









A photograph of a person with a backpack walking along the Great Wall of China. The wall is made of stone and brick, and the surrounding landscape is hilly and green. The sky is overcast.

Why Beijing and Shanghai Should Be on Your Radar Now

January 2018

To paraphrase an old saying, when the going gets cheap, the savvy get going. Right now, Business Class fares to Beijing and Shanghai are cheap as we pointed out over the last few months, most recently in our [December](#) fare alert. (See screenshot below and alert [here](#).)

Sample Business Class Fares to Asia

FARE	ROUTES	AIRLINES
\$2,156	Boston to Beijing	
\$2,247	Raleigh Durham to Beijing	
\$2,300	Las Vegas to Beijing	
\$2,337	San Diego to Beijing	
\$2,405	Denver to Beijing	
\$2,408	Detroit to Beijing	
\$2,521	Chicago to Beijing	
\$2,581	Los Angeles to Beijing	
\$2,586	Seattle to Beijing	
\$2,596	Seattle to Shanghai	

For example, Boston-Beijing is only \$2,155 round-trip, whereas Boston-Hong Kong non-stop on Cathay Pacific is \$7,200, a difference of \$5,044 / 70%. You can easily fold Hong Kong—or countless other cities in Asia—into the trip by booking a separate ticket (about 3.5 hours).

OPEN-JAW OPPORTUNITY

As we [recently reported on open jaws](#), it's also easy to visit two cities on one ticket and notch a stop like Hong Kong along the way.

For example, Seattle-Beijing costs about \$2,600 Business Class, as does Seattle-Shanghai. The fare is valid if you fly to one and depart from the other. Two separate tickets, Shanghai to Hong Kong and Hong Kong to Beijing, costs about \$700 to \$800 in Business, and \$300 in coach, or 55,000 miles using Cathay Pacific (Amex points partner) miles in Business Class and 35,000 miles in coach.

You can also use British Airways miles for the same flights for 35,000 miles in Business Class and 17,500 miles in coach. (But you might also take the [bullet train](#) from Shanghai to Beijing and skip the Hong Kong stop in order to see China's new rail infrastructure firsthand: About five to six hours, at speeds up to 200+ MPH.)

But don't stop there, because from Beijing or Shanghai you can fly to many other destinations in Asia. Use miles for short intra-Asia flights, for example Shanghai-Tokyo, which costs 30,000 miles using British Airways miles in Business Class.

So, to whet your appetite, here are eight reasons to zero in on Beijing and Shanghai right now.

1. Bucket-list sights check-off: **The Great Wall**, The Forbidden City, in Beijing; the Bund (the original settlement) in Shanghai, Pudong, the new modern section of Shanghai that has arisen in the past 10 years.
2. The chance to experience first-hand a society and economy that are changing the world.
3. Relatively inexpensive five-star hotels in both cities. Or, max the luxe and stay at the [Aman Summer Palace](#) in Beijing and the [Mandarin Oriental Pudong](#) in Shanghai.
4. Cultural side trips, among them a Yangtze River cruise or a visit to the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor in Shanxi.
5. Take in Hong Kong, its fabulous harbor, top-notch hotels (the flagship Peninsula, the Mandarin Oriental), and vibrant dining scene.
6. Get really adventurous and organize a side trip to Mongolia and stay in a yurt (a traditional nomadic tent).
7. Use Beijing or Shanghai as a launchpad to visit Southeast Asia: Saigon, Bangkok, Singapore, and Bali.
8. Or go even farther afield: Shanghai-Sydney in Business Class starts as low as 80,000 American miles round-trip, non-stop on Qantas.



Premium Economy Fare-Gap to Europe Closes: Trending Up from the East Coast—Down from the West Coast

January 2018

Routes that net free upgrades; fallback upgrades; and other ways to get the most for your PE penny.

In the past few years, East Coast Premium Economy fares could be found starting at about \$900 to Europe (about 14 hours non-stop round-trip) on the New York-London route for example. So recently, FCF has been looking for good fare deals along these lines, but fares on this route have been \$1,100 to \$1,200. Meanwhile, Los Angeles-London has been \$1,200, for about 22 hours of flying round-trip on non-stop flights (and to Dublin as low as \$1,100).

GREAT FALLBACK UPGRADE

Not all airlines allow mileage upgrades to Business Class. Only British Airways (T class) and Air France (A class) allow with the lowest Premium Economy fares to Europe.

LOWEST UPGRADABLE FARES

British Airways Los Angeles-London example: The lowest published Business Class fare is \$3,610. The upgradeable Premium Economy fare is \$1,299 plus 30,000 miles round-trip (off-peak) and 50,000 (peak). BA does not charge a co-pay, per se, for upgrades—it costs \$700 on American and \$1,100 on United—but BA does impose a “tax difference fee” between Premium Economy and Business Class taxes, which runs about \$600 to \$700 per ticket, depending on the route. So the total cost is about \$1,955, a savings of \$1,655 (46%). See [link](#) for more on upgrading PE fares with BA.

Air France Chicago-Paris example: The lowest published Business Class fare is \$2,810. The upgradeable Premium Economy fare is \$1,174 plus 30,000 miles one-way. Air France does not charge a co-pay, so the total cost is about \$1,174, a savings of \$1,636 (58%).

BEST TIME TO THINK /BUY PREMIUM ECONOMY

In general, Premium Economy fares behave in a similar way to economy fares, in that most often the lowest fares are offered in the winter. Summer fares tend to be higher to Europe.

ENDLESS ITINERARY OPTIONS

Premium Economy fares can be purchased to destinations beyond a hub city (London, Paris, etc.), but in Europe the onward service is in economy, which is no big deal as many flights are only an hour or so.

BUSINESS CLASS ONE WAY, PREMIUM ECONOMY THE OTHER

You might plan to work or watch movies for the most part on one flight. If that’s the case, why buy Business Class round-trip, as you won’t be using the benefits of a Business Class seat (sleep)? In this case, PE might suffice. For example, the lowest Business Class fare on Air France from Detroit to Paris is \$3,360 round-trip. Compare that to buying a mixed-class ticket, that is, flying to Paris in Business Class—the flight leaves at 9:05pm (so use the flat-bed seat to sleep)—and return from Paris in Premium Economy. The flight leaves at 3:10pm, so you’re not thinking of sleep, and arrives in Detroit at 7:10pm. The difference: \$903.

HOW TO CALCULATE FREE AND LOW-COST UPGRADES

Boston-London on Virgin Atlantic takes almost 14 hours non-stop, round-trip. Virgin’s Premium Economy fare is \$939 round-trip. That’s just about \$190 more to fly Premium Economy than coach each way—only about \$27.14 per-flight-hour to upgrade. See Virgin screenshots below.

Departing:
Wed 21 Feb 2018

Economy

Watch video →

Premium Economy

Watch video →

BOS → LHR

21:40 +1 day 09:00

6h 20m Direct

Operated by Virgin Atlantic

Lowest fare

\$ 558.86

\$ 939.06

The background of the header image is a large, stylized Delta SkyMiles logo. It features a red triangle pointing upwards, with the word "DELTA" in white capital letters inside it. Below "DELTA" is the word "SKYMILES" in a larger, light blue font. The background is split into red and dark blue sections by diagonal lines.

How (And Why) to Bust Out of Delta SkyMiles Bondage for Travel to Asia, Europe, and South America

January 2018

Fly Delta Business Class for 40,000 fewer miles; and All Nippon First for 55,000 fewer miles—or save enough for a free domestic First Class round-trip for every long-haul booked.

Many FCF readers are Delta-focused travelers. Maybe you live in Atlanta, Detroit, or another city where Delta holds sway. That's fine. But many of you use Delta co-branded credit cards well beyond your elite-bonus spend level. That's where I draw the line. Why? Because you have too many miles as it is with the airline—and don't need any more because they can't be used elsewhere and they are only losing value by the day. And you know it.

Here’s a better idea—if you insist on flying Delta: Earn Amex Points or Starwood Starpoints, and transfer them to a Virgin Atlantic mileage account. It makes a lot more sense because it gives you a better value per mile.

The Devil’s in the Delta Details: Virgin Atlantic’s mileage program often has lower mileage award rates **for Delta operated flights than Delta’s own rate**. Plus, award availability using Virgin Atlantic’s mileage program is often the same as Delta’s.

Furthermore, award taxes using Virgin Atlantic’s mileage program are the same as those Delta charges for travel to Asia, many European cities (apart from London), and South America.

**BONDAGE BUSTER PROOF:
HOW TO SAVES 25% / 40,000 MILES TO EUROPE**

Our sample trip to Asia (below) saves 40,000 miles when booked with Virgin Atlantic miles instead of Delta miles, while the taxes are the same. For Los Angeles-Tokyo in Business Class, use Delta miles and the lowest price is 160,000 miles round-trip and \$45 in taxes. Book the same flights using Virgin Atlantic miles, however, and you'll only be out 120,000 miles and the same \$45 in taxes.

Delta.com @ 160,000 Miles...

FLIGHTS		SKY PRIORITY			
TUE 16 JAN	LAX • HND	DL 7	Delta One® (O)	Change Flight	Miles per Passenger
	09:35 AM 2:55 PM ARRIVES NEXT DAY	12h 20m NONSTOP	Changeable / Nonrefundable		160,000 Miles
			Delta Air Lines Baggage Information		Taxes, Fees and Charges (USD)
	Details View Seats				\$44.76
TUE 23 JAN	HND • LAX	DL 6	Delta One® (O)	Change Flight	Total Price (USD)
	4:25 PM 09:45 AM	10h 20m NONSTOP	Changeable / Nonrefundable		
			Delta Air Lines Baggage Information		
	Details View Seats				160,000 Miles + \$44.76
Award Tickets cannot be redeposited or changed within 72 hours of scheduled flight departure time.					

Virgin Atlantic.com @ 120,000 Miles...

1 adult

Total 120,000 miles
+ \$44.76

Next step →

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

Departure

Tue 16 Jan 2018

LAX → HND
09:35 14:55

12h 20m Direct
First

+1 day

Return

Tue 23 Jan 2018

HND → LAX
16:25 09:45

10h 20m Direct
First

BONDAGE BUSTER #3

Sample trip to Europe saves 40,000 miles when booked with Virgin Atlantic miles instead of Delta miles. On New York-Dublin Delta's lowest Business Class award costs 140,000 miles and \$46 in taxes. However, booking the same flights using Virgin Atlantic miles is 100,000 miles round-trip and \$46 in taxes.

Delta.com @ 140,000 Miles...

FLIGHTS		SKY PRIORITY					
WED 11 APR	JFK → DUB	DL 44	Delta One® (O)	Change Flight	Miles per Passenger	140,000 Miles	
	9:53 PM 09:40 AM ARRIVES NEXT DAY	6h 47m NONSTOP	Changeable / Nonrefundable		Taxes, Fees and Charges (USD)	\$46.46	
			Delta Air Lines Baggage Information				
	► Details View Seats		✈️🔑🧳📺 + More				
WED 18 APR	DUB → JFK	DL 45	Delta One® (O)	Change Flight			
	11:25 AM 1:50 PM	7h 25m NONSTOP	Changeable / Nonrefundable				
			Delta Air Lines Baggage Information				
	► Details View Seats		✈️🔑🧳📺 + More		Total Price (USD)	140,000 Miles + \$46.46	
Award Tickets cannot be redeposited or changed within 72 hours of scheduled flight departure time.							

Virgin Atlantic.com @ 100,000 Miles...

Depart Wed 11 Apr 2018

New York (JFK), US to
Dublin (DUB), IE

JFK → DUB
21:53 → **09:40**
+1 day
6h 47m Direct
Upper Class
Operated by Delta Air Lines

Upper Class

Show more flight details ▼

Return Tue 17 Apr 2018

Dublin (DUB), IE to
New York (JFK), US

DUB → JFK
11:25 → **13:50**
7h 25m Direct
Upper Class
Operated by Delta Air Lines

Upper Class

Show more flight details ▼

Your flights

Departing

Wed 11 Apr 2018
JFK → DUB
21:53 → 09:40
6h 47m Direct
Upper Class
+1 day

Return

Tue 17 Apr 2018
DUB → JFK
11:25 → 13:50
7h 25m Direct
Upper Class

Total 100,000 miles +
\$46.46

1 adult

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

Fare breakdown

It's not *perfect*. Not all cities can be booked online with Virgin Atlantic, given its weird booking engine (some cities aren't loaded). So, you may need to call Virgin Atlantic (1-800-365-9500) to check for partner space. A bit annoying, but not a deal-breaker.

For example, we found mileage award space for Atlanta-Santiago with Delta in June for 148,000 miles round-trip and \$53 in taxes. But, we weren't able to search for those same flights online with Virgin Atlantic—we had to call. Happily, the rate was **90,000 miles round-trip and \$53 in taxes**. It was worth the phone call.

ANOTHER BONDAGE BUSTER

Great award hold with Virgin Atlantic miles, even for Delta flights. Virgin lets you hold a mileage award booking for two days at no charge. [Check here for more on why that's so great](#). Delta does not even offer this

perk for its own flights.

BONUS BIZ CLASS BONDAGE BUSTER

Throughout the year Virgin Atlantic and Amex Membership Rewards offer transfer bonuses. The most recent one was 30%, while Delta's co-branded credit cards never offer a transfer bonus.

FIRST CLASS BONDAGE BUSTER

Fly First Class for up to 50,000 fewer miles than Delta Business Class (aka "Less than Free Upgrade").

Virgin Atlantic gives you access to First Class awards; Delta does not: When booking premium award space using Delta miles, they can only be used to book Business Class, even for partners, since Delta has no First Class cabin and its partners don't share their best with them.

Using Virgin Atlantic miles, however, you have **access to airline partners that do offer a First Class cabin**; for example, All Nippon. For travel from the U.S. to Japan, All Nippon charges 150,000 to 165,000 miles round-trip, however using Virgin Atlantic miles the cost is only 110,000 (Western U.S.) to 120,000 (Eastern U.S.), a savings of up to 55,000 miles. With a recent 30% Amex transfer bonus, you're flying international, three-cabin **First Class for only 15,000 miles more than Delta in coach!**



2018: Fearless Forecasts and Harbingers of Hope

January 2018

A look back at 2017—and FCF's prognostications on Business and First Class airfare trends for 2018.

Happy New Year! It's that time again, when FCF dusts off its trusty crystal ball to give you a taste of what to expect in MMXVIII (that's 2018 for you non-Romans). Cue the mystical music....

International Business Class

TO EUROPE

[Tactical Fares](#) from the U.S. to Europe have leveled off over the last four months. Sadly, we foresee major airlines offering fewer flash tactical fares in the \$1,500 to \$1,900 range. \$1,500 deals will still appear from time to time—but 60- to 90-day advance-purchase fares will continue to be offered at \$2,000 to \$2,800. The standard price is usually double or even triple that. **If you're flexible and patient, you will be able to score in 2018.** Note: To the extent you're impatient and inflexible, plan on paying more.

COASTAL TRENDS

The gap between East and West Coast fares will continue to shrink on many international routes. Take NY-Frankfurt, for example. On major European airlines, this is currently one of the lowest-fare routes from the East Coast to Europe, starting at \$2,199 round-trip. For comparison, Virgin Atlantic charges \$2,322 on San Francisco-Manchester, merely a \$123 difference. This cost differential used to be \$1,500 to \$4,000!

Nowadays, an East Coast departure can even cost more than a West Coast departure to the same destination—it's enough to make you polish your crystal ball with Windex. Take, for example, Seattle-Copenhagen. Currently, the lowest fare ranges from \$2,346 to \$2,410 depending on the airline, whereas NY-Copenhagen starts at \$2,628. Look for more such West Coast deals in 2018. Time to redraw your mental fare map—and embrace the need to abandon much of what you thought about fares as it's a brave new world.

TO ASIA

Look for the lowest fare deals to originate in Canada (from [\\$1,990](#)). From the U.S. the best deals will be to Shanghai and Beijing (from [\\$2,150](#)). Otherwise, look for more tactical flash fares from the West Coast, such as Las Vegas to Japan starting at [\\$2,200+](#) or from the West Coast to Bangkok, Jakarta, and Taipei, starting at [\\$2,200](#). In 2018, if you can be flexible, consider buying separate tickets to the gateway (such as the West Coast or Canada) and the destination. You'll save a small fortune and can get a free stopover in the U.S.

TO AFRICA

Last year the best deals—[\\$2,750+](#)—were to Johannesburg and Nairobi—fares that, until recently, easily cost double that. In 2018 we anticipate the trend to get even better out of many U.S. and Canadian gateways and expand to more African cities.

THE SOUTH PACIFIC

In general it will still be a high-priced destination year-round, but look for better flash tactical fare promotions than in years past. Otherwise, keep Hawaiian Airlines in mind for fares between \$3,600 (West Coast) and \$4,000 (East Coast). An inducement: Hawaiian is in the process of [rolling out more flat-bed Business Class](#) seats. For a screaming deal, keep an eye on our newsroom for flash availability of mileage seats, as we've seen airlines, especially Qantas of late, becoming much more generous and [including First Class](#).

International First Class Tactical Fare Predictions

TO EUROPE

As everyday Business Class fares inch up, so will those in First Class. That said, we predict that for most of 2018, the Continent will still have the world's lowest, long-haul First Class fares from the U.S.—[as low as \\$3,500](#). So, 2018 could see some fare turbulence, although FCF expects that to be offset by airlines experimenting with new ways to sell excess inventory. Rest assured we will spot those trends for you.

TO ASIA, AFRICA, MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH AMERICA, AND SOUTH PACIFIC

First Class fare deals will be hard to get on major airlines, if only because supply isn't very strong, so these destinations will offer a great return on free and upgraded award travel. Our advice is to [buy miles and points at a discount](#) if you don't already have them. Then use them for deals such as those here to [Asia](#), the [Middle East](#), and [South Pacific](#).

DOMESTIC FARE PREDICTIONS

Many premium fares will increase because of aggressive airline segmentation. Apart from some competitive routes (Chicago-New York, for example, where First Class fares still start at about \$400 round-trip), continue to look for low Premium fares, as the airlines will still rather sell them cheaply instead of *giving them away* to elites.

We see domestic Premium Economy becoming the new "upgrade class" from economy. Delta is and will continue to be the leader in the push to get more money per seat with the least change or effort. See our [detailed analysis](#) as to the future look of domestic First Class.

WHAT WE THINK WON'T CHANGE

[Lucrative loyalty-currency deals](#), buy-miles promotions, and credit card point transfer promotions will continue to be plentiful and will likely expand. Concentrate on [Alaska](#), [American](#), [LifeMiles \(Avianca\)](#), and [United](#), which last year consistently offered buying bonuses and discounts; and keep an eye on Amex Rewards for transfer deals to airlines such as British Airways and Virgin Atlantic.

ELITE STATUS: PLAY THE VIOLINS

Nothing to see here, folks. As we've been saying for the last decade, elite is e-lite. Elite upgrade hopefuls can forget it, except on short-haul routes or unless you're top tier. When it comes to elite loyalists, the only winners will be the airlines.

MILEAGE AWARD AVAILABILITY

Pretty much the status quo. Mileage-award availability on the three major U.S. carriers will continue to behave like [flash fare sales](#). (So read FCF to find them!) Premium award space will get tighter because the airlines are getting more creative at selling premium seats, because they prefer cash to mileage redemptions, and because more and more otherwise non-travelers consume these seats through credit card churning.

International airlines will have good award availability as fewer travelers are savvy enough to book them using miles.

Be flexible in 2018. Fly where and when there's [availability on free First Class tickets](#). Watch FCF award availability calendars under the heading "[Sweet Redeems](#)." They detail the routes with lucrative mileage availability.

Finally, forget destination "lock-in." Consider grabbing mileage award space to the nearest destination and getting [a free connecting flight](#) from there, or even [reconsider the destination](#) based on the deal.

FCF'S RECOMMENDATIONS

[Stay Alert](#): Airfares, restrictions, *and* routes change all the time. Airlines will continue to favor selling seats on certain routes through [tactical flash sales](#) rather than *giving* them away to loyalty program members. Keep an eye on [FCF Alerts](#), and you'll be light-years ahead of the pack.

[If Possible, Avoid Destination Lock-In](#): Most people I know have more than one destination remaining on their bucket list. Unless money is no object, consider [grabbing an amazingly-low open-jaw fare](#) from your nearest gateway to a city close to your bucket-list destination, and buy separate tickets to the gateway or the destination. Or better yet, if it's a cool destination, spend a day or three in the low-fare city.

Forget About Mileage-Award Lock-In: When Business Class costs little more than coach or when First is ridiculously low, pay cash and save miles for expensive trips to exotic destinations.

[Consider Booking Via Canada for Long Hauls](#): It can be a great deal, when ex-U.S. fares are high. Consider breaking up your trip in Calgary, Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver—three great cities if you haven't been—perhaps one city outbound and one on the return if you're into checking things off the list, with bonuses baked in.

Get to Know Lesser-Known Airlines: Look for airlines such as Aer Lingus (oneworld) and Scandinavian (Star Alliance) to offer fare deals to Europe and Hawaiian to do the same to the South Pacific. Added inducement: You can often earn miles in a partner mileage program.

Fly between many cities in North America and South America

Beta V1
Send feedback [here](#)

From: New York

To: Sao Paulo

Calendar Availability

Days	2018	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
13+										
4 to 8										

January 2018

Saving Opportunities

115,000 American Airlines Miles (normal everyday price is 300,000)

115,000 American Airlines Miles 62% OFF
GET [DETAILS ON FREE FLIGHTS](#) TO NEW YORK + FROM SAO PAULO

spg 55,000 SPG Points 82% OFF
EASILY TRANSFERRED TO JAPAN AIRLINES - [MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

We love pizza, and we love our **Discount Miles Detector**, the World's Best Way (seriously!) to instantly see how you can find **dirt-cheap Business and First Class mileage seats**—frequently for the cost of **coach or less**—and when they are ripe for easy picking—in [FCF's Newsroom](#).

It's live and ready to use. So go ahead—play with the origin and destination opportunities. Is it a bucket list city? A romantic favorite? **The Discount Miles Detector appears at the top of [almost every mileage deal we publish](#)**. Give it a try.

Bang! Just like that you get a survey of the availability using your miles and points for long-haul flight/s—a little or a lot, and when. And lots more.

Fly between many cities in North America and South America

From: ⓘ

New York



To: ⓘ

Sao Paulo

Calendar Availability

Days Available	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	2018 MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
13+									
9 to 12									
4 to 8									

4 Seats 2 Seats 1 Seat

Saving Opportunities

115,000 American Airlines Miles (normal everyday price is 300,000) ^

115,000 American Airlines Miles ✓ 62% OFF
GET [DETAILS ON FREE FLIGHTS TO NEW YORK + FROM SAO PAULO](#)

55,000 SPG Points 82% OFF
EASILY TRANSFERRED TO JAPAN AIRLINES - [MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

65,000 Japan Airlines Miles 78% OFF
GET [DETAILS ON FREE OR PAID FLIGHTS TO NEW YORK + FROM SAO PAULO](#)

80,000 Cathay Pacific Miles 73% OFF
GET [DETAILS ON FREE OR PAID FLIGHTS TO NEW YORK + FROM SAO PAULO](#)

80,000 Amex and Citi Points 73% OFF
EASILY TRANSFERRED TO CATHAY PACIFIC - [MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

No Miles? No Problem:

Easily Buy Points from American Express if you don't have enough or any 58% OFF
SAVE \$2,858

Easily Buy Miles From American Airlines if you don't have enough or any 57% OFF
SAVE \$2,788

Just a glance will tell you it's simple to use, and it's packed with useful information. How much do we love our Discount Miles Detector? Let us count the ways. All nine.

SAVE TIME








It's super user-friendly. Mile-hoarders can get a near-instant sense of where the lucrative mileage fish are swimming. Our Discount Miles Detector will **save you countless hours**. You'll feel like a trout-trapping champion with your **big discount-upgrade catch**.

SAVE MILES / POINTS

The big discount-upgrade opportunities are laid out simply for you, like this one (below) showing how an SPG points player will fare compared to an American Airlines credit-card player. In this example, the former **saves 82%**.

Saving Opportunities

115,000 American Airlines Miles (normal everyday price is 300,000) ^

 115,000 American Airlines Miles ✓ GET DETAILS ON FREE FLIGHTS TO NEW YORK + FROM SAO PAULO	62% OFF
 55,000 SPG Points EASILY TRANSFERRED TO JAPAN AIRLINES - MORE DETAILS HERE	82% OFF
 65,000 Japan Airlines Miles GET DETAILS ON FREE OR PAID FLIGHTS TO NEW YORK + FROM SAO PAULO	78% OFF
 80,000 Cathay Pacific Miles GET DETAILS ON FREE OR PAID FLIGHTS TO NEW YORK + FROM SAO PAULO	73% OFF
 80,000 Amex and Citi Points EASILY TRANSFERRED TO CATHAY PACIFIC - MORE DETAILS HERE	73% OFF
No Miles? No Problem:	
 Easily Buy Points from American Express if you don't have enough or any	58% OFF SAVE \$2,858
 Easily Buy Miles From American Airlines if you don't have enough or any	57% OFF SAVE \$2,788

Everyone has the challenge of thinking through which mileage currency to use. In the blink of an eye, see which of your miles or hotel / credit card transferable points works best for you.

The Discount Miles Detector works with American Express Membership Rewards, Chase Ultimate Rewards, Starwood Starpoints, and Citi ThankYou Points.

Often, just by using Discount Miles Detector, you can net Business Class for a little more, a little less, or the same as economy (aka **free/low-cost upgrades**), or First for less-than-Business Class.



FCF helps you **easily decide between using your:**

- Miles, or
- Points, or

- Money (via unusually strong mileage award availability).

SAVE MONEY












If you don't have miles or points, no problem. Our Discount Miles Detector will show you [how to buy the points or miles if you don't have enough or any](#) at all. This strategy has been a favorite of FCF readers since we invented it over a decade ago. See how it works here:




No Miles? No Problem:		
	Easily Buy Points from American Express if you don't have enough or any	58% OFF SAVE \$2,858
	Easily Buy Miles From American Airlines if you don't have enough or any	57% OFF SAVE \$2,788

One of the best ways to save many thousands on premium air travel.

EASY-TO-USE CALENDAR

Otherwise hard-to-find flash mileage deals are visible at a glance. You get a good sense of general availability by month—for 1-, 2-, and 4-seat availability—so you immediately see if it lines up with your itinerary, and the number of people you are traveling with. Or, if the deal is so good (they often are) you'll **tweak your travel dates to make the ridiculously amazing opportunity work for you.**

Calendar Availability									
Days Available	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	2018 MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
13+									
9 to 12									
4 to 8									

 4 Seats
  2 Seats
  1 Seat

WORKS WITH MAJOR AND PREMIUM CARRIERS

Including All Nippon, American, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Delta, Emirates, Etihad, Japan Air, Lufthansa, Singapore, and United, to name a few.

UNDERSTAND HOW FREE CONNECTIONS WORK

From Your Airport and/or To Your Desired Destination: See which airline programs offer possible connections for free from your home airport or from abroad. Links to our special reports show more details

about connections and buying or transferring miles.

SAVE EVEN MORE TIME AND MONEY BY STACKING RELATED OPPORTUNITIES AND FCF STRATEGIES

We link to other relevant First Class Flyer special reports where you can “stack the strategies”—including:

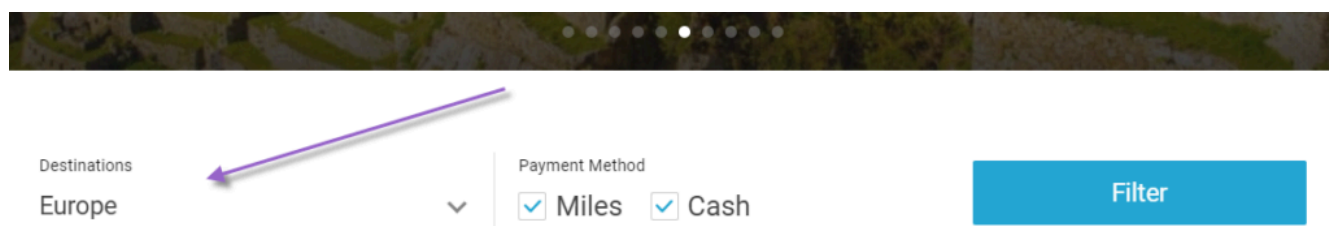
- Getting [Free Tickets Beyond the Non-Stop Bridge](#) flight
- [Connection Widget](#) makes more deals doable
- Beginner’s Guide: [how to play the “buy miles to fly in style” strategy](#).
- Details on transferring miles and points partnerships: For [SkyTeam](#), for [oneworld](#), for [Star Alliance](#), and for [non-alliance airlines](#).
- Six Plays to Consider [when there’s only one mileage seat available](#)
- [Which airlines will lend you the time](#) to either buy or transfer the miles needed

TOP BUCKET LIST ROUTES

Everyone has the problem of finding flights with mileage availability to places like [Africa](#) and the [South Pacific](#). That’s what FCF’s **Truffle Hounds** are for, to serve up the opportunities that enable you to secure hard-to-get destinations at deeply discounted prices, on major airlines.

FILTER DISCOUNT MILES DETECTORS FAST BY REGION

Start at FCF’s [Daily Deals page](#) and you can zero in faster by filtering by region:



Destinations
Europe

Payment Method
☒ Miles ☒ Cash

Filter

PS: Let us know about [your success story](#) (there’s a **reward** for that), and how you think our Discount Miles Detector [could be better](#) (a **reward** for that, too).



Before We Talk About Your Next Flight, Let's Talk Politics and Religion

January 2018

And 32 upgrade roads less traveled.

Some of my views on politics and religion can change by the month, if not by the week, and sometimes on a dime. As I'm exposed to new ideas or information, my perspectives alter.

I can't help it; it's how I'm wired!

Is that the case with most people? I suspect not. Many seem to have such well-entrenched opinions that they only look for information that reinforces them. Psychologists call this **confirmation bias**.

So what about travel? After 21+ years of doing what I do, I see a clear attitudinal difference. There are essentially two types of travelers and most fall into the category of *doing what they've always done* when it comes to travel—a form of confirmation bias. Then there are the folks we like to call “Airficionados” who think differently. For them, the process of travel is one of possibilities.

IT'S AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE—OF THE MIND THAT IS.

Now, most travelers fall into that close-minded group and that's fine. But here at First Class Flyer, we think they're **missing out** on an Aladdin's Cave of **opportunity**. I don't want to sound preachy on this, but it does go to the heart of what we do: pointing out the more lucrative **roads-less-traveled** so you can have a trip **worth remembering**.

We see these open-minded thinkers as having “The Upgrade Mindset”.

Does it mean they have to do a lot more work? Not usually. We do it for them. Closed—or open-minded—people spend time booking travel. In fact, while some may perceive FCF's Upgrade Strategies as taking more time to implement, according to an IBM survey [45% of travelers spend four or more hours shopping and/or booking flights](#); **so getting much more for the same effort (or much less effort) isn't that difficult!**

I WANT TO BE AN OPEN-MINDED OPPORTUNITY TRAVELER; HOW CAN I DIP MY TOE IN?

The simplest example: When prompted to think of a tropical paradise, most American minds default to Hawaii or the Caribbean. But have you ever seen the movie Jurassic Park? The opening sequence was shot in Costa Rica. It's a spectacularly beautiful country and also [currently selling at \\$541](#) round-trip in Business Class on Delta from San Francisco, compared with \$1,100 to Hawaii. It's a beautiful, tropical, low-cost “road-less-traveled” destination. (And, no, there aren't any dinosaurs.)

Think of it as a First Class vacation for the price of a coach class vacation. Plus, being a new place, it comes with the unexpected and inevitably accompanying inspiration.

“Open-minded” means being flexible, and sometimes, a little adventurous. Are you? Among our readers, we've found that the more open-minded about travel they are, the more open minded they want to be because the benefits are addictive.

OPEN YOUR EYES

When you've got your mind set on one thing, it's easy to completely miss that extraordinary something else. For a novel look at “selective vision,” check out this short video:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo>

OPEN-MINDED QUICK QUIZ

If you saw a deal that required barely any more effort to grab:

1. Would you change to a different destination (hello [Costa Rica!](#))—to fly Business Class for the price of coach?
2. [Change credit cards](#)—so that you have 300% more First Class partner transfer opportunities?
3. [Tack on a leisure side-trip to the Caribbean or Mexico](#)—to save over 50% on domestic First Class?
4. Consider [dropping the elite-status illusion](#)—to be a free agent with endless opportunities? Elite is now e-lite.
5. [Use a little-utilized Amex points partner](#)—to get a Round-the-World ticket for less than Delta charges for simple round-trips? Ker-ching.
6. Consider [adding a second or third destination / open-jaw](#) to your ticket—to lower your airfare by 50%?
7. [Use a foreign airline's miles](#) (and an Amex points partner) for domestic U.S., Canada, Caribbean and Mexico flights—to get First Class for about the same price as coach?
8. [Think more about buying miles than you do earning them](#)—to get international First Class the world over at up to 90% off? It's one of the best strategies I know and so little used.
9. Think about [flying on short notice](#)—to make using your miles a walk in the park?
10. [Use miles for an upgrade rather than a free ticket](#)—to net better availability and elite credit?
11. Plan your trip's dates [when airlines offer their lowest fares](#)? Rather than what most do: the exact opposite.
12. [Think "connecting-city first"](#)—to get free in-class upgrades to Hawaii?
13. [Fly via Canada](#) to Asia—to get six destinations for the price of one? It's our slapshot slingshot game-winner.
14. [Book two \(completely different\) itineraries / trips on one ticket](#)—to get Business Class for \$624.25 per leg?
15. [Book the scenic route](#)—to net free side-Continent trips? Love that view.
16. [Book two different cabins](#)—so no upgrade dollar goes to waste?
17. [Book a different bucket-list destination](#)—to save 50% or net bonus cities?
18. [Change your ticket](#) close to departure—to save big or upgrade from Business Class to First with your savings?
19. [Stop using an American Airlines credit card](#)—to fly Business Class for the price of coach?
20. [Think about partner opportunities](#) instead of the usual American-, Delta-, and United-think—to open up availability of mileage tickets 100,000%+.
21. [Stop using a Delta credit card](#)—to get less-than-free upgrades?
22. [Don't think you need to fly to the Middle East—or pay \\$30,000](#)—to experience Emirates First Class, in-flight showers, from the U.S.?

23. Instead of using American or Delta miles, consider using [this](#) Starwood partner or [that one](#)—to get two Business Class tickets for the price of one?
24. [Stop using a United credit card](#)—to fly Business Class for the price of coach?
25. [Not be content with a great Biz Class fare](#)—in order to upgrade to First cheaply? That's an up-Upgrade.
26. [Start searching for one-way tickets](#) instead of round-trips—in order to skyrocket your odds of a deal?
27. [Put multiple tickets on hold](#)—so the best fares don't slip through your fingers?
28. [Fly when airlines offer great deals](#)—instead of when hotels, resorts, cruise lines, or tour operators offer deals? Maximize your dealability.
29. Start [booking your tickets from a destination](#) you fly frequently—to get two tickets or three for the price of one?
30. [Hold mileage award space before you're ready to confirm](#)—so that using your miles for discount availability is never an issue?
31. [Transfer Starwood Starpoints to Marriott points](#) before transferring to airline miles—to net free or super-cheap hotel stays at Ritz-Carltons?
32. [Book air-and-land together](#)—to save over 50% on Delta domestically?

If you answered yes to just one of these questions, there's hope. If yes to more than one, then you're already opening your mind to possibility. If only politics and religion could be so simple.

Each of these questions relates to strategies we talk about every month here at FCF. At a glance they might seem too hard or too weird. But they're not when you really look at them, just as so many of our Airficionados do.

And remember another major tenet of The Upgrade Mindset: **Don't give a second thought to novel ideas you can't use, just think about the ones you can use!** Do this and you'll be ahead of most people.

What's [your perspective](#)?



The top seven ways you can uniquely save time and money by having the widget.

Just as our [Discount Miles Detector](#) is World's-Best-Widget-Practice for using your miles, FCF's Discount Fare Detector takes finding great deals and booking them to new heights (if you'll pardon the pun).

FCF's Discount Fare Detector

Fly from **North America** to **Europe** for **\$2,316** — in 3 clicks

From	To	
San Jose ▼	Manchester \$2,316 ▼	Get Deal

BETA v1 - Please Send us [your feedback](#) * Results may vary. [Need help](#) with Google Flights?

THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS TO START YOUR FARE SEARCH:

1. In the blind, with no knowledge of anything, or
2. With a treasure map that shows where the low tactical fares are.

FCF's Discount Fare Detector is the latter. We report on [unusually-low tactical airfares](#) based on the findings of our research team. They dive deep into the airlines' and other websites and trawl for ridiculously low **tactical fare sales**.

This is not an alternative to Expedia or Priceline, sites that throw any and all fares at you for your particular itinerary. FCF's Discount Fare Detector gives you **only extraordinary opportunities**, but it's also intuitive, giving you lots of options to consider around that itinerary.

HOW DISCOUNT FARE DETECTOR WORKS

1. Save Time by Instantly Knowing Where Hidden Tactical Airfares Are:

Discover the fastest way to the best of the best deals the airlines offer—sometimes priced at little more than coach. Simply put, it pinpoints with precision where the hottest deals are right now at rates up to 80% off.

2. Save Money by Booking When Fares Are Low:

Why search for fares when they are high? FCF's email alerts, linking to our special report with the Discount Fare Detector, only show fares with huge savings.

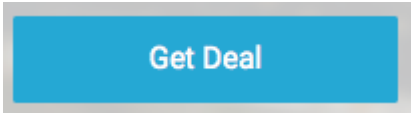
A few live examples of deals to [Europe at 43% off](#), [Asia at 43% off](#), and [southern South America at 38% off](#).

3. Save Time by Discovering Hidden Fares That You Can Book in Seconds:

FCF has embedded links to Google Flights (no, [we don't get kickbacks](#) from Google—or anyone else) that allow you to **go straight to the hidden fare deal**, in as few as three clicks.

Just click on the "Get Deal" button to find one **example of the fare**—plus the controls on Google you need to search your specific travel dates, airlines, and alternative fare options. After that it's one more click to the

airline’s website, where you can **book the ticket fast and easy.**











4. Save Time by Seeing at a Glance Which Airlines Are Offering the Best Fares:

The Discount Fare Detector also **works for Elites and Airline-Focused Travelers.** The widget’s accompanying table lets you skim different airlines on the same routes—perfect for Elites looking for their airlines.

Plus, **only top-tier airlines** are tracked. You won’t find Air Europa or Copa or Philippine Airlines in our hemisphere, as you do on so many other sites, which are really offering bait-and-switch fares on tier-two carriers.

Example of Discount Fare Detector's Accompanying Table...

Business Class Fares Found to Nice

FARE	ROUTES	AIRLINES
\$1,779	Chicago to Nice	  
\$1,789	Houston to Nice	 
\$2,041	Dallas to Nice	  

5. Save Time by Seeing Fare Calendars and Availability Density:

Screenshots show you how often a fare is available (i.e. every day, every third day, etc.), so you know if you need to be a little more flexible with dates, or not.

6. Save Even More Time and Money by Stacking Related Opportunities and FCF Strategies:

We link to other relevant First Class Flyer special reports where you can “stack the strategies” and other Upgrade Mindset primers, including:

- How to upgrade your awesome Business Class fare on [American](#), [British Airlines](#), and [United](#) to First Class
- How to [hold fares](#) to give you time to leverage the crazy-good deal
- How to save an [additional \\$200 + 10% off on British Airways](#)—even with amazingly-low premium flash fares
- Why [open-jaw itineraries](#) and airfares can save a bundle
- The latest trends, so you have full airfare context, like the latest [ceasefire on transatlantic Business Class fare wars](#), for example
- Know thyself: Are you an [opportunity traveler](#)?

As you can see, FCF's Discount Fare Detector gives you **all the tactical fare details and lots more**, saving you as much time as it does money.

7. A Regularly Updated Fare Feed Like No Other:

Be informed [almost daily via our newsroom](#) of the latest tactical fares our truffle hounds have unearthed. Every day around the world there are more than a million airline fare changes. That's why our team spends 100-person hours every day researching fares (so you don't have to).

Take our Discount Fare Detector for a test-flight. We think it's the best thing since in-flight movies.

See you up front.



Delta Cabin Casino: How Its Divide-and-Conquer Strategy Has Led to Higher Domestic First Class Fares

January 2018

In FCF's quest for the truth, we bring you news that isn't always good. But our position is that information, research, and analysis make you a better traveler. It also allows all of us to better predict future trends.

Which brings us to Delta Air Lines.

Delta has long been the most innovative of the big three U.S. airlines in several ways. Such as selling discounted Business Class fares to Europe as an [Up Fare](#), and offering a new version of [Off-Peak Domestic First Class Fares](#) for example.

And now Delta is at it again, although in this case, the benefits are decidedly in Delta's favor, not yours. Surprised?

SEGMENTATION. NOT JUST A MARKETING TERM.

In a recent [interview](#), Delta CEO Edward H. Bastian said, "We're a marketing company, not just an airline. We also have to price, we have to sell, we have to market to consumers."

In November 2015, Delta put many items from that list into practice with the introduction of Delta Comfort+, a dedicated cabin segment **with its own booking code**, in effect a third cabin on a two-cabin flight. It's a Premium Economy option with extra leg-room (up to four more inches) and preferred check-in, an upsell option that costs extra. Tick the box and up you go. Not way up, just a little bit up.



Well, now, Comfort+, the same product, costs much more. "With 200 million Delta customers every year, every nuance counts," said Mr. Bastian.

We're now seeing the effects of that decision.

A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY

For Delta, profit and shareholder value comes from incrementally getting more money from the least change or effort. That's basic math, right? Airlines are great at math.

Let's look at an example involving Kansas City and Los Angeles. In December 2016, First Class fares between those cities were \$402 round-trip. At that time, Delta Comfort+ was \$272. Now, a Comfort+ seat with its four extra inches of legroom is \$356, while First Class is \$682. Ah, the price of segmentation.

Delta.com screenshot, latest pricing:

Outbound: MCI → LAX

Kansas City, MO to Los Angeles, CA

SHOW PRICE IN

\$ USD

MILES

MILES + CASH

SORT BY

Best Match

TOTAL PRICE ROUND TRIP

Per Passenger

Compare Experiences

Best Match' may list Delta-operated flights first.

Tuesday, February 06, 2018

1 Passenger

Round trip price includes taxes and fees.

Additional baggage fees may apply

LOWEST FARE

DL 1939

7:00 AM → 8:45 AM

3H 45M

MCI → LAX

NONSTOP

Details

View Seats

DELTA COMFORT+®

Delta Comfort+® (W) from

\$ 356^{.40}

FIRST CLASS

First Class (G) from

\$ 682^{.40}

Comparing Delta’s 2016 Domestic First Class Fares to 2017 Fares

Route	December 2016 First Class Fares	December 2017 First Class Fares	December 2017 Comfort+ Fares
Atlanta - Las Vegas	\$524	\$885	\$445
Atlanta - Los Angeles	\$610	\$1,085	\$515
Chicago - Salt Lake City	\$404	\$629	\$371
Denver - New York	\$566	\$859	\$325
Detroit - Seattle	\$556	\$813	\$465
Los Angeles - Dallas	\$344	\$631	\$255
Minneapolis - San Francisco	\$566	\$759	\$345

When it comes to low domestic First Class fares, **Delta has gone from maven to miser**, charging more than the competition in many cases. Compare United and Delta’s First Class round-trip on the Denver-NYC route. United charges \$723 while Delta costs \$869. On Los Angeles-Atlanta First Class round-trip, American Airlines charges \$839, while Delta’s fare is \$1,095.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN FOR THE FUTURE?

FCF Predictions: American and United will follow suit some time soon. Both airlines are currently selling their domestic Premium Economy product as an upsell ancillary seat product from economy only. Look for them to make it available for purchase as a fare product with its own booking code.

The domestic First Class name could disappear; companies answerable to shareholders and their penchant for social media aren't as likely to put all their executives up front for a two or three hour flight. In this egalitarian zeitgeist (at least on the surface), we envision domestic First Class being re-branded as Business Class (same product as before, just a different name).

Think about it: For companies, employees will be "doing business," not fancy-schmancying it up front. For those employees, the service will be the same (it's just a name change, after all), and they'll feel better about saying they fly in Business. Is the domestic "First Class" name going the way of the dodo bird? Time will tell.

There's another option: airlines change the name of their domestic Premium Economy offerings to Business Class. (Don't laugh, that's been going on in Europe for years.) Again, it sounds like an upgrade and they can probably charge even more for domestic First Class. Gotta love that segmentation.


ELITE UPGRADES

It could also make sense, from Delta's perspective, when it comes to elite passengers looking to upgrade. Maybe, at some point, Comfort+ will be the free upgrade for lower-tier (if not all) elites. As elite programs are now driven by how much one spends, why should lower elites, who spend less, even get the promise of an upgrade to First Class? It's an upgrade, but not as you know it—and maybe only top elites get the promise of an upgrade to Business Class.

AMERICAN UPHOLDING THE PE FLAG

American is leading the way among U.S. airlines in rolling out a true Premium Economy product. It launched its new PE seats on its first 787-9 in October 2016, and "after gauging its success", the airline began an ambitious PE retrofit program for its other long-haul aircraft in 2017. By the end of 2017, the airline planned to have 63 wide-body aircraft with premium economy seats installed. American only sells Premium Economy tickets when it's a true Premium Economy seat offered. For that reason we'd have thought American would have gone to the third-cabin domestic fare idea before Delta. If and when AA does, now AA will have a more legitimate claim to the third-cabin domestic fare.

See last month's special report focused on United's coach upsell option: [Coach For Barely Less Than First? Don't Get Schmucked by United.](#)



The Power of American Upgrades to Asia—Plus Surprising Availability for Elite and Non-Elite Flyers

January 2018

Business and leisure travelers can save big on 11+ routes to Asia—up to 81% off.

Last month FCF wrote [a special report for oneworld \(American\) members](#) looking to deploy miles to Europe in order to achieve or maintain their elite status. (The tactics also work for anyone who can't find a low Business Class fare AND also works for those that don't even have any American miles.)

This month FCF takes the same approach to Asia.

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

AMERICAN'S UPGRADE PROGRAM

To Asia, American requires 25,000 miles plus a \$350 co-pay each way on the lowest upgradeable economy fares (H, K, M, L, V, G, Q, N, O, S classes). The co-pay is kind of high, but when Business Class fares are high, this upgrade offers a great return.

SAVE 68% ON HIGH-FARE ROUTES

One Example: Say you're traveling Dallas-Hong Kong, often an expensive Business Class route, even booked way in advance. The lowest AA economy fare is currently \$1,322 from Dallas, while Business Class is \$6,255 (\$4,933 more)—so even with the \$700 co-pay, you can save 68% off the published fare by using miles. (See chart below for upgrade award availability survey.)

AA.com screenshot below...

Depart [Dallas/ Fort Worth, TX to Hong Kong, Hong Kong](#)
Wednesday, May 2, 2018

<	Mon, Apr 30 \$1,322	Tue, May 01 \$1,322	Wed, May 02 \$1,322	Thu, May 03 \$1,336	Fri, May 04 \$1,522	>
---	------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	---

Sort by:

	Main Cabin	Premium Economy	Business
--	----------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------

DFW	HKG	16h 30m		
10:40 AM →	4:10 PM	Nonstop	Round trip \$1,322	Not available
AA 125 ■ 77W-Boeing 777				Round trip \$6,255 Flexible
Details Seats				

WHAT TO DO WHEN AN UPGRADE IS ONLY AVAILABLE ONE-WAY

American lets you combine coach and Business Class fares, so you can upgrade from a coach fare the segment that has upgrade space and book the other leg in Business Class. On Dallas-Hong Kong, the combined coach-Business Class fare is \$3,755 while round-trip Business Class is \$6,205—so even with the \$350 one-way co-pay, you can still save 34% by using miles one-way.

LOWEST ECONOMY ROUTE ON AMERICAN SAVES 75%

Los Angeles-Hong Kong is one of AA's lowest economy fare routes, currently starting at only \$490 round-trip, while Business Class is \$4,795. Even with the \$700 co-pay, you can save 75% off the published fare by using miles.

AA.com screenshot below...

Depart Los Angeles, CA to Hong Kong, Hong Kong
Tuesday, April 3, 2018

<

Sun, Apr 01

\$ 4,795

Mon, Apr 02

\$ 629

Tue, Apr 03

\$ 490

Wed, Apr 04

\$ 490

Thu, Apr 05

\$ 490

>

Sort by:

Relevance

▼

Main Cabin

Premium Economy

Business

LAX

HKG

15h 15m

Round trip

Not available

Round trip

1:55 AM

→

8:10 AM

Nonstop

\$ 490

\$ 4,795

AA 193

77W-Boeing 777

📶

⚠ Overnight flight or connection

Details

Seats

BRIDGE ROUTE CONNECTIONS CAN SAVE UP TO 81%

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

From the U.S., that means you might even buy an economy through-fare ticket, meaning the fare gets you to and from the international gateway all on one ticket rather than requiring two separate tickets. Upgrade all the flight segments if upgrade space is available—or only the international legs.

Example: Boston-Hong Kong: The through-fare ticket gets you there via Dallas or Los Angeles for \$695 instead of \$4,819, the cost of a Business Class ticket. Even with the \$700 co-pay, you can save 71% off the published fare by using miles.

TRAVELING ONWARD IN ASIA, AND NOT ON AMERICAN?









It's easy if you stick with AA's partners, Cathay Pacific, Japan Airlines, and Malaysia Airlines, and book the entire trip on one ticket.

Say you want to fly from Los Angeles to Bangkok. On American, that means making a connection in Hong Kong. The through-fare is \$665 in coach round-trip versus \$7,003 in Business Class. You upgrade the bridge legs of the trip, Los Angeles-Hong Kong-Los Angeles. Even with the \$700 co-pay, you can **save 81%** off the published fare by using miles. Note that the Hong Kong-Bangkok leg will be on Cathay Pacific in economy.









Google Flights screenshot below...


Round trip	One way	Multi-city	Economy	1 adult
LAX Los Angeles		Bangkok (all airports)		
Tue, April 3		Tue, April 17		

Outbound flight

Tue, Apr 3	 1:55 AM – 8:10 AM^{*1} Los Angeles (LAX) – Hong Kong (HKG) American 193 · Economy Class · Boeing 777 Average legroom (31") Overnight flight	15h 15m  Wi-Fi  In-seat & USB power  On-demand video
Layover in Hong Kong HKG		
	 5:05 PM^{*1} – 7:00 PM^{*1} Hong Kong (HKG) – Bangkok (BKK) Cathay Pacific 703 · Economy Class · Airbus A330 Above average legroom (32") Often delayed by 30+ min	2h 55m  In-seat power  On-demand video  No Wi-Fi

Return flight

Tue, Apr 17	 12:50 PM – 4:40 PM Bangkok (BKK) – Hong Kong (HKG) Cathay Pacific 618 · Economy Class · Airbus A330 Above average legroom (32") Often delayed by 30+ min	2h 50m  In-seat & USB power  On-demand video  No Wi-Fi
Layover in Hong Kong HKG		
	 6:10 PM – 4:30 PM Hong Kong (HKG) – Los Angeles (LAX) American 192 · Economy Class · Boeing 777 Average legroom (31") Overnight flight	13h 20m  Wi-Fi  In-seat & USB power  On-demand video


Book, track or share this flight
Ads ⓘ

Total incl taxes & fees for 1 adult · [Additional bag fees](#) may apply.

[Book with American](#)
Marketed as AA 193, AA 8895, AA 8959, AA 192

\$665

HOW TO BOOK MILEAGE UPGRADES WITH AMERICAN

After you get a sense of “where good availability is” (perhaps using our survey below), call American and confirm that the flights/dates you want are available for the upgrade using miles, and book it.

If the upgrade on the flights/dates you want are not available, have the agent check other dates/flights.

This cannot be done online. Call 1-800-433-7300.

HOW ANYONE CAN PLAY THIS UPGRADE GAME

Don't have any or enough American miles? No problem. Just buy American miles when they go on sale (recent opportunity [here](#)), or transfer Starwood points (takes about two days), and you too can save big.

Sweet Redeem Survey: American Upgrade Availability to Asia

Routes	To Asia			From Asia		
	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
Chicago - Beijing	Jan., Feb., July					
Chicago - Tokyo	Jan., April, May , July , Aug.	Feb. , July	Feb.	Feb. , March		
Chicago - Shanghai				July		
Los Angeles - Shanghai	June, July					
Los Angeles - Tokyo	Jan. , Feb. , April, May , June, July	Feb.		Feb. , May, June , July	Feb., March	July
Dallas - Tokyo	Jan. , Feb. , April, June , Aug.	Jan. , Feb., May , June, July , Aug.		July		
Dallas - Seoul	July, Aug.			April		
Dallas - Shanghai	July			July		
Dallas - Hong Kong	April, May , July	May , Aug.	May, June, July	June, July , Aug.	July	
Los Angeles - Hong Kong	Feb. , March , May through July , Aug.	Feb. , March , April , May , June, July	March, April , May, July, Aug.	May , June, July , Aug.	March , April , June, July, Aug.	March through May , June, Aug.
Los Angeles - Tokyo	Feb. , April, May, Aug.			March , May	May	

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



First Class One Way, Business Class the Other: Frugal Opulence to Europe

January 2018

A smart way to compromise when First Class fares are very expensive and you're out of upgrade strategies.

So, after all these years of telling you "It's about the seat," we're going to give you another way to think about the seat: How you're going to use it and therefore how to book it.

Sleep, movies, work, or nap? These choices should determine whether you go for First or Business, but we're going to add a nuance: **Looking at a seat this way means you can—and could—choose both** when going to Europe from the U.S., First one way, Business the other.

The key is going to Europe while sleeping so you wake up in the best shape you can—so you can take full advantage of your trip—given that it’s an overnight flight. That’s what First Class is about: lots of space, lots of comfort. The hardest part, if you want to get sleep, is resisting the food and beverage service on offer, especially if you’re on a relatively short flight.

On the return, usually a late-morning or afternoon departure, you want a seat that gives you some of the same amenities, space, entertainment, comfort, food and beverage, but not to the same extent.





Why pay more for a benefit you don’t need or might not even use?

USING THE COMBINING CLASSES STRATEGY EXAMPLE TO PARIS

Sample Savings #1: The lowest average First Class fare on Air France from New York to Paris is \$7,210 round-trip. Compare that to buying a mixed-class ticket at \$5,022; flying to Paris in First Class while returning in Business. Savings: \$2,188.


See Air France.com screenshot...

New York-Paris First Class on the departure and returning in Business Class.

 YOUR DEPARTURE FLIGHT LA PREMIÈRE New York > Paris 06/03/2018 at 4:25 PM 3 x checked baggage	 YOUR RETURN FLIGHT BUSINESS Paris > New York 20/03/2018 at 9:10 AM 2 x checked baggage	Passengers  1 Duration  15 d	TOTAL INCLUDING TAX \$5,022.14 ► Fare conditions (for the selected fares)
--	--	---	--

Sample Savings #2: You get the same dividend from Los Angeles. The lowest average First Class fare on Air France is \$9,430 round-trip, whereas a mixed-class ticket costs \$6,545. The LA flight departs at 6pm, so you’ll want that First Class bed. The return flight departs Paris at 10:20am, so again a nap may be on the flight plan but not a night’s sleep, and it arrives in LA at 12:50pm. (Actually, you don’t want to sleep too long on the flight or you’ll be up all night at home.) The fare difference: \$2,885.

Los Angeles-Paris First Class on the departure and returning in Business Class.

 YOUR DEPARTURE FLIGHT LA PREMIÈRE Los Angeles > Paris 03/07/2018 at 6:00 PM 3 x checked baggage	 YOUR RETURN FLIGHT BUSINESS Paris > Los Angeles 17/07/2018 at 10:20 AM 2 x checked baggage	Passengers  1 Duration  15 d	TOTAL INCLUDING TAX \$6,545.14 ► Fare conditions (for the selected fares)
---	--	---	--

HOW TO SEARCH AND BOOK

Any travel agent or airline reservationist can price this for you. However, only some airline sites offer this search option, among them American, Air France, British Airways, United, and SWISS.



We predicted it back in September: The [10% discount](#) for using a British Airways Visa Card (promo code CARDOFFERU) will be valid through June 2018. Go [here](#) to find out how best to exploit the discount, and how to combine it with the \$200 AARP discount.

It can take a Business Class ticket from \$2,152 to \$1,766.

Key point: Outbound travel must commence by June 30. (The 10% discount will most likely be extended beyond June 2018 but not anytime soon.)