



The FCF Premium Economy Oscars to Asia

October 2017

Best Experience, Best Fares, Lowest Mileage Cost

- Best PE experience: All Nippon, Japan Airlines, and Singapore.
- Lowest PE fares: American starting at \$1,176 to Tokyo.
- Lowest mileage award rate: Japan Airlines, 65,000 miles round-trip to Tokyo.

For starters, understand that Premium Economy is a two-caste system: There's Premium Economy **Elite** (PE Elite) and Premium Economy **Lite** (PE Lite). The former refers to airlines that have created a separate cabin and an upgraded seat—among them, many international airlines and now American and Delta—while the latter (United among them) are faking it, having just put in a bit more legroom at the front of economy.

This month we will do a deep dive into U.S./Canada-Asia routes, which often have high Business Class fares, especially on the top carriers like Cathay Pacific and Singapore.

MILEAGE AWARD COST DIFFERENCE: ECONOMY VS. PE

Flying to/from Asia allows you to take advantage of award-chart anomalies. Having the right credit cards, meaning ones from Amex Rewards, Chase, Citi ThankYou, or Starwood, enables you to leverage these anomalies.

This means you can sometimes book a **PE Elite award at or less than the cost of economy (think free upgrade)** on a U.S. carrier to Asia.

One Example: On New York-Tokyo, Japan Airlines only charges 65,000 miles for PE Elite (United charges 70,000 for economy). This is one of the lowest PE Elite awards to Asia from the U.S. (The second best is Cathay Pacific's, starting at 72,000 miles on Los Angeles-Hong Kong.) It costs even less if you use Starwood points: only 55,000 Starpoints—**15,000 fewer miles for PE Elite than for economy (again, think free upgrade)**. In other words, if you earn miles/points via a Starwood card and book via Japan Airlines, as opposed to earning with a United credit card, you're getting a **free upgrade**.

THE BEST PE ELITE AIRLINES TO ASIA

Here's a rundown—the seat and whether to use miles or cash.



Air Canada Premium Economy

MILEAGE AWARD COST

125,000 to 130,000. Business Class is only 25,000 miles more, so do it.

CASH

Varies by route. Vancouver-Tokyo starts at US\$2,190 versus US\$4,870 in Business Class, and Toronto-Hong Kong costs US\$2,172 (Business Class is US\$6,579). In short, PE is a decent value. All Nippon

SEAT

19.3-inch seat width, 38-inch pitch, 114.5-degree recline, 11-inch touch LCD monitor, adjustable headrest, legrest and footrest, amenity kit, economy meal service with extras and, depending on the airport, lounge access (go [here](#) for details).



All Nippon Premium Economy

MILEAGE AWARD COST

Not offered.

CASH

Varies by route. On Los Angeles-Tokyo, PE fares start at \$2,025 versus \$3,528 in Business Class, and on New York-Tokyo at \$2,175 (Business Class is \$6,074). American

SEAT

19-inch seat width, 38-inch seat pitch, 6-inch recline, 15.6-inch touch-screen monitor, foot, leg and head rests, amenity kit, and upgraded meal service.



American Airlines Premium Economy

MILEAGE AWARD COST

Not offered.

CASH

Varies by route: Los Angeles-Tokyo PE fares start at \$1,176 versus \$3,526 in Business Class; Dallas-Tokyo at \$1,813 versus \$5,773. PE is a very good value. (For more on AA's PE Elite routes and fares, go [here](#).) Cathay Pacific

SEAT

19.3-inch seat width, 38-inch seat pitch, 8-inch recline, 10.6-inch touch monitor, calf rest, footrest, and headrest, amenity kit, Business Class meal service.



Cathay Pacific Premium Economy

MILEAGE AWARD COST

Based on flight distance: Los Angeles-Hong Kong is 72,000 miles (Business Class is 120,000) and New York-Hong Kong is 108,000 (Business Class is 145,000).

CASH

LAX-Hong Kong starts at \$1,979 versus \$5,498 in Business Class, and New York-Hong Kong starts at \$2,132 (Business Class is \$7,740). The decision: Save up to \$5,608 (72%) in cash or up to 48,000 fewer miles. Delta

SEAT

Currently only offered on Delta's A350, debuting this fall on Detroit-Tokyo (for details go [here](#)): 19-inch seat width, 38-inch pitch, 7-inch recline. 13.3-inch screen, foot, leg and head rests, [amenity kit](#), and [upgraded meal service](#).



Delta Premium Economy

MILEAGE AWARD COST

130,000 miles; Business Class is 270,000 miles more. (Delta does not publish a mileage chart, at time of publishing this was the lowest mileage rate we could find.)

CASH

Varies by route. Detroit-Tokyo starts at \$1,880 versus \$5,473 in Business Class, and Detroit-Seoul starts at \$1,800 (Business Class starts at \$5,200). EVA Air

SEAT

19.5 inches wide, 38-inch pitch, 8-inch recline, 11-inch LCD touch screen, adjustable headrest, footrest, amenity kit, and upgraded meal service.



EVA Air Premium Economy

MILEAGE AWARD COST

110,000 to 120,000 miles (Chicago, New York, Houston, and Toronto to Taipei) Business Class: 150,000 to 160,000 miles.

CASH

PE starts at \$1,196 on Los Angeles-Taipei and \$1,545 NY-Taipei, compared to \$4,675 in Business Class from LAX and \$4,784 from NYC. Your choice: Save up to \$3,479 (74%) over Business Class or up to 40,000 (26% fewer) mile. Bottom line: Cash offers the best value. [Japan Airlines](#) (JAL offers two types of Premium Economy seats, JAL SKY PREMIUM and JAL SKY SHELL SEAT. SKY Premium is the newer seat, and is offered on most U.S. flights. For routes and flight number details go [here](#), seat data below is based on the SKY Premium seat.) Japan Airlines

SEAT

19 inches wide, 42-inch pitch, the shell seat has a slide down seat (no recline information on how many inches). 12.1-inch (8.9-inch for the front-row seats) touch monitor, legrest, footrest, and headrest, amenity kit, economy meal service with some extras and, depending on the airport, [Sakura Lounge access and JAL Lounge on American](#).



Japan Airlines Premium Economy

MILEAGE AWARD COST

65,000 miles in Premium Economy to Tokyo—also offers a [limited time special](#) starting at 60,000 miles now through March 31, 2018. Business Class is 35,000 miles more.

CASH

Fares start at \$1,929 on LAX-Tokyo and \$2,079 on NY-Tokyo, compared to \$3,533 in Business Class from LAX and \$5,679 from NYC. Your choice: Save up to \$3,600 (63%) over Business Class or up to 35,000 (35% fewer) miles. Singapore Airlines

SEAT

19.5 inches wide, 38-inch pitch, 8-inch recline. 13.3-inch HD touchscreen monitor, calf rest and footrest, headrest, amenity kit, and upgraded meal service (book via '[Book the Cook](#)').



Singapore Airlines Premium Economy

MILEAGE AWARD COST

Varies by route. San Francisco-Singapore is 130,000 miles (Business 176,000) and New York- Singapore is 140,000 (Business 184,000).

CASH

Fares start at \$1,928 on SFO-Singapore and \$1,790 on NY-Singapore, compared to \$4,198 in Business Class from SFO and \$4,610 from NYC. Your choice: Save up to \$2,820 (61%) over Business Class or up to 45,000 (26% fewer) miles. Cash offers the best value.

HOW PE ELITE FARES TYPICALLY BEHAVE

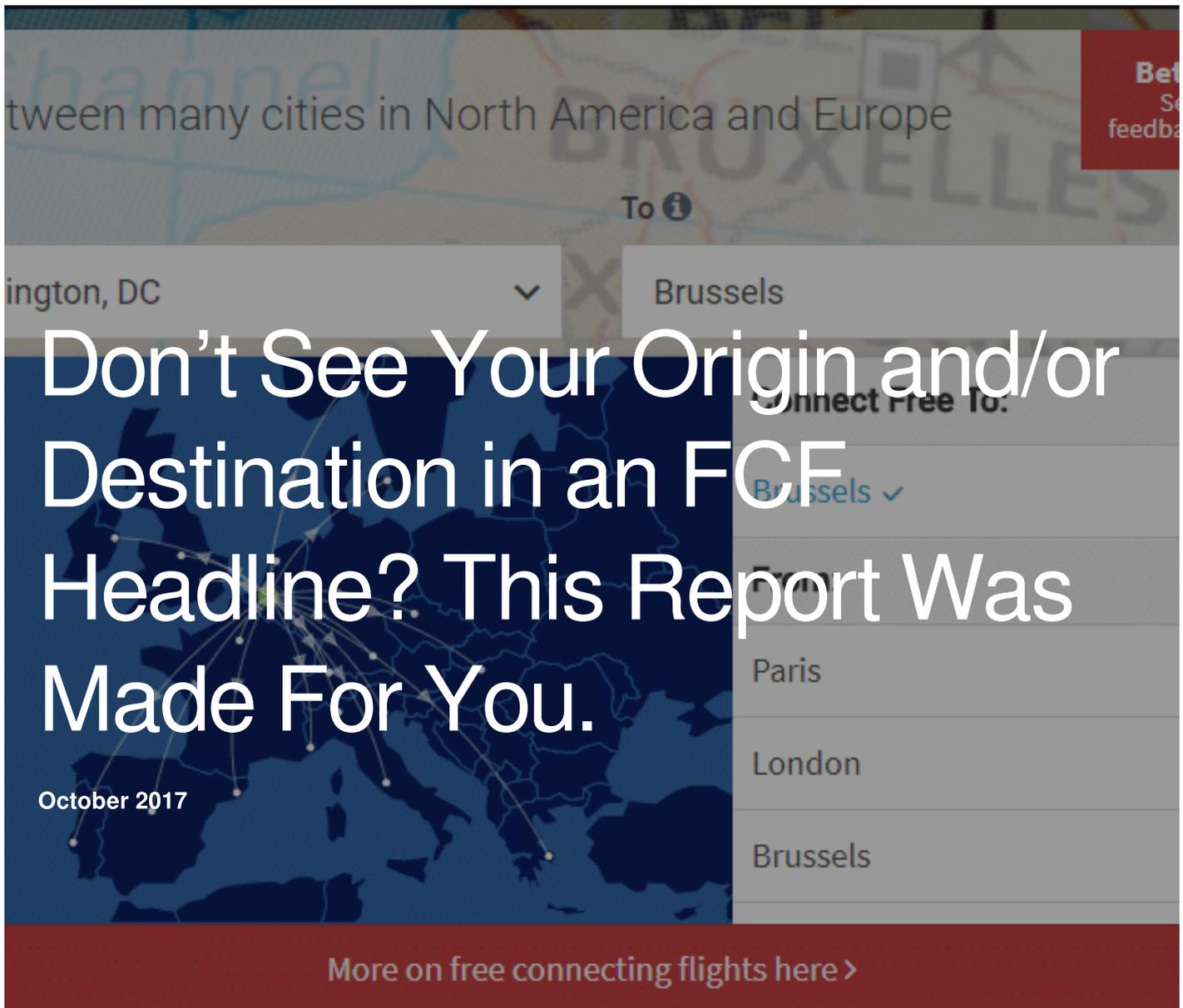
Almost identical to economy: To get the lowest fare, you must travel midweek, Monday through Thursday, or low season (varies by airline, to Asia, usually the summer months). Asian airlines offering PE Elite often have fare promotions throughout the year. Forget Christmas and the rest of high season because economy fares are highest then, as are PE Elite fares.

WHEN TO CONSIDER PREMIUM ECONOMY ELITE

- When sleep is secondary to working or not important.
- When Business Class fares are high.
- When upgrade or free mileage-award inventory is not available in Business Class.
- On a family vacation. (Do the kids really need to fly up front?)
- When you do not have enough miles for a free Business Class mileage award—unless you're willing to buy the miles needed.

For Business Travel

- When company travel policy or client's budget forbids Business Class.
- When you want to give your employees a perk



Don't See Your Origin and/or Destination in an FCF Headline? This Report Was Made For You.

FCF's New Connection Widget Makes More Deals Doable.

When you see an enticing FCF “Sweet Redeem” deal from, say, New York to Madrid, do you Zone Out because you live in Nashville? Or Dallas? Or Chicago?

We say: Zone In—because very often, the connecting flight to the hub we mention in the report (in this case New York) is free in most cases; minus Hawaii and some other edge cases.

WHAT'S A SWEET REDEEM AGAIN?

Sweet Redeems are those routes and airlines we find with low-cost Business and First Class mileage award availability. Sweet redeems = sweet dreams. (For FCF's January A Freudian Analysis of FCF's "Sweet Redeems" report go [here](#).)

In other words, what else would you call a mileage award ticket that American wants to charge you 270,000 miles for, normally, that is—for a moment in time—115,000? A sweet redeem, yeah?

And very often, too, the same applies on the other side of the Atlantic. So you may want to go to London instead of Madrid. Again, very often, the connection from Madrid to London is free, as long as you're flying on partners.

This special report is all about those connections, how to know if you can make them happen *and* how our cool new widget makes it easy to make them happen.

IS THIS AIR TRAVEL'S BEST KEPT SECRET?

If you don't know about it, YES—as these free connections open up countless opportunities you otherwise don't realize.

To get the deal, you have to get to the deal. Our new widget's drop-down menu shows what cities *might* be compatible with the deal. There are also the lowest mileage amounts you need to pay for the deal and current availability. It's a one-stop-shop of sweet redeem-ability. Here's what it looks like below:

WITH NEW FCF WIDGET, SEE BEST DEALS AT A GLANCE:

Fly between many cities in North America and Europe

Beta V1
Send feedback [here](#)

From **Washington, DC** To **Brussels**

Payment Method
115,000 United Miles (normal everyday price is 300,000)

Choose the best option for you (see below for details)

 115,000 United Miles ✓	62% OFF
 115,000 Chase Miles EASILY TRANSFERED TO UNITED - MORE DETAILS HERE	62% OFF
 88,000 All Nippon Airways Miles	71% OFF
 88,000 American Express Miles EASILY TRANSFERED TO ALL NIPPON AIRWAYS - MORE DETAILS HERE	71% OFF
 80,000 Asiana Miles	73% OFF
 65,000 SPG Miles EASILY TRANSFERED TO ASIANA - MORE DETAILS HERE	78% OFF
 No Miles? No Problem: Easily Buy Points from American Express	42% OFF

(See [example widget here](#). And yes, we'd really like your feedback on how it can be much better.)

QUICK CASE STUDY #1: SEE WASHINGTON, DC, THINK KANSAS CITY

Washington, DC to Brussels in Business Class on United costs 105,000 miles round-trip (57,500 one-way). But you live in Kansas City. End of story? No. For no additional miles you can add a United flight to Washington, DC to hook up with that deal from your departure city.

Business Saver Award

Saver Award

57.5k miles
+\$5.60

Select

United Polaris business (I)

Dinner

Depart ▾ Arrive ▾ Stops ▾ Duration ▾

Wed, Apr 4 5:35 pm Thu, Apr 5 7:15 am Nonstop 7h 40m

▼ Details

► Seats

Washington, DC, US (IAD - Dulles) to Brussels, BE (BRU)

UA 950 | Boeing 777-200

Wi-Fi Power outlets

⚠ Depart IAD: Wed, Apr 4
Arrive BRU: Thu, Apr 5

⚠ Red-eye flight

Washington, DC-Brussels screenshot:

Depart ⌵
Arrive ⌵
Stops ⌵
Duration ⌵

Business Saver Award ⌵

Wed, Apr 4 12:30 pm
 Thu, Apr 5 7:15 am
 1 stop
 11h 45m
 Details
 ▶ Seats

Includes Travel Operated By Mesa Airlines Dba United Express

Saver Award

57.5k miles

+\$5.60

Select

Kansas City, MO, US (MCI) to Washington, DC, US (IAD - Dulles)

12:30 pm - 3:51 pm (2h 21m)

✈ UA 6034 | Canadair Regional Jet 700

Operated By Mesa Airlines Dba United Express

! Red-eye flight

United First (I)

Lunch

----- 1h 44m connection -----

Washington, DC, US (IAD - Dulles) to Brussels, BE (BRU)

5:35 pm - 7:15 am (7h 40m)

✈ UA 950 | Boeing 777-200

📶 Wi-Fi 🔌 Power outlets

! Depart IAD: Wed, Apr 4 ! Red-eye flight

Arrive BRU: Thu, Apr 5

United Polaris business (I)

Dinner

Kansas City-Brussels screenshot (notice the price is the same):

QUICK CASE STUDY #2: SEE HOUSTON-LONDON, THINK AMARILLO-COPENHAGEN

What if you don't want to go to London, but Copenhagen? And what if you live in Amarillo? You can go there via London at no extra cost because of free airline alliance connections.

In effect you're getting six flight segments for 115,000 miles (57,500 one-way). Amarillo-Houston-London-Copenhagen-London-Houston- Amarillo. That's amazing value, considering the original deal is lucrative to start with.

Houston-London screenshot:

Business Saver Award

Saver Award

57.5k miles

+\$5.60

Select

United Polaris business (I)

Dinner

Depart ▾ Arrive ▾ Stops ▾ Duration ▾

Wed, Apr 4
4:20 pm

Thu, Apr 5
7:40 am

Nonstop

9h 20m

Details

Seats

Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental) to London, GB (LHR - Heathrow)

UA 880 | Boeing 777-200

Wi-Fi

Power outlets

Depart IAH: Wed, Apr 4
Arrive LHR: Thu, Apr 5

Red-eye flight

Houston-London screenshot:

Depart ▾ Arrive ▾ Stops ▾ Duration ▾

Wed, Apr 4 12:00 pm Thu, Apr 5 12:40 pm 2 stops 17h 40m

▼ Details ▶ Seats

Includes Travel Operated By Expressjet Airlines Dba United E

Mixed cabin ?

Saver Award

57.5k miles
+\$30.90

Select

Amarillo, TX, US (AMA) to Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental)

12:00 pm - 1:40 pm (1h 40m)

UA 4258 | Embraer RJ145

Operated By Expressjet Airlines Dba United Express

ⓘ Long layover ⓘ Terminal change ⓘ Red-eye flight

2h 40m connection

Houston, TX, US (IAH - Intercontinental) to London, GB (LHR - Heathrow)

4:20 pm - 7:40 am (9h 20m)

UA 880 | Boeing 777-200

⚡ Power outlets

ⓘ Depart IAH: Wed, Apr 4 Arrive LHR: Thu, Apr 5 ⓘ Long layover

ⓘ Terminal change ⓘ Red-eye flight

2h 10m connection

London, GB (LHR - Heathrow) to Copenhagen, DK (CPH)

9:50 am - 12:40 pm (1h 50m)

✪ SK 502 | Airbus A320

ⓘ Long layover ⓘ Terminal change ⓘ Red-eye flight

United Economy (X)

Snacks for Purchase

United Polaris business (I)

Dinner

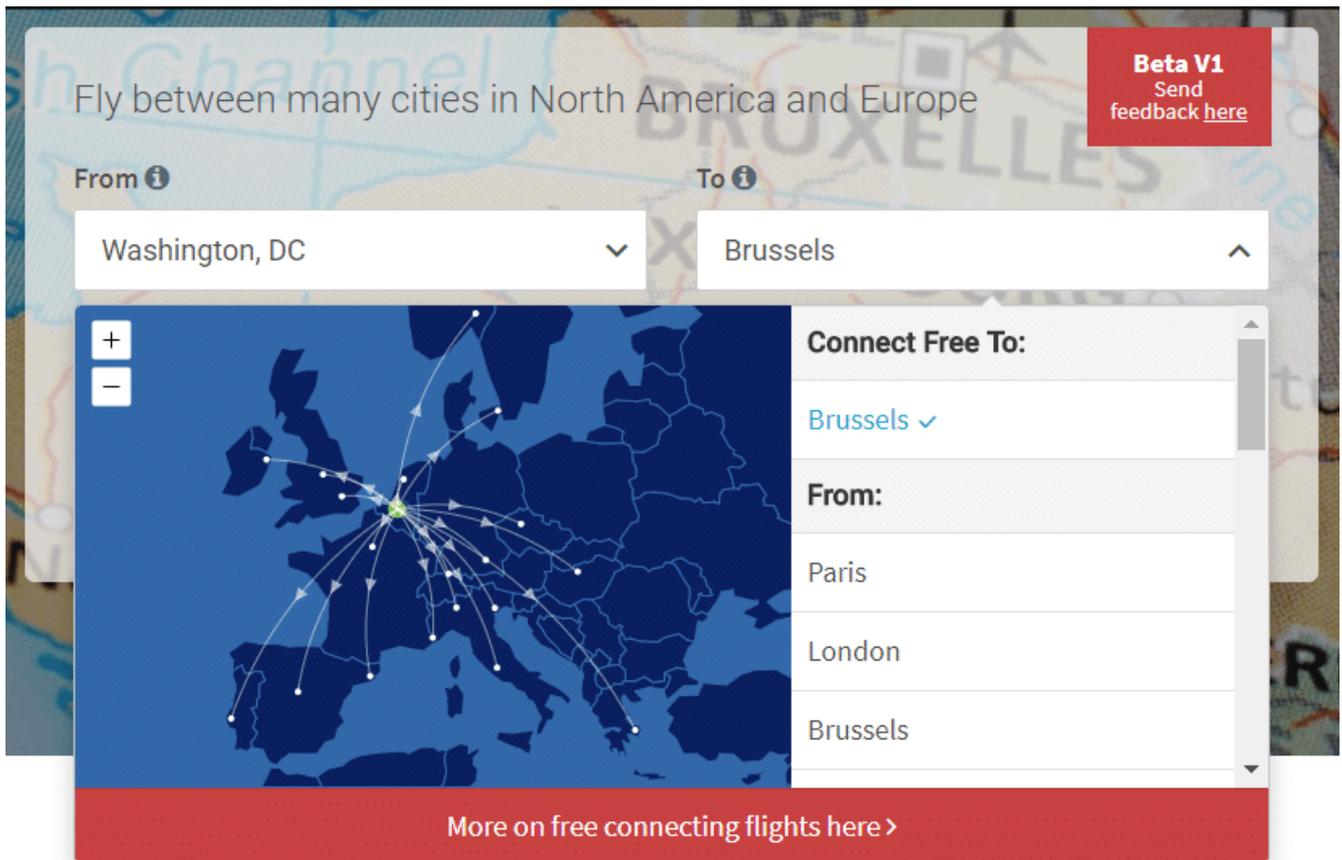
Business (I)

Meal

Amarillo-Copenhagen screenshot (same price as above):

It's because United and Scandinavian Airlines are both part of Star Alliance. The same applies to American and its oneworld friends, and Delta with its SkyTeam alliance buddies.

WITH NEW FCF WIDGET, SEE POSSIBLE FREE CONNECTING FLIGHTS AT A GLANCE:



(See . And yes, we'd really like your feedback on how it can be much better.)

We wrote a special report about this concept last December called "The Art of Skipping Stones," [right here](#).

This time we're going deeper. The chart below shows you how to get those free connecting flights when you see an [FCF Sweet Redeem Alert](#). There are also the connecting airlines with info on which flights can be booked online and which have to be booked by phone plus any relevant reward programs in play.

HOW TO READ—DECODE—FCF HEADLINES FOR LUCRATIVE SUCCESS

These mileage programs below generally offer of free connection to the hub city and onward travel to final European destination.

How To Leverage Sweet Redeem "Bridge Routes" When You Don't See Your City: To/From Europe

Operating Airline You See in FCF Headline	Book Sweet Redeems Award and Get Free Connecting Flights <u>With These Operating Airline Mileage Programs</u> in U.S./Canada and European Hub Cities	How to Book Operating Airline Flights: Online or Call	Getting the Operating Airline Miles Through:
American ¹	Use American in the U.S. or partners (such as British Airways or Iberia) in Europe.	Online	SPG
Delta ²	Use Delta in the U.S. or partners (such as Air France and KLM) in Europe.	Online	AMEX, SPG
United ³	Use United in the U.S. or partners (such as Lufthansa or SWISS) in Europe.	Online	CHASE, SPG
Lufthansa (any Miles&More airline) ⁴	Use United in the U.S.	Online for Adria, Austrian, Brussels Airlines, Condor, Croatia Airlines, Eurowings, LOT, Luxair and SWISS; other airlines you have to call.	SPG
Air Canada ⁵	Use United or Air Canada in the U.S./Canada or partners (such as Lufthansa or SWISS) in Europe.	Online	AMEX, SPG
Singapore ⁶	Use United in the U.S. or partners (such as Lufthansa or SWISS) in Europe.	Online for Singapore flights, for partner flights you need to call.	AMEX, CITI, CHASE, SPG
Air France/KLM ⁷	Use Delta in the U.S.	Online	AMEX, CITI, SPG

AMEX = American Express Rewards, CHASE = Chase Ultimate Rewards, CITI = CITI ThankYou, SPG = Starwood. ¹ Alaska mileage rates are for American flights only. ² Delta charges more miles for partner flights, than its own. Virgin Atlantic mileage rates are for Delta flights only. ³ United charges more miles for partner awards if travel on the over-the-water flight is on a partner, for travel with partner airlines within Europe no extra miles are charged, it is at the United rate. ⁴ Miles&More has the same mileage rate for own and partner flights. ⁵ Air Canada has the same rate for own and partner flights, but it has two zone mileage rates to Europe. ⁶ Singapore has two European routes: New York-Frankfurt and Houston-Manchester. ⁷ Flying Blue, the mileage program for Air France and KLM, charges the same rate for own and partner flights.

Operating Airline You See in FCF Headline	Possible Better Deal: Book Sweet Redeems Award and Get Free Connecting Flights <u>With These Partners Mileage Programs</u> in U.S./Canada and European Hub Cities	How to Book via Partner Airline Mileage Programs: Online or Call	Get the Partner Airline Miles Through:
American ¹	Alaska Airlines	Online	SPG
Delta ²	Air France / KLM	Online	AMEX, CITI, SPG
	Korean	Call	CHASE, SPG
	Virgin Atlantic	Call	AMEX, CITI, CHASE, SPG
United ³	Air Canada	Online	AMEX, SPG

Operating Airline You See in FCF Headline	Possible Better Deal: Book Sweet Redeems Award and Get Free Connecting Flights <u>With These Partners Mileage Programs</u> in U.S./Canada and European Hub Cities	How to Book via Partner Airline Mileage Programs: Online or Call	Get the Partner Airline Miles Through:
	All Nippon	Online	AMEX, SPG
	Asiana	Call	SPG
	LifeMiles	Online	SPG
	Lufthansa (any Miles&More airline)	Online for Adria, Austrian, Brussels Airlines, Condor, Croatia Airlines, Eurowings, LOT, Luxair and SWISS; other airlines you have to call.	SPG
	Singapore	Call	AMEX, CITI, CHASE, SPG
Lufthansa (any Miles&More airline) ⁴	Air Canada	Online	AMEX, SPG
	All Nippon	Online	AMEX, SPG
	Asiana	Call	SPG
	LifeMiles	Online	SPG
	United	Online	CHASE, SPG
	Singapore	Call	AMEX, CITI, CHASE, SPG
Air Canada ⁵	All Nippon	Online	AMEX, SPG
	Asiana	Call	SPG
	LifeMiles	Online	SPG
	Lufthansa (any Miles&More airline)	Online for Adria, Austrian, Brussels Airlines, Condor, Croatia Airlines, Eurowings, LOT, Luxair and SWISS; other airlines you have to call.	SPG
	United	Online	CHASE, SPG
	Singapore	Call	AMEX, CITI, CHASE, SPG
Singapore ⁶	Air Canada	Online	AMEX, SPG
	All Nippon	Online	AMEX, SPG
	Asiana	Call	SPG

Operating Airline You See in FCF Headline	Possible Better Deal: Book Sweet Redeems Award and Get Free Connecting Flights <u>With These Partners Mileage Programs</u> in U.S./Canada and European Hub Cities	How to Book via Partner Airline Mileage Programs: Online or Call	Get the Partner Airline Miles Through:
	LifeMiles	Online	SPG
	Lufthansa (any Miles&More airline)	Online for Adria, Austrian, Brussels Airlines, Condor, Croatia Airlines, Eurowings, LOT, Luxair and SWISS; other airlines you have to call.	SPG
	United	Online	CHASE, SPG
Air France/KLM ⁷	Delta	Online	AMEX, SPG
	Korean	Call	CHASE, SPG

AMEX = American Express Rewards, CHASE = Chase Ultimate Rewards, CITI = CITI ThankYou, SPG = Starwood. ¹ Alaska mileage rates are for American flights only. ² Delta charges more miles for partner flights, than its own. Virgin Atlantic mileage rates are for Delta flights only. ³ United charges more miles for partner awards if travel on the over-the-water flight is on a partner, for travel with partner airlines within Europe no extra miles are charged, it is at the United rate. ⁴ Miles&More has the same mileage rate for own and partner flights. ⁵ Air Canada has the same rate for own and partner flights, but it has two zone mileage rates to Europe. ⁶ Singapore has two European routes: New York-Frankfurt and Houston-Manchester. ⁷ Flying Blue, the mileage program for Air France and KLM, charges the same rate for own and partner flights.

DISTANCE PROGRAMS

Airlines not mentioned in the chart above are due to the fact that they charge miles based on flight distance, such as British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Iberia, and Japan Airlines—with some calculating each segments separately and others by the total sum of flight miles. Or they're not part of a major Alliance, such as Virgin Atlantic and Emirates, and, as such, don't have an alliance partner award chart. Connecting flights for these airlines in the U.S. and for onward travel in Europe are not free, but at an extra cost.

ALLIANCES ARE YOUR ALLIES

Star Alliance: Air Canada, Air India, All Nippon, Lufthansa, Singapore Airlines, Turkish Airlines, United, and more.

oneworld: American, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Finnair, Iberia, Japan Airlines, Qantas and more.

SkyTeam: Air France, Alitalia, China Airlines, Delta, KLM, Korean Air, and more.

I SEE LUFTHANSA IN THE HEADLINE BUT DON'T HAVE LUFTHANSA MILES: BAD?

No! And for the same reasons we've been talking about: those very handy Alliance Partnerships.

So if you have stacks of Air Canada miles for example, you can use them to fly on Lufthansa because they're both Star Alliance members. Print out that airline alliance list above and stick it next to your computer. It could save you a lot of money.

BRIDGE ROUTE CONNECTING FLIGHTS

Note that when using the available discounted long-haul flight as a "bridge," the connecting flight from the U.S. and/or international hub can be either booked in Business Class or economy, depending on availability.

If only economy is available, don't let that affect your travel plans as the most important part is getting the long-haul flight in the class you want first.

COMING SOON:

We'll be looking deeper at bridge routes to other parts of the world (including Asia) when it comes to using FCF's new widget.

The Best Way to Europe Non-Stop on Star Alliance Airlines to/from Boston, New York and Washington, DC

October 2017

By nailing the stratospheric 54% savings possible on Lufthansa, especially if you can fly via the carrier's three East Coast hubs.

There are dozens of ways to book non-stop First Class seats Europe to/from Boston, New York and Washington, DC.

To narrow the options, start by asking these crucial questions:

- When and on what carrier is there good availability?

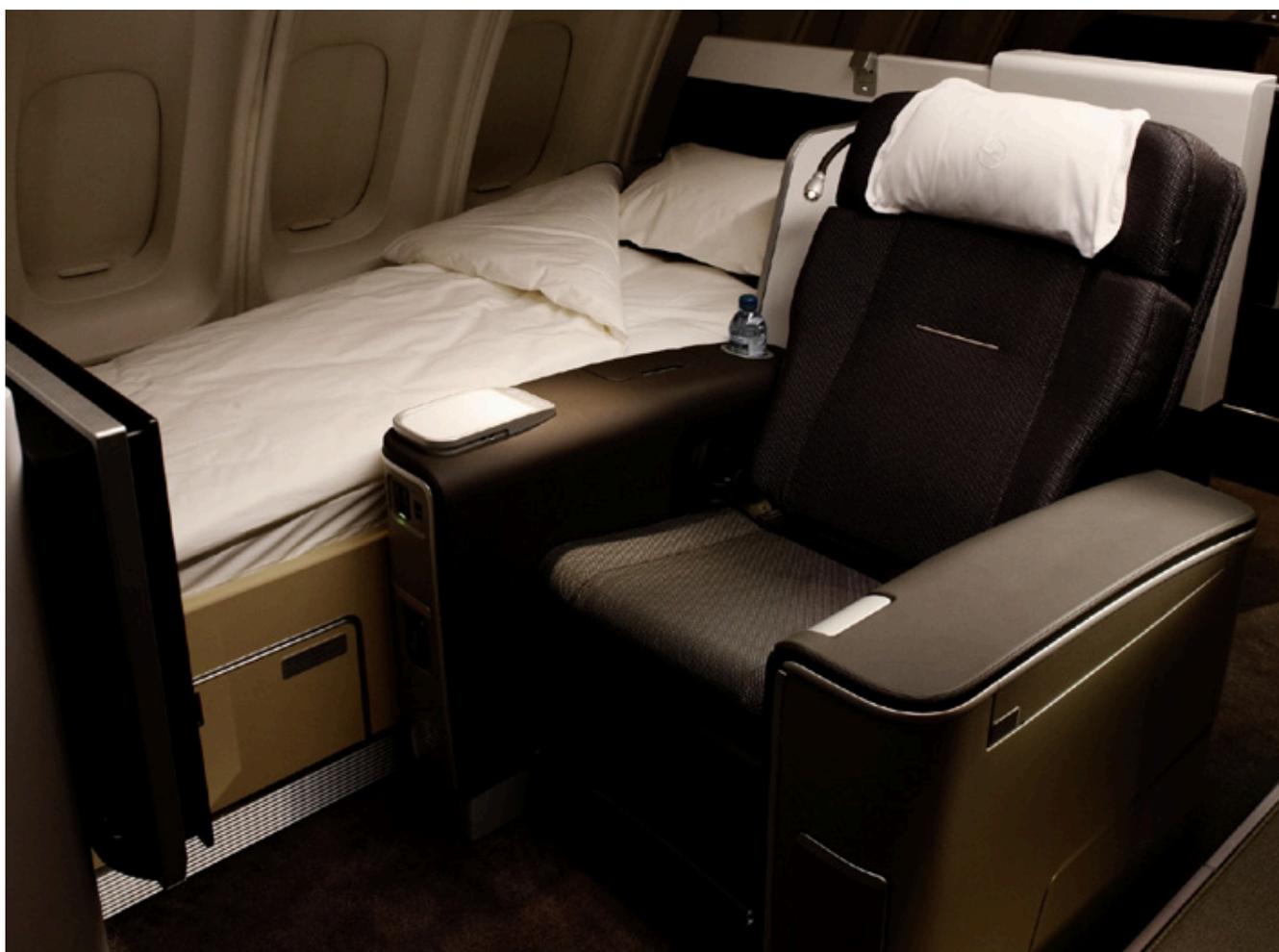
- How can I buy the miles if I don't have enough in my account to cover the cost of an award?

UNITED MILEAGEPLUS MEMBERS GET HOSED, AGAIN

United's non-stops from New York and Washington, DC to Europe have almost no First Class mileage award seats over the next 11 months, which is why the carrier is not part of this special report.

The answer to the first question right now is Lufthansa. What follows is a rundown of the carrier's best First Class deals in the upcoming months (up to two seats available).

LUFTHANSA FIRST CLASS (BOEING 747-8)



Published Fares: To Frankfurt from Boston round-trip starts at \$10,037—\$10,135 from Washington, DC (Dulles), and \$7,119 from New York (JFK). New York-Munich starts at \$9,334.

Mileage Cost: 170,000, with the rest of Europe or a stopover in Germany at no extra cost. **Or, you can add a free domestic flight to any Lufthansa U.S. gateway on partner United.** (See mileage award availability using Lufthansa miles in the chart below.)

No Lufthansa Miles? No Problem: Transfer 135,000 Starwood points.

PARTNER OPPORTUNITIES:

Asiana Airlines: Just 100,000 miles for Lufthansa flights.

Starwood Points: Transfer to Asiana to bring down the award cost to 80,000 points (with the 25% transfer bonus) to/from any U.S. city, a savings of up to 42%.

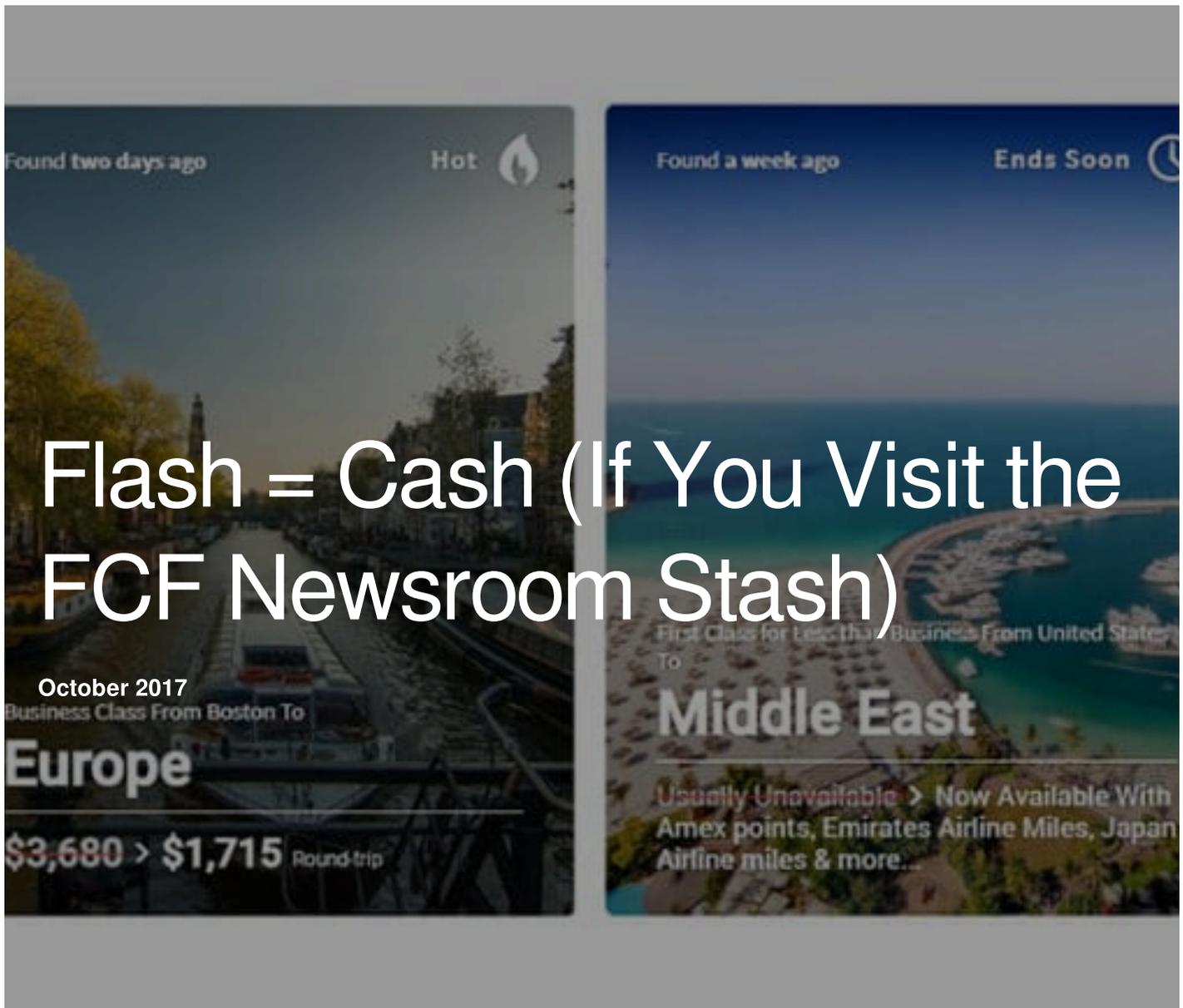
Best “[Buy Miles to Fly in Style](#)” Deal: Save 54% through Air Canada: Air Canada charges 140,000 miles for First Class. Purchasing Amex Rewards points at 2.5¢ each brings the First Class ticket down to \$4,620 round-trip (including about \$1,120 in award taxes), a savings of \$5,515 (54%) on the Washington, DC-Frankfurt (\$10,135).

Partner mileage award space is seldom the same as Lufthansa’s own for First Class as Lufthansa gives preference to members in their own mileage program first. Note that you must be very flexible to book Lufthansa’s First Class using partner miles as often partner award space can only be booked within 14 days of departure.

Sweet Redeem Survey: First Class on Lufthansa to Europe, Up to Two Seats Available

Routes	Availability to Europe			Availability from Europe		
	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
Boston to Frankfurt	Oct., Nov., Dec., Jan., March, April	Feb.	Oct., Dec., Jan., Feb., March	Oct.		Oct., Nov., Dec., Jan., Feb., March, April, May, June
New York (EWR) to Frankfurt	Oct. to Dec., April, May	Jan., Feb., March	Jan., Feb.	Oct., Dec., April, June	Nov., May	Jan., Feb., March
New York (JFK) to Frankfurt		Oct., Nov., Dec.	Nov., Dec., Jan. to March, April		Oct., Dec.	Nov., Dec., Jan. to March, April, May
New York (EWR) to Munich	June	Oct., April	Nov. to March, April, May, June, July, Aug.		June	Nov. to May, June, July, Aug.
New York (JFK) to Munich	Oct., June	Dec.	Oct., Nov., Dec., Jan. to May, June, July, Aug.	Oct.	Oct., Nov.	Oct., Nov., Dec. to Aug.
Washington, DC to Frankfurt	Oct., Nov.	Dec., March	Nov., Dec., Jan., Feb., Aug.		May	Nov. to March, April

Months in black are for one seat availability; in blue at least two seats.



FCF has your back with the latest new trend: Our newsroom has more flash fares on access than ever before. That's because flash fares are lasting longer these days—they're no longer Mayflies.

There's one constant about airfares: They change constantly. The best airfares are like falling stars: You must catch them at just the right time.

Which, we admit, is hard to do. And which is why we've introduced **Deal Tracking**.

Starting this month, you'll now:

1. Run into 'expired fares' much less often, plus
2. Be aware of older fares that are 'still around' which you might have missed.

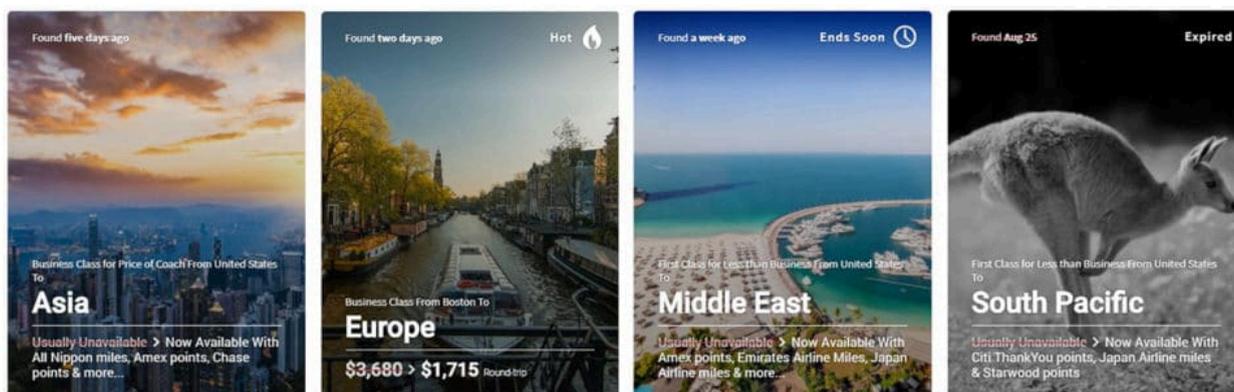
We've put on new staff to monitor when a fare dies—they'll also be finding new great deals as well. Here are the symbols you must know:

No symbol = Good deal, still valid.

Hot symbol = Great deal, still valid.

Ends Soon symbol = One or more of the fares in the alert has expired, and the others cited may expire soon. So hurry.

Expired symbol = Dead, expired deal.



WHY WE'VE CHANGED OUR COVERAGE

Not long ago flash fares were gone almost instantly, so if you were looking at the deal a week later, it was inevitably gone.

But the ground has changed. Now, many flash sales last longer—days and even weeks. So, if you see a deal without an 'expired' mark, it means that FCF's team has checked it in the last 24 to 48 hours (minus weekends) to ascertain that it's still there.

EXPIRED DEALS

Why show expired deals? It's FCF's fare memory, a record of what's happened, which shows the current state of "fare play." Airlines often bring the same deals back later, or similar deals, so this section gives you a

baseline for a given route, and what the future *might* hold.

THE DEAL TRACKER

Here are the top deals still valid in our newsroom at time of publication...

[9/29/17: New Business Class Fares to Beijing From U.S. & Canada Starting at US\\$1,928 R/T](#)

[9/25/17: Top Ten Business Class Fares from Boston to Europe, Starting at \\$1,715](#)

[9/22/17: New Hawaii Business Class Fares Found at 40% Off](#)

[9/21/17: New South & East Africa Business Class Fares Found at 37% Off](#)

[9/20/17: New Holiday Business Class Fares to Seoul and Taipei Starting at \\$2,251 R/T on American, Delta, Japan and United](#)

[9/19/17: Top Nine Business Class Fares from Chicago, Detroit and Minneapolis to Europe, Starting at \\$1,720](#)

[9/18/17: Top Ten Business Class Fares from Washington, DC and Raleigh Durham to Europe, Starting at \\$1,713](#)

[9/15/17: Top Ten Business Class Fares from the West Coast to Europe, Up to 37% Off](#)

[9/14/17: Top Ten Business Class Fares from New York to Europe, Up to 43% Off](#)

[9/13/17: New Companion Business Class Fares Found to Asia and India Starting at 60% Off on Qatar Airways](#)

Live deals are at time of publishing.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO WITH LIVE DEALS?

Confirm them fast without commitment: Remember that 13 airlines (and some of their partners) allow you to lock-in a flash airfare. See [FCF's July report](#) on How to Hold Amazing Business and First Class Flash Fares Before They Disappear into a Black Hole.

At FCF, we call it "Look, Lock, Book." Find the fare, use a lock option, and then book (or not) based on further research or whatever else factors into your travel plans. Look at the "lock" cost as insurance.



Miles are Dead For Inflexible Travelers

October 2017

Six feet under. Pushing up daisies. Dead as a doornail. Gone.

That's your hard-earned miles we're talking about if you think like most people do.

First the bad news—don't worry, we'll get to the good news in a minute.

I'm always asking my team to dig up good mileage-seat availability on major routes, so FCF subscribers can quickly, easily, and cheaply use their miles/points to fly in Business or First Class on major airlines every day,

which you already realize. That's part of our value proposition to you, as are the great deals we send out in Daily Alerts from our Newsroom several days a week.

Sounds simple, right? Not really.

The thing is, way more often than not, we come up with goose eggs! It's almost unbelievable how many airlines offer zero or next-to zero availability on major routes. I tell the team to go back and check again, but same story.

So this special report is about how to make an omelet out of a goose egg (plus where the lucrative availability is).

DO YOU THINK LIKE MOST TRAVELERS? HOPEFULLY NOT

Contessa watches Moulin Rouge on Netflix and says, "Hey, let's go to Paris!" She books Le Hotel Fromage on the Left Bank. She chooses June because, well, no particular reason—she's on a roll! Let's do it!

Then she says, "Hey we've got a stack of miles, let's use them for nice Business or First Class seats!"

She does so and thinks, "Whoa, all low-cost mileage awards are gone. Those sure are expensive flights, but what can you do? Gotta get to Paris now that I've booked Le Hotel Fromage for June."

Now, here at FCF, we think what she's doing is sheer MADness. As in M.A.D.: Miles Are Dead-ness. We think it's inflexible thinking, and we want to persuade you that there's a much better way to go about it.

CALL 911: MY MILES AREN'T BREATHING

Your Miles Will Be Dead (or will certainly appear that way when you go to use them) if:

- You're locked into one of the three big U.S. carriers.
- Your credit card isn't "multi-currency" or linked to lots of mileage programs.
- You have no time/date flexibility.
- You have no destination flexibility—"Paris or nothing!"
- You book land before air.
- You book cruise before air.

MINDSET MATTERS MOST

If you can change your mindset about how to book travel, you greatly increase the odds of using those miles, because you're not working against the airlines, you're working with them. If you're counting on a deal

that perfectly fits your already-locked-in plans, **the odds are slimmer than an economy seat.**

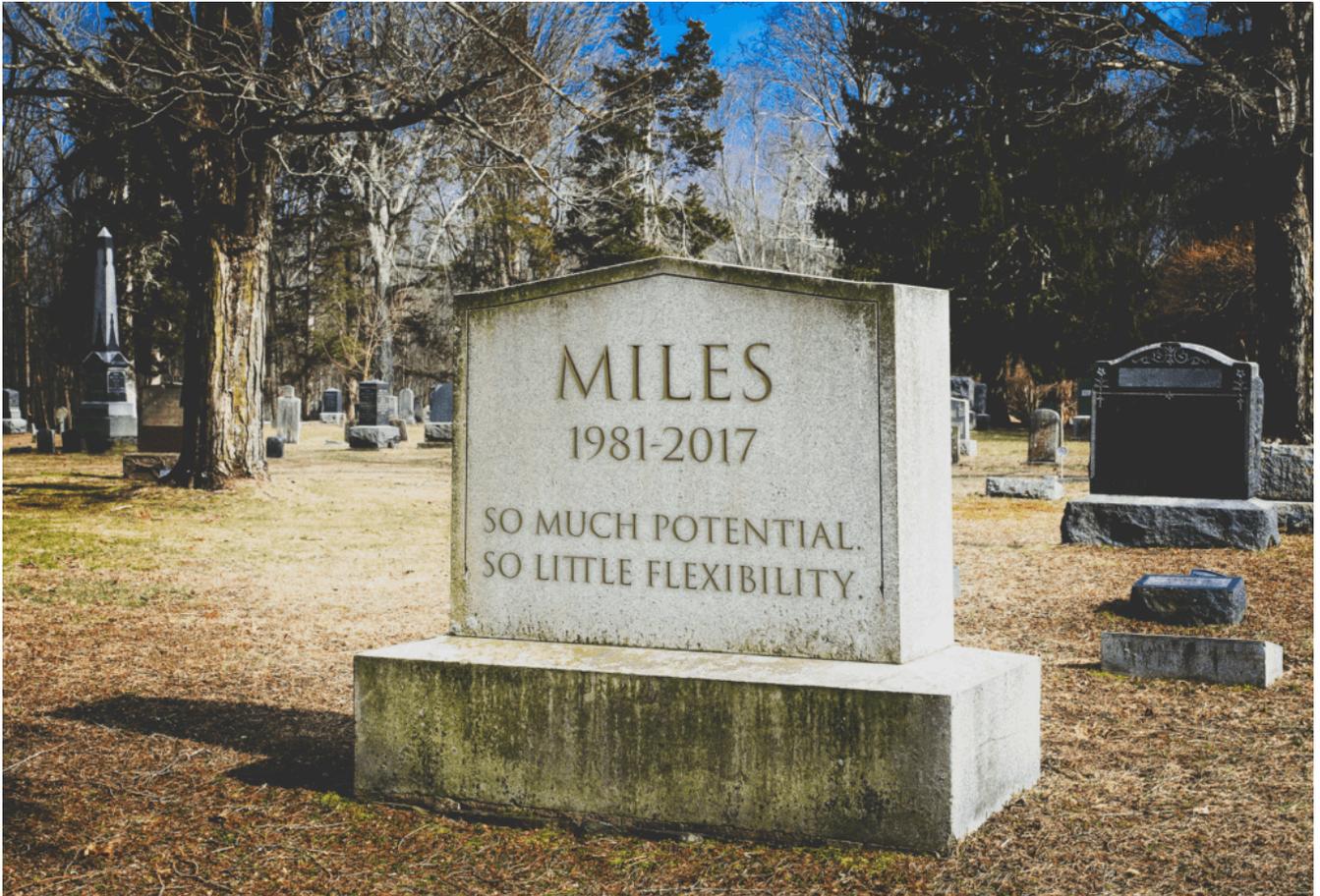
Take *flash miles availability* for example on American Airlines. It occasionally has flash miles availability but it can be here and gone in a day, or even a couple of hours. (Thus the word “flash”.) Otherwise, forget about it.

THE AMERICAN NADA ROUTES

‘Example’ routes on which AA had no low-cost mileage seats so far this year:

- Dallas-Rio de Janeiro in Business Class
- Dallas-Hong Kong in Business and First Class
- Chicago-Shanghai in Business Class
- Los Angeles-Sao Paulo in Business Class
- Dallas-Madrid in Business Class
- Chicago-Venice in Business Class
- Miami-London in First Class
- Los Angeles-London in First Class

Then there’s regional opportunity. Some cities hardly ever see great deals. Tel Aviv on Delta and United rarely sees Business Class award space, so don’t hold your breath for that. Lately too, opportunities to the South Pacific have been rarer than a Fiji iceberg on the major three U.S. airlines.



MORE NADA

More 'example' routes on which the major three U.S. airlines have no low-cost award seats:

MILEAGE UPGRADES ARE DEAD, TOO

On U.S. airlines, these used to be the most dependable option. It's how I flew in the 90s and 00s, and how many elites have flown up until the last couple of years, given that U.S. airlines allocated many more seats for upgrades than for free tickets. American and United have all but abandoned them—even though they come with \$1,100+ surcharges.

SOME RECENT ALERTS WITH FIRST CLASS AVAILABILITY

- [9/25/17: Emirates First Class Easy Miles Availability Found from San Francisco and Seattle to Dubai, With Amex or Starpoints + How to Pay 40,000 Fewer Miles than Biz Class](#)
- [9/21/17: Free Etihad First Class Awards Found from Washington, DC to Abu Dhabi, With Amex, Citi or Starpoints](#)

- [9/20/17: Emirates First Class Easy Miles Availability Found from Chicago, New York and Washington, DC to Dubai, With Amex or Starpoints + How to Pay 35,000 Fewer Miles than Biz Class](#)
- [9/19/17: Qantas First Class 'Easy Availability' with Miles Found to Melbourne & Sydney \(with AA Miles & Starpoints\) + How to Pay 15,000 Fewer Miles than Biz Class](#)
- [9/18/17: Singapore Airlines First Class Availability Found to/from Tokyo—For Only 25,000 Miles More than Business](#)
- [9/4/17: Free Korean Air First Class Awards Found from Las Vegas, San Francisco and Seattle to/from Asia—For 30,000 Less Miles than Business](#)
- [8/30/17: Free Etihad First Class Awards Found from Los Angeles and San Francisco to Abu Dhabi, With Amex, Citi or Starpoints](#)
- [8/23/17: Free All Nippon First Class Awards Found to/from Tokyo—For Less than Price of Business](#)
- [8/7/17: Free Asiana First Class Awards Found to/from Seoul—For Less than Business](#)

FIRST CLASS: DEAD (FOR THE UNAWARE), TOO

Same story, unless you think beyond the Bermuda triangle (American-Delta-United) and look at airlines such as All Nippon, Cathay Pacific, British Airways, Emirates, Lufthansa, and Korean Air. On these carriers, First Class availability can be quite good, with two or more seats often available depending on the route.

Which brings us back full circle to those flexible and friendly multi-currency credit cards.

THERE ARE MILES AND THEN THERE ARE SMILES

Smiles, or “smart miles”, are those delivered by the multi-currency credit cards we mentioned just above. We speak of them often at FCF, [most recently here](#).

The great advantage of these cards is that the points you accrue can be turned into miles on more than one airline.

Starwood has long been an FCF favorite because it partners with more than 40 airlines. That’s a lot of choice.

And for all you “there is only one Paris” travelers, well yes, there is only one Paris, apart from the one in Texas. But there’s more than one way to get there.

For example, if you see a great mileage award availability deal to Frankfurt or another European city, consider including it in your trip. Frankfurt and Paris are only four and half hours apart by train—some might even say, it is a great way to see Europe.

So it's easy really. If you're able (and more people are much more able than they think), you can increase the chances of a great mileage deal by being flexible. Take off the blinders and think air before land. Think about getting a credit card that makes it easy to be flexible. Think wider than just one destination city. It could be enough to put a smile in every mile.

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS USE MILES TO GO EXACTLY WHERE YOU WANT— BUT YOU CAN USUALLY GET SOMEWHERE YOU'LL LOVE

Sometimes the best experiences are the ones you never bargained for. It's a big world full of wonderful cities and people. If you're flexible, you can get to more of them than you ever dreamed of. So when you see a list like the one above, you think: "Yeah, that'd be way cool to go there, and like lightning in a bottle, I can grab it now."

IN SUMMARY: REAP WITH THE UPGRADE MINDSET

The Conclusion: A big part of The Upgrade Mindset (TUM) is looking at the glass half-full. That's easier said than done, if you have your blinders on and are an inflexible traveler:

Let's boil this all down, starting with the facts:

#1: Airlines will only ever offer so many seats for miles redemption.

#2: They offer them so sporadically (routes and dates), that you will inevitably be disappointed, unless you're lucky.

#3: Given the odds, most are usually unlucky.

#4: Unlucky travelers get disenchanted, and largely give up.

#5: This makes for fewer seat-searchers.

#6: Less 'competition' is better for you and me (i.e. fewer travelers looking for seats, more seats for fewer travelers).

Lucky #7: Those in the know, who take advantage Flash Miles/Points Availability Deals [outwit everyone](#).

Consider yourself in the know, and check out our [Flash Miles/Points Availability Alert Newsroom](#). It shows when you can use your miles to fly the world over, if you're in the mood to reap.

Nurse—I think we've got a pulse!

BACK FULL CIRCLE TO THOSE FLEXIBLE AND FRIENDLY MULTI-CURRENCY CREDIT CARDS.

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Nurse—I think we've got a pulse!



Want to Save \$8,000 on Qantas' First Class to Australia?

October 2017

Here's How: Knowing Partner Availability

Qantas' First Class is the last option most people think of. Why? It's expensive (easily \$12,900+) because Qantas pretty much has a monopoly on the route from the U.S. year-round. (At times, American and United offer an aircraft with a First Class cabin, but not currently.)

Using miles is not the solution, as the Qantas program is if-you-have-to-ask: 288,000 miles (Los Angeles-Melbourne) to 336,000 (Dallas-Sydney) round-trip. The big drawback: Qantas has only one credit-card transfer partner, the Citi ThankYou program, which has an annual purchase limit of 100,000 miles, which is not enough to buy the miles needed for an award ticket.

But, in character with FCF's contrary thinking, here's why you should look at Qantas' First Class first, if saving \$6,500 even while paying \$6,400, is ok with you.

As [FCF's Sweet Redeems](#) alerts have found over the last five months, Qantas often has good First Class mileage award availability on Los Angeles-Melbourne and Dallas-Sydney for at least two months of the year.

But what if you could buy all the miles needed through another credit card, and what if this credit card had an airline transfer partner that **has the same First Class award availability that Qantas offers**. This would enable you to buy Qantas First Class starting at \$6,400, **a savings of up to 50%**.

Enter the world of American Express and Cathay Pacific (a Qantas partner).

Cathay Pacific partner-award space has been identical to Qantas own space in our research, and Cathay is a point-transfer partner with American Express Membership Rewards, which allows members to buy up to 500,000 miles annually. Moreover, Cathay requires fewer miles (220,000) than Qantas on these routes, a savings of up to 34%.

THE \$6,400 FIRST CLASS TICKET MATH

How the “Buy Miles to Fly in Style” Strategy Can Save Up to 50%: Simply purchase Amex Rewards points. They cost 2.5¢ each. That brings the cost of a First Class ticket on the Dallas-Sydney route down to \$6,400 round-trip (including about \$900 in award taxes, which vary slightly by route) for a seat that otherwise goes for \$12,900.



Qantas First Class Seat

Sweet Redeem Survey: First Class to Australia for at Least One Person Flying Qantas and Using Cathay Pacific Miles

Routes	Availability to Australia			Availability from Australia		
	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 to Sydney		May, June		May	June	
Los Angeles to Melbourne		May, June		May, June		

Keep in mind that great First Class availability can change at any time, even by the hour.

A survey of past alerts shows the two-month trend in First Class for both routes as far back as a May 2017 alert, when FCF found award space for travel in February and March, 2018, in June for travel in March and April, 2018, and in August for travel in May and June, 2018.

LOWER MILEAGE PARTNER RATES?

Yes, FCF research does show that Japan Airlines (JAL) charges 155,000 miles round-trip for the same routes, and it costs even less if you have a Starwood account: only 125,000 Starpoints. The downside is that JAL's Qantas award inventory is much less than Qantas offers using Qantas miles.

How to Work It:

First: If you are very flexible and you have Starwood points, check availability using Japan Airlines miles—this can be done online [here](#), account log-in is required to check for award space. If you are able to find space, great, transfer points, and book using JAL miles—FCF's last transfer to JAL took seven days, so, keep in mind that the seat may disappear. More [here](#) on that.

Second: If there is no availability on Qantas via JAL miles, check award space with Cathay Pacific for Qantas flights; this can be done online [here](#) (account log-in is required). If yes, then transfer Amex Reward points to Cathay—FCF's last transfer to Cathay took two days, so, again, be careful. Be flexible about dates—look for different travel days that could work for you to increase the likelihood of no award space being available once your points have transferred.

TRANSFER POINTS TO CATHAY PACIFIC

Cathay Pacific is a transfer partner with Amex Rewards, Citi ThankYou, and Starwood. Getting the 220,000 Cathy miles takes only 180,000 Starpoints.

HAVE AMERICAN MILES?

FCF has found a few dates also for Qantas First Class Award space (see screenshot below). While AA has much less award availability than Qantas offers using Qantas miles, AA does allow you to buy miles as low as 1.8¢ when on sale, which means you can buy your way into Qantas First Class' \$13k ticket for just \$4,860.

American Miles screenshot.

Departure
From: Dallas Fort Worth International - DFW and Area
To: Sydney Kingsford Smith - SYD
Flight Date: Tuesday, May 1, 2018
Miles Used: 40,000
Taxes and Carrier-imposed Fees
All award travel requires the government taxes/fees, and carrier-imposed fees when applicable, from \$5.60 per person per award

Award Legend Taxes and Carrier-imposed Fees Apply **Award Details**

- Economy MileSAver
- Economy Anytime
- BusinessFirst MileSAver*
- BusinessFirst Anytime*
- First MileSAver

* Valid for BusinessFirst on flights with two classes of service where applicable and Business class on all other flights.

May 2018 Requested: Tue May 1 **Close Full Calendar**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6 40K	7 40K	8 110K	9 40K	10 110K	11	12
13 40K	14 110K	15 110K	16	17 110K	18	19 40K
20 40K	21 40K	22	23	24 110K	25	26
27 40K	28 40K	29				

Number of Stops (Domestic only)
Calendar(s) displays the lowest available Award Miles for that day.



16 Ways American AAdvantage Loyalists Can Upgrade to First Class to Europe for Less than Free, Free, or Very Little—by Adopting the Upgrade Mindset

October 2017

Part 4 of a series on how to hit Grand Slams using Elastic Plastic, AKA credit cards that earn Transferable Points. Read on for First Class deals on American, British Airways, and Emirates.

When you read ‘free’ and ‘very little,’ you know exactly what we mean. It’s plain English.

But 'less than free'? Isn't free as low as you can go? After all, free is an absolute.

One thing we do here at FCF is propound a mindset, a way of thinking about getting the best deal on airfares that emphasizes thinking out of the box. (We call it the Upgrade Mindset.) Free is a kind of box: Once you're in it, you stop thinking.

You can do better.

In terms of premium air travel, a "less than free upgrade" means booking First Class tickets for less than in-the-box thinkers pay for Business.

This report focuses on cheap, free, and less-than-free upgrade opportunities using what FCF calls Elastic Plastic Points. That just means using credit card points that give you access to numerous loyalty programs, via simple transfers. The [ultra-elastic points program \(46 partners\)](#) is Starwood Preferred Guest.

Just look at the chart below, which uses the [baseline cost](#) for the lowest Business Class saver award on American, 115,000 miles round-trip to Europe, or 115,000 miles earned on your American co-branded credit card.

In most cases, you can upgrade for free, little more than free, or less than free—to Europe on American, British Airways, and Emirates, if you follow FCF's Upgrade Mindset, and corollary data analysis.

See our previous report here for [Nine Ways Delta SkyMiles Travelers Can Upgrade to Europe for Free or Little More Than Coach](#), using Elastic Plastic Credit Card points; here for [13 Ways United MileagePlus Loyalists Can Upgrade to Europe for Very Little, Free, or Less than Free](#); and here for [26 Ways American AAdvantage Loyalists Can Upgrade to Europe for Less than Free, Free, or Very Little —by Adopting the Upgrade Mindset](#).

16 Ways to Upgrade Your Europe Experience to First Class for Less-than-Free or Little More than American Charges for Business Class

To / From	Loyalty Program	Operating Airlines	First Class Mileage Award Cost	Get Miles Via Partner; "Elastic Plastic" Credit Cards	Net Cost After "Elastic Plastic" Points Transfer	THE DEAL: Relative to Business Class with American AAdvantage miles (115,000)
U.S. & Europe	American*	American	170,000	SPG (up to 30% bonus deal)	108,400	Less than free upgrade: 6,600 miles less than Business

To / From	Loyalty Program	Operating Airlines	First Class Mileage Award Cost	Get Miles Via Partner; "Elastic Plastic" Credit Cards	Net Cost After "Elastic Plastic" Points Transfer	THE DEAL: Relative to Business Class with American AAdvantage miles (115,000)
		British Airways				
London & Boston, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Toronto, Washington, DC	British Airways	British Airways	136,000 low season, 160,000 high season	SPG	111,000 (to 130,000)	Less than free upgrade: Can be 4,000 miles less than Business
				AMEX, CHASE	136,000 (to 160,000)	Cheap upgrade: Can be 21,000 fewer miles than Business
London & New York		American	100,000		80,000	Less than free upgrade: 35,000 miles less than Business
London & Dallas, Miami			105,000		85,000	Less than free upgrade: 30,000 miles less than Business
London & Boston, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle, Toronto, Washington, DC			100,000		80,000	Less than free upgrade: 35,000 miles less than Business
London & Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Miami, Seattle, Vancouver			105,000		85,000	Less than free upgrade: 30,000 miles less than Business
London & Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose	Japan Airlines	British Airways	115,000		95,000	Less than free upgrade: 20,000 miles less than Business
New York & Athens, Milan			Emirates		105,000	85,000
London & Los Angeles		American	115,000		95,000	Less than free upgrade: 20,000 miles less than Business
London & Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle,	Cathay Pacific	British Airways	120,000	SPG	100,000	Less than free upgrade: 15,000 miles less than Business

To / From	Loyalty Program	Operating Airlines	First Class Mileage Award Cost	Get Miles Via Partner; "Elastic Plastic" Credit Cards	Net Cost After "Elastic Plastic" Points Transfer	THE DEAL: Relative to Business Class with American AAdvantage miles (115,000)
Toronto, Washington, DC, Vancouver		American		AMEX, CITI	120,000	Cheap upgrade: 5,000 miles more than Business
London & Dallas, Miami and New York				SPG	100,000	Less than free upgrade: 15,000 miles less than Business
				AMEX, CITI	120,000	Cheap upgrade: 5,000 miles more than Business
U.S. & Europe	Alaska**	American	125,000	SPG	100,000	Less than free upgrade: 15,000 miles less than Business
U.S. & London		British Airways	140,000		115,000	Free upgrade: First Class for same price as Business

AMEX = American Express Rewards, CHASE = Chase Ultimate Rewards, CITI = CITI ThankYou, SPG = Starwood. *Up to 30% transfer bonus valid till Oct. 15. **Rate change: Alaska partner rate for American is valid until Dec. 31, new rate starts on Jan. 1, 2018 for 170,000 miles.