kennedy)	14h 20m total	
OZ 222 Airbus A380-800		①	
Operated By Asiana Airlines			
		Revise flight	Details

Asiana.com @ 160,000 Miles...

Reservation Information 	
NEW YORK / Kennedy(JFK) [13:50]	
↓	
SEOUL / INCHEON(ICN) [17:10] [+1]	
2018/09/03 (MO)	
(OZ221) 	
First(O)	
SEOUL / INCHEON(ICN) [10:30]	
↓	
NEW YORK / Kennedy(JFK) [11:50]	
2018/09/17 (MO)	
(OZ222) 	
First(O)	
My Miles	
151 Miles	
Miles Needed	
159,849 Miles	
Total	
• Miles	160,000 Miles
• Tax	USD 266.51

UNITED FIRST CLASS BONDAGE BUSTER #2:

Sample partner trip to Asia in First Class saves 60,000 miles—enough for a one-way Business Class ticket to Europe or southern South America: On the New York-Tokyo route, United's lowest All Nippon First Class partner award costs 220,000 miles, whereas Asiana charges 160,000 miles.

BUSINESS CLASS BONDAGE BUSTER #3:

Sample trip to South America saves 50,000 miles (enough for a free First Class ticket in the U.S.): On the Houston-Rio de Janeiro route United's lowest Business Class award costs 120,000 miles and \$56 in taxes, while Asiana charges only 70,000 miles and about \$93 in taxes.

United.com @ 120,000 Miles...

Trip summary

TOTAL

120,000 miles
+ \$55.81

Wed, May 9

9:55 pm

Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental)

UA 129

Boeing 767-300

Thu, May 10

10:15 am

Rio de Janeiro, RJ, BR (GIG - Galeao)

Nonstop

10h 20m total

Revise flight

Details

Tue, Jun 05, 2018

Tue, Jun 5

9:05 pm

Rio de Janeiro, RJ, BR (GIG - Galeao)

UA 128

Boeing 767-300

Wed, Jun 6

5:50 am

Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental)

Nonstop

10h 45m total

Revise flight

Details

Asiana.com @ 70,000 Miles...

Confirm Itinerary

Smartium Class Installed

Code-share

[+1] : Date After Departure Date

Flight	Date	Departure	Arrival	Airline/Aircraft	Transit/Transit	Class	Status
UA129	2018/05/09 (WED)	George Bush Intercont(IAH) 2018-05-09(WED), 21:55	Galeao A.C. Jobim Intercontinental(GIG) 2018-05-10(THU), 10:15	UNITED AIR/ 763	Non-stop	Business	Confirmed
UA128	2018/06/05 (TUE)	Galeao A.C. Jobim Intercontinental(GIG) 2018-06-05(TUE), 21:05	George Bush Intercont(IAH) 2018-06-06(WED), 05:50	UNITED AIR/ 763	Non-stop	Business	Confirmed

Pay

Cancellation/Refund

Fare Payment

1

Deduction for Flight Ticket

70,000 Miles

Airport Use Fee

100,400 KRW

BONDAGE BUSTER #4—BUSINESS CLASS:

Sample trip to Europe saves 40,000 miles: On the Newark-Frankfurt route, United's lowest Business Class award costs 120,000 miles and \$126 in taxes. Booking the flights using Asiana miles costs 80,000 miles round-trip and about \$164 in taxes.

HOW TO SEARCH FOR ASIANA AWARD SPACE

- Set up an Asiana mileage account (takes five minutes [here](#)) as you must have the mileage required for award redemption in order to book award space.
- Check the [United website](#) for United-operated flight-award availability or for Star Alliance partner operated flight-award availability; or another good site to find Star Alliance award space is Aeroplan, Air Canada's mileage program, you must [log into Aeroplan](#) to search for space, then click "Travel" under the "Use Your Miles" menu. These sites are a great tool and are easier to get an idea in finding Star Alliance partner award space, so you know where there is free award availability.

- Then call Asiana to check if the award space is the same, and if so, book United or book partner award space. 1-800-227-4262 (menu key #5).
- Getting miles: Asiana is a transfer partner with Starwood. (For more details on Starwood see, [What Grandma Taught Me About Loyalty Programs and 99+ Ways Anyone Can Score by Buying SPG Points.](#))

RELATED FCF REPORTS:

For details on How and Why to Bust Out of United MileagePlus Bondage—for Travel to Asia, Europe, and South America using All Nippon miles, go [here](#).

For details on How (and Why) to Bust Out of Delta SkyMiles Bondage for Travel to Asia, Europe, and South America with Virgin Atlantic miles, go [here](#); and using Korean miles, go [here](#).



The Power of American Upgrades to Hawaii, Plus Surprising Availability

April 2018

Elite, non-elite, business, and leisure travelers can now save big on Hawaii routes—up to 44% off.

In the past four months, FCF has written four special reports for oneworld members (American) looking to deploy miles in order to achieve or maintain elite status. In December, we focused on [Europe](#), in January on [Asia](#), in February on [South America](#), and in March on the [Transcon](#).

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 American miles.

This month FCF takes the same approach to American's Hawaii routes.

Our Pitch: The same as Asia, Europe, South America, and the Transcon: Forget about free mileage awards because they don't earn elite credit, and it can be difficult to find award availability. Instead, use miles to upgrade, as availability is much greater and you earn miles and elite credit.

AMERICAN'S UPGRADE PROGRAM

To Hawaii, American requires 15,000 miles plus a \$175 co-pay each way on the lowest upgradeable economy fares (H, K, M, L, V, G, Q, N, O, S classes) to Business Class. When fares are high, this upgrade feature can offer a great return.

SAVE 44% ON HAWAII BUSINESS CLASS FARES

One example: Business Class on Los Angeles-Maui is often expensive, \$1,400+, even when booked way in advance. The lowest American economy fare is currently \$457 (for travel in May), while the lowest Business Class ticket is \$1,447. So, even with the \$350 co-pay, you can save 44% (\$640) off the published fare by using miles. (See chart below for a survey of upgrade-award availability.)

WHAT TO DO WHEN AN UPGRADE IS ONLY AVAILABLE ONE WAY

American lets you combine coach and Business Class fares, so just upgrade the segment that has the space and pay for the other leg in coach, or spring for Business. On Los Angeles-Maui, the combined coach-Business Class fare is \$987, while round-trip Business Class is \$1,447—so even with the \$175 one-way co-pay, you can still save 32% (\$460) by using your miles one-way.

CONNECTIONS CAN SAVE UP TO 44%

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

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

Example: Albuquerque-Honolulu: The through-fare ticket, via Los Angeles or Phoenix in coach is \$349 versus \$1,251 in Business Class. Even with the \$350 co-pay, you can save \$552 (44%) 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 (upgrades cannot be booked online) at 1-800-433-7300 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.

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 fast 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, right now perhaps, because they're on sale for as low as 1.8¢ each (includes taxes and processing fee). For more information go [here](#).

Don't have any American miles but do have Starwood points? Then transfer Starwood points (takes about two days). Transferring Starwood points generally works whenever you have a difference between the coach fare and the Business Class fare of, say, \$850 or more—given that the co-pay is \$350.

So, anything more than those two costs is savings gravy.

RELATED READS:

- [Upgrader's Block and How to Overcome It, Volume 1: When to Use Your Miles.](#)
- [When to Buy Miles Instead of Purchasing a Normal Published Fare.](#)

Sweet Redeem Survey: American Upgrade to Hawaii

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
Dallas - Honolulu	Aug.	Aug.				
Dallas - Kona	Aug.			Dec.		

Routes	Depart			Return		
	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month	4 to 8 Days Per Month	9 to 12 Days Per Month	13+ Days Per Month
Los Angeles - Honolulu	April, Aug. through Oct., Dec.	April., Sept., Nov., Dec., Jan.	April., May, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Jan.	Aug., Oct. through Dec.	Aug., Dec.	April, May, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.
Los Angeles - Maui	April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct.	June, July	June, July, Aug.	April, May, Aug., Sept., Dec.	April, May, Aug., Dec.	June, July, Aug., Dec.
Los Angeles - Kona	May, June, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.	May, June, Sept.	July, Aug.	May, Aug., Sept., Oct., Dec.	June, July, Aug.	June, July
Los Angeles - Kauai	April, May, Nov., Dec., Jan.	May, June, Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.	May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.	May, Oct., Nov.	May, Aug., Sept., Oct.	June, July, Aug., Dec.
Phoenix - Honolulu	Aug.			April, May, Aug. through Nov.		May
Phoenix - Maui	July, Aug.			Aug.		
Phoenix - Kona				May, June, July		
Phoenix - Kauai	Aug.			May, July, Aug., Dec.	Dec.	

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



Just last month we told you about our unique [Leg Stretch Strategy delivering Business Class for 33% less than coach by using points.](#)

Our dedicated staff of mileage-busters have taken the strategy even further this month—to the luxurious confines of the First Class cabin. And the best yet: it's for at least 105,000 fewer points than you'd pay in Business Class to do the same two trips.

In this case, we Leg Stretch from London to New York to Brazil to Philadelphia/New York to London, all for 155,000 miles in First Class.

You book the flights through Japan Airlines (JAL)—a Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG) points-to-miles transfer partner—but take the flights on JAL’s mileage partner, American Airlines.

LEG STRETCH 101: HOW DOES IT WORK AGAIN?

Our FCF team created the Leg Stretch Strategy when they saw that a normal round-trip airfare from Europe to South America offered free stop-overs in the U.S.—both ways.

Since then, we've shown you a number of other Leg Stretch journeys as well—using cash or miles—[from South America to Asia](#), and [from Europe to the South Pacific](#).

It's not for everyone, but if you are planning on, say, going to Europe twice this year and South America once in First Class, or vice versa, this strategy is great, because you can time it so that the "free stop-over" (in your home city) can last for weeks or even months. The only restriction is that the itinerary has to be completed within 12 months of your departure date.

LET’S BREAK IT DOWN — OPTION 1: POSSIBLY THE WORLD’S BEST MILES/POINTS TICKETING STRATEGY FOR FIRST CLASS TRAVEL

This is a sample itinerary, but one that will work for many other itineraries.

Combine Europe and South America on one ticket! Usually, you’d think of them as separate trips, but the Leg Stretch Strategy lets you combine them with amazing effect. And you can “stretch” the trip over a year (you don’t have to do it all at once).

Pre-Leg Stretch: Get yourself to London on the cheapest ticket you can find. No sweat: FCF is where you find those [one-way award](#) and [fare deals](#).

Then, We S t r e t c h

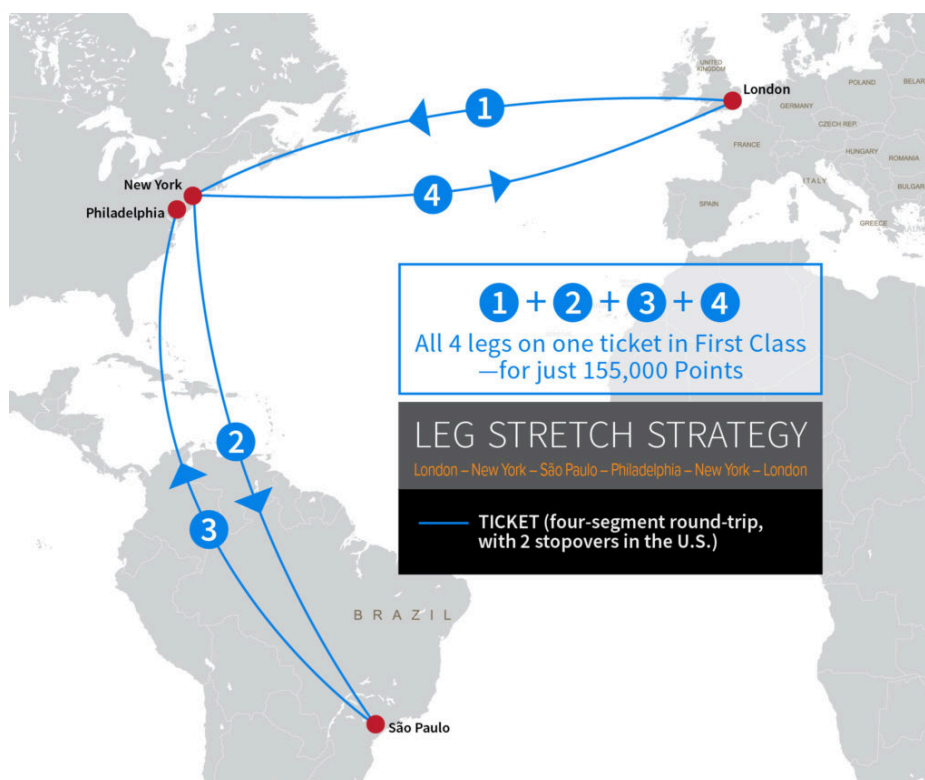
Leg 1: London to New York—the first U.S. stop (it could be at the end of a vacation or business trip.)

Leg 2: New York to São Paulo—for a vacation in Brazil and the first segment of the second trip. (Remember, you don’t have to do it all at once.)

Leg 3: São Paulo to Philadelphia—the second U.S. stop. Japan Airlines fine print requires you to stop at a different U.S. airport than the first one, and connect via a different airport, too. (End of the second trip.) If that’s a problem, see option 2, below.

Leg 4: New York to London (Start of the next vacation/business trip.)


Post-Leg Stretch: Either come back home from London on a cheap one-way ticket or start another Leg Stretch. Your call.





American Airlines four-segment itinerary (equivalent to two round-trips)—**all on one ticket**. Screenshot from www.JAL.co:

✈️ London → New York	Sat 12 May
AA105	
14:30 London (Heathrow)	17:25 New York (John F Kennedy International)
Cabin: First class	
Total duration 7hour(s)55minute(s)	
✈️ New York → Sao Paulo	Thu 11 Oct
AA951	
22:15 New York (John F Kennedy International)	09:10 +1 Sao Paulo (Guarulhos International)
Cabin: First class	
Total duration 9hour(s)55minute(s)	
✈️ Sao Paulo → Philadelphia	Mon 22 Oct
AA930	
22:25 Sao Paulo (Guarulhos International)	04:50 +1 Miami (Miami International)
Duration : 7hour(s)25minute(s)	
Cabin: First class	
Connecting time: 1hour(s)55minute(s)	
AA1623	
06:45 Miami (Miami International)	09:37 +1 Philadelphia (Philadelphia International)
Duration : 2hour(s)52minute(s)	
Cabin: Business class	
Total duration 12hour(s)12minute(s)	
✈️ New York → London	Wed 09 Jan
AA100	
18:25 New York (John F Kennedy International)	06:20 +1 London (Heathrow)
Cabin: First class	
Total duration 6hour(s)55minute(s)	

155,000 JAL miles for the four segments—which cost me **125,000 SPG points**. (AA credit card users pay 105,000 more for Business Class!) Screenshot from www.JAL.com:


JAPAN AIRLINES





MR MATTHEW BENNETT Mileage Statement for MR MATTHEW BENNETT

• Thank you for flying with Japan Airlines.

Date	Description	miles ①	Bonus miles ②	Total ① + ②
	Up to December 31 2017			
01 Apr 2018	MILES FOR PARTNER AIRLINES AWARD TICKETS	-155,000	0	-155,000

WHAT YOU SAVE USING OPTION #1

If you fly from the U.S. to Europe one-way in Business Class, it will cost you at least 57,500 miles each way using American's program, and from the U.S. to South America in Business Class it's 57,500 miles each way.

All up, that's 230,000 miles at a minimum to fly Business Class for these four segments—and (you'd better sit down), 340,000 miles in First Class using AA miles.

With this Leg Stretch Strategy, you get those same destinations in First Class for 155,000 miles or 125,000 SPG points. (American Airlines credit card players pay 105,000 / 45% more miles for Business Class travel!)

That's a stratospheric 105,000 fewer miles than Business Class. Think of it as a couple of free tickets and more. I know it's April but I'm not fooling.

OPTION #2: WHEN YOU MUST RETURN TO THE SAME U.S. CITY

To get around the rule that forbids stopping in the same city twice, it will cost you 210,000 miles round-trip, but it means you can use the same city as your U.S. stop-over. It is, in effect, two one-way tickets that each allow a stop-over in that one city.

Savings: Each one-way Leg Stretch ticket costs 105,000 miles (27,500 more than half a round-trip ticket), so 210,000 in total for a round-trip in First Class—or 170,000 SPG points. It's still at least 60,000 fewer miles than Business Class, and you get to stop in your U.S. home city twice, which should make booking the LSS easier.

Here's an example of how option #2 might work:

Ticket #1: Europe > U.S. (stop-over) > South America

■ Your itinerary

Bound 1

LON NYC

Departure

10:15 / TUE 1 MAY

London (Heathrow)

Arrival

13:10 / TUE 1 MAY

New York (John F Kennedy International)

 Total duration **9h05m**

9h05m

Bound 2

NYC  SAO

Departure

22:15 / THU 11 OCT

New York (John F Kennedy International)

Arrival

09:10 / FRI 12 OCT

Sao Paulo (Guarulhos International)

 Total duration **10h55m**

10h55m

Difference summary

Adult x1	105,000 Miles
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105,000 Miles

Fuel surcharge	\$ 0.00 (USD)
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\$ 0.00 (USD)

<u>Other taxes</u>	\$ 193.91 (USD)
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\$ 193.91 (USD)

Total **105,000 Miles** + \$ 193.91 (USD)

105,000 Miles + \$ 193.91 (USD)

Ticket #2: South America > U.S. (stop-over) > Europe

- JAL has a flight-distance program, meaning miles charged are based on flight distance. The Leg Stretch Strategy for 155,000 miles for four long-haul segments works for trips for up to 20,000 flight miles; for trips up to 25,000 flight miles the cost increases to 200,000 JAL miles **(for example: Los Angeles-London-San Diego-Rio de Janeiro-San Diego)**.

FCF CHEAT SHEETS GET YOU THERE FAST AND EASY

We've prepared a few First Class "Sweet Redeem" alerts to show you when and where free mileage award space for American Airlines flights is available to/from the U.S. and Europe, and to/from the U.S. and South America, including:

[American First Class Award Availability Found from Miami and New York to Europe—for Less than Business](#)

[New Sale Saves 70% on American's First Class to Argentina, Brazil, and Chile with Cash—or 70% Off with Miles](#)

[Save 69% on American's First Class to Argentina, Brazil, and Chile with Cash—or 61% Off with Miles](#)

[Save 65% on American's First Class to Argentina, Brazil, and Chile with Cash—or 73% Off with Miles](#)

NO DATES? NO PROBLEM.


JAL allows you to make date changes for just \$20. You can't change the cities on your ticket once travel has commenced, but changing dates only requires American Airlines to have availability.

So, if you're flexible, it's no problem. As you can see above, FCF publishes availability opportunities with American all the time. Just get your cities right and you should be fine by providing "placeholder dates" when you make your booking.

MORE HELPFUL LINKS

Figure out how [many flight miles your trip will be](#).

Japan Airlines flight distance [pricing chart](#).



Lowest One-Way Biz Class Fares to Europe, to Consider Using With The Leg Stretch Strategy (LSS)

April 2018

Our super-powered Leg Stretch Strategy usually starts in Europe, so here's how to get there cheap.

First Class Flyer loves the Leg Stretch Strategy (LSS) and there are many reasons you should too. The biggest reason travelers balk at the LSS:

“How to begin the process with the one-way ticket to Europe?”

PROBLEM: SOLVED

In this month's issue we have another great [LSS for First Class travel to Europe and South America](#).

Get to Europe with Miles: FCF often publishes [special reports on why one-way awards can be ideal for Business and First Class travel](#) for many different scenarios. We're revising the topic now because you should also keep one-way fares in mind when booking FCF's Leg Stretch Strategy.

GET TO EUROPE IN BUSINESS CLASS ON PUBLISHED FARES: FOR LESS THAN \$1,261 ONE-WAY.

The carrier: TAP Air Portugal, a Star Alliance partner (same as United).

The routes: Non-stop service from Boston, Miami, and New York (JFK and Newark) to Lisbon; and Newark to Porto, with onward connections to [major cities Europe](#).



TAP Air Portugal New Business Class Seat

The Business Class cabin: A refitted Airbus [A330-200 with flat-bed Business Class](#) seats from Boston, New York (JFK) and Newark to Lisbon, other routes offer the older recliner Business Class seats. (Seat width is 20 to 22 inches.)

The fares: TAP offers many routes starting at under \$1,400 one-way in Business Class.

Here are 21 sample fares:

From Boston: \$1,262 to Barcelona, \$1,262 to Paris, \$1,273 to London or Manchester, \$1,312 to Munich or Rome, \$1,362 to Copenhagen.

From New York (Newark airport): \$1,261 to Paris, \$1,268 to London, \$1,299 to Porto, \$1,311 to Brussels, Luxembourg, or Amsterdam, \$1,312 to Florence.

From Miami: \$1,299 to Lisbon, \$1,314 to Madrid, \$1,325 to London, \$1,364 to Amsterdam, Milan, or Bordeaux, and \$1,371 to Stuttgart.

Mileage earnings: TAP's J fares earn 125% award miles and 100% Premier Qualifying Miles (PQM) on United, but no PQD's.

RELATED FCF LEG STRETCH STRATEGY SPECIAL REPORTS

March: [Inventive Premium Ticketing Strategy Nets Business Class for 33.33% LESS Than Coach?](#)

February: [It's Still Flying: The World's Best Airfares Are Here Months Later and are Now Even Lower](#)

September: [FCF's Latest Leg Stretch Strategy Nets First Class for \\$2,738 Less than Business Class to Europe and South America](#)

August: [FCF's Leg Stretch Strategy Nets Business Class for Up to \\$66.68 Less than Coach on United \(and Partners\) to Europe and South America](#)

July: [The World's Most Ridiculously Amazing Airfare Strategy Nets Business Class for up to \\$139.65 Less than Coach on Delta & SkyTeam Partners to Europe and South America?](#)

June: [FCF's 2-for-1 Business Class Leg Stretch #2: Asia-North America-South America](#)

May: [FCF's 2-for-1 Leg Stretch Strategy: U.S., Europe & South Pacific, Business Class](#)

The background of the top section is a grey rectangle. Overlaid on this is the text 'EMBERSH' in a large, blue, serif font, and 'Rewards' in a smaller, blue, serif font below it. The title 'How to Buy American Express Membership Rewards Points' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, centered over the text.

How to Buy American Express Membership Rewards Points

April 2018

Business and First Class fares can be expensive. Buying miles or points can be a much better approach to flying premium class, much of the time.

This report focuses on the American Express Membership Rewards loyalty program, because it offers a gigantic advantage: A very high ceiling—up to 500,000—on the number of points you can buy annually.

Points can be transferred to 18 different airline loyalty programs. You only need an American Express Card that offers Membership Rewards as part of the deal, of course, but you never even have to use it after that.

SEE AMEX'S RULES FOR YOURSELF

Screenshot taken from [this page](#):

Buy points

You can't buy and bank points for future rewards, but you may be able to buy them when you're in the process of using points and you don't have enough. The charge for the points you buy will appear on your Card Account.

Conditions for buying points:

- 1,000 points for \$25
- A minimum of 1,000 points at a time and only multiples of 1,000 (for example, you'd buy 2,000 points instead of 1,750)
- Up to 100,000 or 500,000 points each calendar year, depending on your Card

Corporate Card Members can't buy points. Check the '**Compare Products**' section of these Terms and Conditions to see whether you can buy points, and how many points you can buy each year.

KEY POINTERS

- **The cards that get you into the program:** Amex Platinum, Amex Business Platinum, Amex Business Gold, among many others. For a complete list go [here](#).
- **How to buy points:** Call the number on the back of your card and when prompted, say, "Membership Rewards points" and you'll be connected to a representative. (You cannot buy points online.)
- **When you can buy points:** Only when you are going to transfer them immediately to a Membership Rewards partner airline. In other words, you can't just stock up on points. All you need to do is tell the representative that you want to buy X number of points to be transferred to Y airline partner.
- **The buying limit:** It depends on the card you have. Amex EveryDay, Amex Platinum Card, and Amex Centurion have the 500,000-point ceiling. To find out the ceiling offered by the other cards, go [here](#).
- **The cost to buy points:** 2.5¢ per point, but you must buy them in increments of 1,000 points (\$25).
- **Before transferring points:** Check and see if the airline is offering a sale on miles. At times, that's a cheaper way to go.
- **Before buying points for a specific trip:** Make sure that award space is available. Also, have a cluster of dates, not just one, as that ups your chances of finding space. Also, factor in the point transfer time, which can be posted instantly or take 48+ hours.

RELATED REPORTS:

- [What the Humble Pea Can Point Out About Using Miles & Points for Premium Air Travel.](#)
- [Upgrader's Block and How to Overcome It, Volume 1: When to Use Your Miles.](#)
- [When to Buy Miles Instead of Purchasing a Normal Published Fare.](#)
- [Beginner's Guide: How to Play the "Buy Miles to Fly In Style" Strategy to Net Up to 90% Off Premium Travel.](#)

LIST OF [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.



Tactical Business Class Fares to India (and the Maldives): An Update

April 2018

In February we wrote about new lower tactical fares to [Africa](#); and in December we had a [high-level overview of airline tactical fares](#), but we haven't done a deep dive into India since [August 2016](#).

Tactical fares are significantly discounted fares that airlines offer sporadically for a variety of reasons, but usually because their sophisticated algorithms tell them that seats won't sell.

This diverse group includes holiday tactical fares (Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and New Year's), origin-specific tactical fares, destination-specific tactical fares, and advance-purchase tactical fares, to name a few.

And then there's this beauty:

LIMITED-ROUTE TACTICAL FARES

Over the last few months we've seen some big-time savings on certain routes from the U.S. to India. Business Class fares have historically been in the \$4,000 to \$6,000 range on major carriers, but on the routes we'll cover today, prices have plunged to under \$2,900.

As always, the fares may not last or they may be restricted to certain U.S. departure cities and/or carriers. The bigger picture: Discounted Business Class fares have landed in India from Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, and Dallas (from Miami, New York, and Washington, DC only to Delhi).

SAMPLE LOW-COST TACTICAL ROUTE

On the Atlanta- and Dallas-Mumbai route, United's published Business Class fare is \$2,631 round-trip. Compared to other high-fare routes, such as Charlotte-Mumbai, starting at \$5,930, that's a savings of \$3,299 (57%). For more details on new Business Class fares found to India starting at \$2,260, go [here](#).

United.com

TOTAL **\$2,630.81**
4 tickets left at this price

Trip summary
Wed, Jul 04, 2018

Wed, Jul 4 4:25 pm Atlanta, GA, US (ATL)	✈	Thu, Jul 5 8:50 pm Mumbai, IN (BOM)	1 Connection 18h 55m total
ATL to EWR UA 792 Airbus A319			
1h 21m connection			
EWR to BOM UA 48 Boeing 777-200			
Details			

Thu, Jul 12, 2018

Thu, Jul 12 11:20 pm Mumbai, IN (BOM)	✈	Fri, Jul 13 8:53 am Atlanta, GA, US (ATL)	1 Connection 19h 3m total
BOM to EWR UA 49 Boeing 777-200			
1h 11m connection			
EWR to ATL UA 241 Airbus A320			
Details			

TOTAL **\$5,929.21**
6 tickets left at this price

Trip summary
Wed, Jul 04, 2018

Wed, Jul 4 4:10 pm → Thu, Jul 5 8:50 pm 1 Connection
 Charlotte, NC, US (CLT) → Mumbai, IN (BOM) 19h 10m total

CLT to EWR UA 3402 Embraer ERJ-175
 Operated By REPUBLIC AIRLINES DBA UNITED EXPRESS

----- 1h 57m connection -----

EWR to BOM UA 48 Boeing 777-200

[Details](#)

Wed, Jul 18, 2018

Wed, Jul 18 11:20 pm → Thu, Jul 19 10:49 am 1 Connection
 Mumbai, IN (BOM) → Charlotte, NC, US (CLT) 20h 59m total

BOM to EWR UA 49 Boeing 777-200

----- 3h 15m connection -----

EWR to CLT UA 3487 Embraer ERJ-170
 Operated By REPUBLIC AIRLINES DBA UNITED EXPRESS

[Details](#)

BRITISH AIRWAYS DEALS

British Airways' Business Class fares are slightly higher but with the [AARP Discount \(anyone of any age can join for \\$16\)](#), members save up to \$200 on fares booked on British Airways before Jan. 31, 2019. The Dallas to Mumbai fare is \$2,711, but with the AARP discount the cost drops to \$2,511.

Plus, you can get an additional savings of [10% off now until June 30](#) with the British Airways Visa card, using the promo code CARDOFFERU. The Dallas to Mumbai fare with AARP discount is \$2,511, but with the 10% off discount the cost drops to \$2,260.

BritishAirways.com AARP discount

Check your flight details

✈️ -- Wednesday 02 May 2018						Price
17:55 02 May	09:00 03 May	Dallas Ft Worth (TX) (Dallas)	Heathrow (London)	BA0192 British Airways	Club World	\$2,511.31 1 passenger Email price quote Baggage allowance Currency calculator
10:00 03 May	23:45 03 May	Heathrow (London)	Chhatrapati Shivaji Intl (Mumbai)	BA0139 British Airways	Club World	
✈️ -- Monday 21 May 2018						
01:45 21 May	06:55 21 May	Chhatrapati Shivaji Intl (Mumbai)	Heathrow (London)	BA0138 British Airways	Club World	
11:25 21 May	15:25 21 May	Heathrow (London)	Dallas Ft Worth (TX) (Dallas)	BA0193 British Airways	Club World	

BritishAirways.com AARP discount + 10%

Check your flight details

✈️ -- Wednesday 02 May 2018						Price
17:55 02 May	09:00 03 May	Dallas Ft Worth (TX) (Dallas)	Heathrow (London)	BA0192 British Airways	Club World	\$2,260.18 1 passenger
10:00 03 May	23:45 03 May	Heathrow (London)	Chhatrapati Shivaji Inti (Mumbai)	BA0139 British Airways	Club World	
✈️ -- Monday 21 May 2018						
01:45 21 May	06:55 21 May	Chhatrapati Shivaji Inti (Mumbai)	Heathrow (London)	BA0138 British Airways	Club World	
11:25 21 May	15:25 21 May	Heathrow (London)	Dallas Ft Worth (TX) (Dallas)	BA0193 British Airways	Club World	
						Email price quote
						Baggage allowance
						Currency calculator

TRAVEL BEYOND INDIA ON CATHAY PACIFIC: MALDIVES

Another limited-route tactical fare can be found with Cathay Pacific from Chicago (via Hong Kong) to India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka.

The normal fare to Malé, the capital of the Maldives, on other airlines starts at around \$5,500 from Chicago. With Cathay Pacific, Chicago–Malé goes for \$2,519 round-trip, a savings of \$2,981 (54%). For more details on new Business Class fares found from Chicago to India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka on Cathay Pacific starting at \$2,519, go [here](#).

MAKE NO MISTAKE, THESE ARE REAL FARES

Many people think FCF is in the mistake-fare business because there are now so many bloggers that focus on them. Be aware that [mistake fares](#) are a risky proposition because airlines often don't honor them. The fares we're talking about in this exclusive report may appear to be mistakes because they're so low, but they're not. They're honest-to-goodness real published fares.

RELEVANT READS

[How Open-Jaw Itineraries and Airfares Can Save You From Getting Bitten.](#)

[Are You An Opportunity Traveler?](#)

[How to Save an Additional \\$200 + 10% Off on British Airways—Even with Amazingly-low Premium Flash Fares.](#)

[fcb-deal-table title="Sample Business Class Fares to India and the Maldives" /]

DON'T MISS THE MALDIVES

If you're going all the way to India, you should tack on a side-trip to one of the remotest and most beautiful places on Earth, The Maldives.

This double chain of 26 atolls, actually the tops of extinct volcanoes far off the tip of India, extends some 800 miles north to south. The atolls have incantatory names, Raa, Baa, Haa Dhaalu, and Kaafu. This archipelago is the tropics sublime: sifted-sand beaches, cerulean-blue water, intact coral reefs, world-class surfing (look up 'The Jailhouse' online), and an amazing concentration of luxury resorts that have staged a luxury arms race with each other over the past 10 years. All of the major brands have outposts here (Four Seasons, Taj, Six Senses, One&Only, and even W, as do some minor ones.)

The key for you is to grasp one major point and the logistics: The point is that you're going to a resort, not a country. The Maldives, an Islamic country, classifies islands as 'inhabited,' meaning Maldivians live there, and "resort," meaning a resort occupies the island. Foreigners are barred from visiting inhabited islands without special permission. (But trust me, you're coming for the resorts, some of the best in the world.)

So, while your ticket will say 'Malé,' the capital of the Maldives, you're actually only going to Malé Airport, a man-made island off the city. Outside of customs, you will meet a representative of the resort who will take you to the resort boat (even if you arrive at midnight) or to the airport lounge if your resort requires a flight. If you want to go to a remote atoll, you may have to book an overnight at a resort within boat-range of the airport. But the resort staff can help you with all that.

How much time do you have? That's your key element. If not much, then you want a resort within boat-distance of the airport (Taj, and Soneva Gili, among them). If you have time to fly—and it's a great experience as the plane lands on the water and the pilots fly barefoot—then you can get to more distant atolls, including the southern ones, where more resorts have been opening in recent years. Among those to consider are Soneva Fushi and the Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru.

The key move is to find the resort you want, get in touch with them and give them the flight information, and let them work the logistics.





How to Get Free In-Class Upgrades to Hawaii on Delta

April 2018

There's only one thing you have to know: Which routes use an aircraft with an international (i.e. much more comfortable) Business Class cabin.

HOW TO AVOID THE DELTA BLUES

Last month we looked at [United](#) seats on two different aircraft flying to **Hawaii**. The difference: One aircraft had an internationally configured Business Class cabin, the other, a domestic one.

The experiential difference was amazing. This month FCF turns its eyes on **Delta**, and what we've uncovered is equally as revealing. (Next month we will look at American.)

Again, we're comparing aircraft seats, one on Delta 1283, the other on Delta 1719. Both flights serve the Los Angeles-Honolulu route. One flight offers just a normal domestic seat; on the other, you're on Easy Street.

DL1283 uses a B767-300, which has an international Business Class cabin.

Delta.com

DL 1283

6H 8M

8:25 AM

✈

11:33 AM






LAX

NONSTOP

HNL

DETAILS ▲

SEATS



DEPARTS

Wed Apr 11 2018 | 8:25am from Los Angeles (LAX)

ARRIVES

Wed Apr 11 2018 | 11:33 am at Honolulu (HNL)

FLIGHT

DL 1283 | 6H 8M

AIRCRAFT

Boeing 767-300

DL1719 uses a domestic aircraft, a B757, so you're just getting a domestic First Class seat.

Delta.com

DL 1719

5H 53M

10:25 AM

✈

1:18 PM





LAX

NONSTOP

HNL

DETAILS ▲

SEATS



DEPARTS

Wed Apr 11 2018 | 10:25am from Los Angeles (LAX)

ARRIVES

Wed Apr 11 2018 | 1:18 pm at Honolulu (HNL)

FLIGHT

DL 1719 | 5H 53M

AIRCRAFT

Boeing 757

On international flights, Business Class on Delta, as on most U.S. carriers, is really Business Class. On domestic flights, however, Business Class is puffed up: It's even called First Class, but it's a big come down in comfort and overall experience. (The Transcon is the one exception.) One is 24-karat gold, the other is fool's gold, given that the price is the same.



Delta's International Business Class Seat

Knowing the Hawaii routes and flights on which Delta offers an international Business Class seat means you can strike gold. You get, in effect, a **free in-class seat upgrade**.

IT STARTS WITH THE RIGHT AIRCRAFT

Delta's B767-300s: The airline has 5 versions, but the ones used on Hawaii routes all have a Business Class flat-bed seat: 180-degree recline, 77 to 81 inches long, 21 inches wide.

Delta's B767-400s: There's only one version, and it has flat-bed seats in Business Class: 180-degree recline, 77 to 81 inches long, 21 inches wide.

NETWORKING, CONNECTIONS, AND FREE UPGRADES

Mainland Connections: If you live in Detroit, you must make a connection to Honolulu somewhere, so why not book Delta via Los Angeles or Salt Lake City instead of via Seattle? If you do, you get the international Business Class seat and the free in-class upgrade.

HOW DO I EASILY BOOK MY ITINERARY AROUND THE BEST SEATS?

Just know where to find Delta's international Business Class seat on routes to Hawaii.

Route	Departure Flight Number	Days of Operation	Return Flight Number	Days of Operation	Aircraft
Atlanta - Honolulu	DL837	Sun. to Sat.	DL836	Sun. to Sat.	767-400
Los Angeles - Honolulu	DL1283	Sun. to Sat.	DL1284	Sun. to Sat.	767-300
Minneapolis - Honolulu	DL1469	Sun. to Sat.	DL1492	Mon., Thurs. to Sun.	767-300
Salt Lake City - Honolulu	DL2767	Sun. to Sat.	DL2768	Sun. to Sat.	767-300

SPECIAL DELTA HAWAII FARES

Stay alert and check FCF's Daily Deals for special low premium Hawaii fares, such as the Flash Fares FCF's research team found on [March 20](#), which started as low as \$614 from the West Coast and another one that offered [fares from Canada for just \\$634](#) round-trip.

The background of the top section is a grey rectangle. Overlaid on this is the text 'EMBERSH' in a large, blue, serif font, and 'Rewards' in a smaller, blue, serif font below it. The title 'How to Buy American Express Membership Rewards Points' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, centered over the text.

How to Buy American Express Membership Rewards Points

April 2018

Business and First Class fares can be expensive. Buying miles or points can be a much better approach to flying premium class, much of the time.

This report focuses on the American Express Membership Rewards loyalty program, because it offers a gigantic advantage: A very high ceiling—up to 500,000—on the number of points you can buy annually.

Points can be transferred to 18 different airline loyalty programs. You only need an American Express Card that offers Membership Rewards as part of the deal, of course, but you never even have to use it after that.

SEE AMEX'S RULES FOR YOURSELF

Screenshot taken from [this page](#):

Buy points

You can't buy and bank points for future rewards, but you may be able to buy them when you're in the process of using points and you don't have enough. The charge for the points you buy will appear on your Card Account.

Conditions for buying points:

- 1,000 points for \$25
- A minimum of 1,000 points at a time and only multiples of 1,000 (for example, you'd buy 2,000 points instead of 1,750)
- Up to 100,000 or 500,000 points each calendar year, depending on your Card

Corporate Card Members can't buy points. Check the '**Compare Products**' section of these Terms and Conditions to see whether you can buy points, and how many points you can buy each year.

KEY POINTERS

- **The cards that get you into the program:** Amex Platinum, Amex Business Platinum, Amex Business Gold, among many others. For a complete list go [here](#).
- **How to buy points:** Call the number on the back of your card and when prompted, say, "Membership Rewards points" and you'll be connected to a representative. (You cannot buy points online.)
- **When you can buy points:** Only when you are going to transfer them immediately to a Membership Rewards partner airline. In other words, you can't just stock up on points. All you need to do is tell the representative that you want to buy X number of points to be transferred to Y airline partner.
- **The buying limit:** It depends on the card you have. Amex EveryDay, Amex Platinum Card, and Amex Centurion have the 500,000-point ceiling. To find out the ceiling offered by the other cards, go [here](#).
- **The cost to buy points:** 2.5¢ per point, but you must buy them in increments of 1,000 points (\$25).
- **Before transferring points:** Check and see if the airline is offering a sale on miles. At times, that's a cheaper way to go.
- **Before buying points for a specific trip:** Make sure that award space is available. Also, have a cluster of dates, not just one, as that ups your chances of finding space. Also, factor in the point transfer time, which can be posted instantly or take 48+ hours.

RELATED REPORTS:

- [What the Humble Pea Can Point Out About Using Miles & Points for Premium Air Travel.](#)
- [Upgrader's Block and How to Overcome It, Volume 1: When to Use Your Miles.](#)
- [When to Buy Miles Instead of Purchasing a Normal Published Fare.](#)
- [Beginner's Guide: How to Play the "Buy Miles to Fly In Style" Strategy to Net Up to 90% Off Premium Travel.](#)

LIST OF [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.



Gold Rush Miles Sale. Get Going.

April 2018

Alaska Airlines isn't a part of any major airline alliance, but it's having a very friendly sale on miles.

And here's the great wrinkle in this opportunity: You don't even have to fly Alaska Airlines to use the miles.

We're not saying, "Don't fly Alaska," we're just saying, "Thank you, Alaska!" We would also add this: Take a look at Alaska's Transcon, formally Virgin America, because Business Class often starts at \$1,800.

The big picture is that you can cash in those purchased miles on Alaska's numerous partners: American, Air France, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Emirates, LAN, Qantas, and 11 other carriers—for up

to 76% off normal fares.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

This is for Americans or Canadians who either don't have any miles in their kitty, or don't have a credit card that allows them to buy points.

ONE CAVEAT

Alaska Airlines' sales are only open to Mileage Plan members residing in North America, and who've been in the program for at least ten days. This particular sale ends on April 9, so you won't be able to take advantage of it now if you're new to the program. But if you have followed **previous advice**—or the early warning alert we sent on [March 16](#)—then you're set to cash in. Otherwise, [become a member now](#) and be ready for the next sale.

SALE DETAILS

Alaska is offering a bonus of up to 40% on miles purchased. The maximum purchase per transaction is 60,000 miles, but there's no limit on the number of transactions. That said, no more than four transactions are permitted on the same credit card in any 30-day period. If you need more miles, just use a second credit card. The promo cost comes out to 2.1¢ per mile, including taxes. This is good buying even though we occasionally see sales up to 50% off, [the last was eight months ago](#).

HOW DOES THIS PLAY IN THE AIR THE WORLD OVER WITH SAVINGS OF UP TO 76%?

SAVE 76% ON EMIRATES A380 IN FIRST CLASS

From the U.S. to Dubai costs 300,000 miles round-trip. (Yes, it's a lot, but if you are faced with having no points, and paying cash, this can be a good deal if award space is available.) The lowest published fare from New York to Dubai is \$26,760 round-trip. Booking a partner award through Alaska, when you can buy miles at this sale price, reduces the cost to \$6,496 round-trip (includes taxes and about \$81 in award tax), a savings of \$20,264 (76%). For more details on how to save 76% on Emirates with cash—or 65% off with miles, see FCF's Sweet Redeems alerts [here](#) and [here](#).

If you're not an Amex Rewards member, then the Alaska buy deal is a great way to go, but if you are a member you could also buy Amex Reward points (217,5000, at 2.5¢ each), and then transfer them directly to Emirates. The price is a bit less, \$6,367 including taxes.

Alaskaair.com

Flight summary			
Flight	Departs	Arrives	Total price for 1 passenger
 Emirates 204 First Nonstop Details Distance: 6,833 mi Duration: 12h 30m	New York-Kennedy (JFK) 10:40 am Mon, Dec 3	Dubai (DXB) + 8:10 am Tue, Dec 4	300,000 miles + \$81.31 Taxes, fees and charges
 Emirates 201 First Nonstop Details Distance: 6,833 mi Duration: 14h 25m	Dubai (DXB) 8:30 am Sun, Dec 16	New York-Kennedy (JFK) 1:55 pm Sun, Dec 16	

SAVE 72% TO ASIA IN FIRST CLASS

Cathay Pacific First Class from the U.S. to Asia, using Alaska miles is 140,000 miles round-trip, and can save you 70%+. The lowest published fare from Chicago to Hong Kong is \$10,960 round-trip. Booking a partner award, during this sale on miles, through Alaska reduces the price to \$3,023 (includes taxes and about \$67 in award tax), a savings of \$7,937 (72%). For more details on how to save up to 70% with cash or 65% off with miles on Cathay Pacific First Class to Asia, see FCF's Sweet Redeems alert [here](#).



SAVE 67% TO AUSTRALIA IN FIRST CLASS

Qantas First Class from the U.S. to Australia is 140,000 miles round-trip using Alaska miles, a savings of up to 67% on First Class. The lowest published fare from Los Angeles to Melbourne is \$12,080 round-trip. Booking a partner award through Alaska, during this sale on miles, reduces the price to \$3,956 (includes taxes and about \$1,000 in award tax), a savings of \$8,124 (67%).

SAVE 55% TO ASIA IN BUSINESS CLASS

Japan Airlines Business Class from the U.S. to Asia is 120,000 miles round-trip, a 55% discount using Alaska miles. The lowest published New York-Tokyo fare is \$5,903 round-trip. Booking a partner award through Alaska, during this sale on miles, reduces the price to \$2,673 round-trip (includes taxes and about \$71 in award tax), a savings of \$3,230 (55%). For more details on Japan Airlines Business Class award space, see FCF's Sweet Redeems alert [here](#).

Alaskaair.com

Flight summary			
Flight	Departs	Arrives	Total price for 1 passenger
 Japan Airlines 3 Business Nonstop Details Distance: 6,726 mi Duration: 14h 30m	New York-Kennedy (JFK) 10:55 am Wed, Jan 30	Tokyo-Tokyo Narita (NRT) + 3:25 pm Thu, Jan 31	120,000 miles + \$71.61 Taxes, fees and charges
 Japan Airlines 6 Business Nonstop Details Distance: 6,754 mi Duration: 12h 45m	Tokyo-Tokyo Haneda (HND) 11:00 am Thu, Feb 7	New York-Kennedy (JFK) 9:45 am Thu, Feb 7	

SAVE 49% TO SOUTH AMERICA IN BUSINESS CLASS



LAN Business Class from the U.S. to South America costs 90,000 miles round-trip with Alaska. The lowest published fare from New York to Santiago is \$3,824 round-trip. Booking a partner award through Alaska, during this sale on miles, reduces the price to \$1,951 (includes taxes and about \$61 in award tax), a savings of \$1,873 (49%). For more details on how to save 49% on LAN's Business Class to Argentina, Brazil, and Chile with cash or 70% off with miles, see FCF's Sweet Redeems alert [here](#).

SAVE 34% TO EUROPE IN FIRST CLASS

British Airways First Class from the U.S. to Europe is 140,000 miles round-trip: The lowest published fare from Los Angeles to London is \$6,504 round-trip. Booking a partner award through Alaska, during this sale on miles, reduces the price to \$4,281 round-trip (includes taxes and about \$1,325 in award tax), a savings of \$2,223 (34%). For more details on British Airways First Class award space, see FCF's Sweet Redeems alert [here](#).

Keep in mind: To Europe, the Alaska buying miles strategy is generally worthwhile when fares are high (\$6,000+), which often is the case on short-notice fares or on West Coast routes.

Alaskaair.com

Flight summary			
Flight	Departs	Arrives	Total price for 1 passenger
 British Airways 280 First Nonstop Details Distance: 5,440 mi Duration: 10h 30m	Los Angeles, CA (LAX) 5:50 pm Mon, Nov 5	London-Heathrow (LHR) + 12:20 pm Tue, Nov 6	140,000 miles + \$1,325.21 Taxes, fees and charges
 British Airways 281 First Nonstop Details Distance: 5,440 mi Duration: 11h 35m	London-Heathrow (LHR) 12:30 pm Mon, Nov 19	Los Angeles, CA (LAX) 4:05 pm Mon, Nov 19	

SAVE 31% TO AFRICA IN FIRST CLASS AND A FREE SECOND CITY





British Airways First Class from the U.S. to Africa is 160,000 miles round-trip using Alaska miles, a 31% savings. The lowest published fare from New York to Johannesburg is \$7,858 round-trip. Booking a partner award through Alaska, during this sale on miles, reduces the price to \$5,419 round-trip (includes taxes and about \$2,015 in award tax), a savings of \$2,439 (31%).

FREE STOPOVERS = BUCKET LIST BONANZA

Plus, if you take advantage of Alaska's generous stop-over rule on partner awards, allowing a free stop-over in the partner's hub city, in this case London, you are getting a second city, London, for free and easily worth \$4,700, giving you a total savings of \$7,139 (57%).

With Alaska's other partners, many [stop-over possibilities](#) exist.

Alaskaair.com

Flight summary			
Flight	Departs	Arrives	Total price for 1 passenger 160,000 miles + \$2,015.81 Taxes, fees and charges
 British Airways 172 First Nonstop Details Distance: 3,440 mi Duration: 7h 5m	New York-Kennedy (JFK) 9:00 pm <u>Sat</u> , Oct 6	London-Heathrow (LHR) + 9:05 am <u>Sun</u> , Oct 7	
 British Airways 56 First Nonstop Details Distance: 5,637 mi Duration: 11h 0m	London-Heathrow (LHR) 7:05 pm <u>Tue</u> , Oct 23	Johannesburg (JNB) + 7:05 am <u>Wed</u> , Oct 24	
 British Airways 54 First Nonstop Details Distance: 5,637 mi Duration: 11h 25m	Johannesburg (JNB) 9:50 pm <u>Mon</u> , Nov 12	London-Heathrow (LHR) + 7:15 am <u>Tue</u> , Nov 13	
 British Airways 116 First Nonstop Details Distance: 3,440 mi Duration: 8h 15m	London-Heathrow (LHR) 2:00 pm <u>Tue</u> , Nov 13	New York-Kennedy (JFK) 5:15 pm <u>Tue</u> , Nov 13	

FOUR MORE REASONS WHY ALASKA IS THE BOMB

SAVE \$ ON TAXES: On some international routes, Alaska charges lower award taxes than the operating airline itself charges. For example, Air France's Business Class award taxes on the Washington, D.C.-Paris route are \$618 round-trip, while that ticket booked through Alaska's mileage program incurs only \$164 in taxes, a **savings of \$454 (73%)**. Booked with Delta SkyMiles, the cost is 45,000 more miles (170,000) than with Alaska miles, and taxes are about equal to Alaska's.

EASY SEARCH: Some airlines, including Air France and British Airways, require you to sign up for their mileage program to check award space online. With [Alaska](#) you don't have to – you can see what's offered by its partners, even before you join. Note this: To find availability on Cathay Pacific or LAN, you have to call Alaska at (800) 252-7522, all others are booked online.

MIX AND MATCH: Alaska's awards allow you to use a different partner in each direction, or to book a one-way award. All of its partners are priced on a one-way basis, so a round-trip is simply double that amount.

FREE STOP-OVERS: As we've touched on, Alaska boasts a generous stop-over rule on partner awards, allowing a free stop-over in the partner's hub city. (Many other carriers allow no stop-overs at all when traveling on a mileage award.) You get one stop-over for a one-way ticket, and two stop-overs on a round-trip! For example, flying Cathay Pacific in Business Class from Los Angeles to Singapore gets you a free stop-over in Hong Kong. For details go [here](#).

WHEN SHOULD I BUY MILES?

Our general rule of thumb is to consider buying miles when published premium fares are high, say \$1,800+ for domestic tickets; \$4,000+ for Business and \$6,000+ for First Class international tickets. Published international First and Business Class fares are often highest when booked on short notice—the perfect time to use miles.

MORE:

We love buying and using miles at FCF, and these two special reports are very much part of our dinner conversation last month:

- [Upgrader's Block and How to Overcome It, Volume 1: When to Use Your Miles](#)

- [When to Buy Miles Instead of Purchasing a Normal Published Fare](#)