



Total Basic Sector Mileage <sup>1</sup>	Required Mileage		
	Economy Class	Business Class	First Class
4,001~7,000	38,000	63,000	90,000
7,001~9,000	43,000	68,000	100,000
9,001~11,000	55,000	85,000	120,000
11,001~14,000	60,000	90,000	140,000
14,001~18,000	65,000	105,000	160,000
18,001~20,000	75,000	115,000	180,000
20,001~22,000	85,000	125,000	200,000
22,001~25,000	100,000	145,000	220,000
25,001~29,000	120,000	170,000	260,000
29,001~34,000	140,000	200,000	300,000
34,001~39,000	160,000	220,000	340,000
39,001~44,000	180,000	270,000	390,000
44,001~50,000	200,000	300,000	450,000

To put this deal in context, consider that Delta charges 140,000 miles for a simple Business Class round-trip between the U.S. and Europe, and 160,000 miles to Asia.

Look at the chart carefully: You can fly around the world for 105,000 miles in Business Class—**55,000 miles LESS than Delta charges to Asia**—or 160,000 in First. (The kids can even fly coach for just 65,000.)

Here's a sample itinerary:

New York > Frankfurt > Tokyo > Seoul > New York

All that for up to **35,000 to 55,000 fewer miles** than the cost for any one of those round-trips on American, Delta, or United! Just look to the right:

### Let's Get Creative

**Haven't been to the Taj Mahal?** Add Delhi for 10,000 miles to the itinerary above.

Want to scratch off the **"Venice of the North"** (St. Petersburg) from the list? That won't even cost a dime more, on the Taj Mahal itinerary.

All Nippon allows up to eight stops; some cost extra, some don't. Sydney, for instance, can be had for 40,000 more miles because it requires veering far to the south.



## Reservation Details

Reservation Number **4A4ZHW**      Reservation / purchase status **Ticketed**

Required mileage **105,000 Miles**      Taxes/Fees/Charges **USD 579.31**  
Adult x1

Flight Itinerary / Payment / Benefits Type		Passenger Passport/Passenger Information		Service Seat/In-Flight Meal/Assistance		
Itinerary	Departure/Arrival	Flight	Seat	Class	Status	Service
Feb 27 Monday 7h25min	15:55 New York(JFK) 05:29 + Friday Frankfurt	LH401 G 74K Operated by Lufthansa German Airlines	---	Business	OK	
Mar 8 Wednesday 11h25min	11:30 Frankfurt 06:55 + Friday Tokyo(Narita)	NH704 ANA 77W	---	Business	OK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lounge</li> <li>11 Meal</li> <li>Move</li> <li>#2 Duty Free</li> </ul>
Mar 20 Monday 2h40min	12:30 Tokyo(Narita) 15:10 Seoul(Incheon)	OZ101 G 77L Operated by Asiana Airlines	---	Business	OK	
Mar 22 Wednesday 11h55min	10:05 Seoul(Incheon) 11:00 New York(JFK)	OZ222 G 388 Operated by Asiana Airlines	---	Business	OK	

## Sample Savings With The Ultimate Business Class Mileage Award

Miles Flown	Miles Cost	Cost If Buying Points from Amex	Normal RTW Fare	SAVINGS
Up to 18,000	105,000	\$2,625 (plus \$500+ award taxes)	\$10,539	\$7,414 / 70%
18,001 to 20,000	115,000	\$2,875 (plus \$500+ award taxes)		\$7,164 / 68%
22,001 to 25,000	145,000	\$3,625 (plus \$500+ award taxes)		\$6,414 / 61%

### No Miles? No problem.

You know the routine by now: [Just buy the miles](#). In fact, I needed to do that to make the booking above. Amex sells them for just 2.5¢ each—a five-minute phone call to Membership Rewards è voila!

**You can buy 105,000 points for just \$2,625** and transfer them to All Nippon for RTW itineraries of fewer than 18,000 flight miles!

That's \$7,414 (70%) LESS than the lowest published Business Class fare with United. (More on RTW Business Class fares [here](#).)

### What Else to Know

- You must book by phone (1-800-235-9262). I recommend using [Aeroplan.com](#) and [United.com](#) to get a sense of availability of the long-haul flights before calling, because ANA's website is less efficient. Short-haul flights are generally easy to find space.
- Transfers from Amex to ANA take two to four days, so there's a chance your seat could disappear; here's how I think about this:
  - I look for routes and dates with **cluster availability**,

meaning if I miss one day, there's a good chance the seat is available on the day before or after.

- With ANA, the downside is minimal, even if the seat falls through, as ANA miles are very often worth much more than miles on most other carriers, as they can be used for everyday round-trips at much better rates than United miles, for example. Or bank the miles and you'll be ready to strike instantly the next time you book the RTW steal.
- Together with the pricing chart, use the [Circle Mapper](#) tool to help quickly calculate the distance and cost of your various itinerary ideas.
- Want to go nuts and use this fare to fly A380s? Go [here](#) or [here](#) for ideas. (Hint: ANA partners that operate the plane include Asiana, Lufthansa, Singapore, and Thai.)
- The rest of the relevant fine print can be found [here](#).
- For me, I find traveling East to West causes less jet lag.

### FCF Best Mileage Award

So, What's Your Nominee for Best Mileage Award?

Start giving it some thought because we'll be announcing **a new contest soon**.

### What About Availability?

Asiana generally has very good availability from Los Angeles and New York to Seoul, as does All Nippon to Tokyo.

The best airlines to/from Europe, off the top of my head, are Austrian Airlines, Lufthansa, and Turkish.

So, although there's no shortage of flights within the Star Alliance to Asia or Europe, availability is always a concern.

That's why this month, FCF's Daily Alerts will focus on "availability trends" that can help you piece together world-class itineraries with ANA, fast. Keep an eye out for them.

## High & Inside

# When, Truly, is the Best Time to Book Your Next European Vacation?

Ever read an article about the best time to book a flight? Travel “gurus” often mention *Thursday*. “*Midnight*” is also popular. Or you’ll often see “*right now*,” making sure to pique your interest before then going on to give advice such as *Close to departure, prices are more likely to go up (while others say down) ... and ... You want to start looking for deals about six months before travel ... and ... In general the cheapest tickets are available two to three months before travel ... and ... But for peak holiday travel, the cheapest tickets are available earlier than that ... and ... You don’t want to buy 11 months or a year in advance.*

Perhaps it’s the Ides of March or when the sun’s shadow is at 37 degrees at Stonehenge. Yes, it can be rather arbitrary. But I think of the best time to book a flight differently.

### The FCF Mindset

First of all you have to remember that many of these articles are based on economy travel—which is very different from premium travel—and they probably cover every or many regions of the world. So Europe is lumped into the same box as Asia and the Pacific. **But different regions have different fare restrictions and airlines price regions differently.**

### First Best Time to Book: When Fares Are Ridiculously Low

One thing *is* true across the board for all regions and classes: **Lucky Fare Deals, or as we call them at FCF, “Flash EasyUp Fares.”** These come and go within hours or days, can be restricted to certain departure and destination cities, certain airlines, may only be valid for **travel during a certain season**, and can vary how far in advance fares have to be booked.

Recent *Lucky Fare* deals FCF spotted for Business Class included: **Italy for \$1,757**, to **Nairobi for \$2,146**, to **Hawaii for \$897**, to **Mumbai for \$2,382**, to **Tokyo for \$1,997**, to **Frankfurt for \$1,996**, to **Seoul for \$1,997**, and to **Manchester for \$1,996**.

FCF’s team watches for these fares like a scientist looks into a microscope. But you’ve got to be constantly looking into the microscope, day in, day out.

### In Brief

**Air Canada:** It will launch seasonal service between Montreal and Tel Aviv starting June 22, flying a three-cabin A330-300 with lie-flat Business Class seats. Fares start at CAD\$3,577 / USD\$2,686. More details [here](#).

Air Canada will also start seasonal service from Toronto (June 21 through Oct. 8) and Montreal (June 23 through Oct. 9) to Reykjavik, Iceland. Both flights will use an A319 (**Air Canada Rouge aircraft**), which only has Premium Economy and economy cabins. PE fares start at CAD\$2,092 / USD\$1,598. More details [here](#).



Air Canada Lie-Flat Business Class



Air Canada Premium Economy



## Next Best Time(s) to Book:

What do you do when you *don't* have a Lucky Fare Deal to Europe? Here are six pieces of advice to keep in mind. Also remember, this is a general guideline; if you wait too long, flights can fill up and the low-fare buckets disappear, so all fares cited are based on inventory availability.

### Know About the Five-Month Trend

Most often—about 90% of the time—the lowest **Business Class fares to Europe require a 150-day advance purchase** to get the best deal. If you haven't followed FCF's reporting long and are hearing this for the first time, don't feel bad because this trend is only about eighteen months old.

### Know You Can Buy 100 Days for \$500

Miss the 150-day advance fare, and you can often end up paying about \$1,000+ more. However, some destinations/routes in Europe sometimes offer 50-day advance purchase fares for only \$500 more than the lowest fare. So check these cities when you are still more than 50 days from departure. For example, Dallas-Frankfurt on American goes for \$3,618 with a 150-day advance purchase mid-week, miss it, and the fare increases by \$500 to \$4,118.

### Know About Pressure-Relieving, 28-Day Advance-Purchase Destinations

These routes often offer their lowest fares with only a 28-day advance purchase requirement. For example: New York-Madrid on SkyTeam and oneworld starts at \$2,500 (New York-Paris can be as much as \$7,118), Los Angeles-Copenhagen at \$3,400, and Chicago-Madrid at \$3,300. Most U.S. carriers have at least one European destination with a 28-day purchase fare. That can be the difference between paying \$2,500 and \$8,000.

### Know About the "I Want to Leave Today" Route(s)

On SkyTeam airlines Air France, Alitalia, Delta, and KLM, the lowest Business Class fare on the New York-Frankfurt route starts at \$2,494 and does not require an advance purchase.

### Know About the Lesser-Known Airlines

Scandinavian Airlines, a Star Alliance (United) partner, offers new **lie-flat Business Class seats**, flies from Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco and Washington, DC to **about 100 cities in Europe**,

offering connections in its hub cities, Copenhagen and Stockholm, but requires only a 28-day advance purchase for its lowest Business Class fares on most routes. Other airlines that offer travelers such freedom are airberlin (16-day advance purchase on many fares) and LOT Polish (3- to 28-day advance purchase on many fares).

## Know How to Decode Advance Purchase Requirements

Generally speaking, my favorite search tool is **Google Flights**. Use it early in your planning process to get a general lay of the When-to-Book Land. Just input your route and class of service, filter by stops and preferred airline/alliance, then click on the departure date, and a fare calendar comes up. It's very user-friendly.

You can survey months of fares before and ahead of your planned departure date. This will give you an idea of how far in advance—or when—the lowest fares are available.

Of course, not everybody is so well organized, or wants to be. At FCF, we often talk of the benefits of being a bags-packed traveler to take advantage of short-term travel opportunities. Here it's more about long-term thinking. Either way, FCF just wants to start you off with eyes wide open.

### In Brief

**South African Airways:** Has launched its **Airbus 330-300** on Washington, DC-Johannesburg (operates three-times weekly; Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday), with a stop in Dakar or Accra. The upgraded flat-bed Business Class seats are configured 1x2x1. More [here](#).



South African Airways Business Class

**Transcon Update**

# The JetBlue Blues Plus the Delta Workaround

The blue carrier is no longer driving down fares on the Transcon—but Delta has a little-known work-around to book for much less on short notice trips.

JetBlue changed the Transcon market when it launched Mint, on its New York-Los Angeles/San Francisco service, in 2014. It undercut the majors (American, Delta, and United) by up to 54% in Business Class and it offered comparable, if not better, lie-flat seats. It was an Indie and FCF gives it a Gold Star for its performance.

Now the majors have lie-flat seats, too, and now JetBlue is acting like them—by raising fares. So the three major carriers have a new wingman.

Still a bit pesky, but no longer a plague.

Now JetBlue's lowest fares come with a 30-day advance purchase requirement (long the norm at the big three), and Business Class costs \$1,300 to \$1,700 (I class, which is very hard to find), depending on the advance purchase requirement and availability, an increase of \$100 to \$400. No-advance D class fares, which offer more availability, start at \$2,200 and J class at \$3,200.

FCF suspects that this is because of route expansion.

JetBlue now flies Boston to Los Angeles/San Francisco and has plans for San Diego and Seattle to Boston and New York, and New York to Las Vegas, and LAX/SFO to Ft. Lauderdale.

It looks like the demand is there. So why not raise the price?

## What's Changed Since FCF's Report a Year Ago

**American's Fare Evolution:** Gone are low seven-day advance-purchase Business Class fares from SFO and low First Class fares.

**United's Fare Evolution:** Seven-day advance purchase fares are also gone.

Fare increases on the major three—American, Delta, and United—are from \$100 to \$400, and now fares range from \$1,300 to \$3,200.

## The FCF Work-Around: Delta Vacations

**This Short-Notice Package Approach Can Save 52%**

First off, it comes with a hotel in New York or Los Angeles, which you need anyway.

**LAX-JFK Sample:** We found a [Delta Vacations](#) offer of \$1,694 per person (based on two travelers) LA-NY in Business Class, a three-night package that includes the Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel and no Saturday-night stay requirement. If you book the flights and hotel separately, the price would be \$6,990—\$831 for the hotel and \$6,159 for the two tickets—making this strategy worth **\$3,602 (52%) off**. Better than a **two-for-one**.

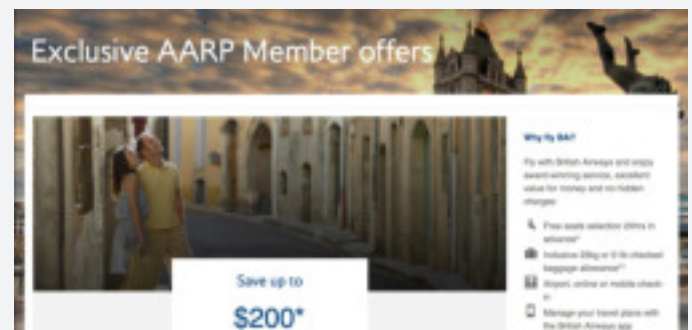
**Program Update**

## British Airways Cuts AARP Discount

Until recently, being a member of [AARP](#) got you a \$400 reduction on BA First and Business Class fares. Now it's been reduced to \$200.

Okay, but it's still worth going for and you don't even have to be 50—**anyone of any age can join AARP**. Annual dues: \$16. In the same way, I am an "Associate Member" of the American Bar Association (although not a lawyer), but I can still take advantage of certain travel discounts available to ABA members.

The discount also applies to EasyUp fares—[New York–Budapest](#), for example, drops to \$2,513 from \$2,713 with the AARP discount—and for BA code-share flights, including American and Iberia, to Europe.



An average hotel was chosen on purpose to spotlight the airfare; deals are readily available at many high-end hotels. Below: Delta Vacations package cost screenshot.

<b>SHERATON NEW YORK TIMES SQUARE HOTEL</b> Midtown West # of Nights: 3      # of Rooms: 1				CHECK IN MON, 20 FEB 2017	CHECK OUT THU, 23 FEB 2017	Total Due <b>\$3,387<sup>33</sup></b> USD
2 Travelers (2 Adults) PROMO CODE JcCERT (optional)						
HOTEL      FLIGHT						
MON 20 FEB	<b>LAX → JFK</b> 06:05 AM    02:43 PM ▶ Details	DL 763 5h 38m   NONSTOP View Seats	Business (Z)	✈️ 📶 📺 🍴 🪑 + More This ticket is changeable up to departure/refundable up to 10 days prior to departure. Fees may apply. Complete Delta Air Lines Baggage Information		
THU 23 FEB	<b>JFK → LAX</b> 08:33 AM    11:55 AM ▶ Details	DL 0472 6h 22m   NONSTOP View Seats	First (Z)	✈️ 📶 📺 🍴 🪑 + More This ticket is changeable up to departure/refundable up to 10 days prior to departure. Fees may apply. Complete Delta Air Lines Baggage Information		
						Hotel + Flight <b>\$3,387<sup>33</sup></b>

Below: Air only screenshot with Delta.

MON 20 FEB	<b>LAX → JFK</b> 06:05 AM    2:43 PM ▶ Details	DL 763 5h 38m   NONSTOP View Seats	Delta One™ (D)	✈️ 📶 📺 🍴 🪑 + More Changeable / Nonrefundable Complete Delta Air Lines Baggage Information		Price per Passenger <b>\$2,838<sup>13</sup></b>
THU 23 FEB	<b>JFK → LAX</b> 08:33 AM    11:55 AM ▶ Details	DL 472 6h 22m   NONSTOP View Seats	Delta One™ (Z)	✈️ 📶 📺 🍴 🪑 + More Changeable / Nonrefundable Complete Delta Air Lines Baggage Information		Taxes, Fees and Charges <b>\$241<sup>27</sup></b>
						Total per Passenger <b>\$3,079<sup>40</sup></b>
						Total (2 passengers) <b>\$6,158<sup>80</sup></b> USD

**JFK-LAX Sample:** Using the same dates as above, [Delta Vacations](#) charges \$1,881 per person in Business Class, based on two travelers for a three-night package at the Westin Bonaventure (no Saturday-night stay requirement). Book the flight and hotel separately and the tab is \$7,156—\$997 for the hotel and \$6,159 for the tickets—making this strategy worth **\$3,394 (47%) off**. That’s almost a *two-for-one on the airline ticket alone*.

**Share...** your successful upgrade experience with us and your fellow travelers.

If we publish your tip, we’ll extend your subscription accordingly—our way of saying “Thanks!”

Write today: [Mr.Upgrade@FirstClassFlyer.com](mailto:Mr.Upgrade@FirstClassFlyer.com)

## Elite & Non-Elite Upgrades

# Cathay Pacific Business Class Upgrades to Asia Save Up to \$4,123, 54%

- Low cost mileage upgrades—starting at 30,000 round-trip—and no co-pay
- Even if you have few or zero miles, it's possible to get an upgrade
- Great availability from eight cities
- Earn “elite credit,” if that’s your thing

Crazy-low Business Class fare sales occur to Asia less frequently than to most other places, and advance-purchase fares usually start at \$4,000 to \$7,000+, even on very competitive routes such as Tokyo and Seoul. That’s why a *mileage upgrade* is often the way to go when flying to Asia.

Cathay Pacific is a prime example. The lowest Business Class fare to Hong Kong is currently \$7,640 from New York and \$5,418 from Los Angeles.

## Six Reasons Why I like Cathay Pacific Upgrades

### Reason #1: Costs About Half the Miles

The airline offers mileage upgrades at 30,000 (LAX) to 45,000 (NYC) round-trip. Other carriers can charge nearly double that.

It costs even fewer miles if you figure in the miles earned (16,000 to 18,000) on the trip. Your net cost to upgrade can drop to as low as 14,000 miles.

## Upgrade Survey: Using Miles on Cathay Pacific to Hong Kong

U.S. Departure City	Business Class Fare	Upgradable (Premium Economy) Fare*	Miles Needed for Upgrade Round-Trip	Cost to Purchase Transferable Points from Amex	Savings When Using Asia Miles (If You Buy Amex Points)
Boston	\$7,640	\$2,392	45,000	\$1,125	\$4,123 / 54%
Chicago	\$6,263	\$2,392	45,000	\$1,125	\$2,746 / 44%
Los Angeles	\$5,418	\$2,258	30,000	\$750	\$2,410 / 45%
New York	\$7,640	\$2,392	45,000	\$1,125	\$4,123 / 54%
San Francisco	\$5,120	\$2,238	30,000	\$750	\$2,132 / 42%

\*Sample Premium Economy fares do not require an advance purchase or minimum stay; maximum stay is 12 months; fare valid Monday through Thursday now through May 23 and Aug. 15 through Dec. 9.



**Reason #2: \$0 Co-Pay**

In addition to paying in miles, American and United charge an \$1,100 co-pay. Cathay Pacific doesn't.

**Reason #3: Great Availability**

See chart below for mileage upgrade space with Cathay Pacific to see what I mean:

**Reason #4: Great for Business Travelers**

When your company or client is covering the cost, upgradeable Premium Economy fares are reasonable—generally around \$2,300 from most U.S. gateways.

**Reason #5: Great for Elite-Status Seekers**

Elites shouldn't think about free mileage awards because they don't earn elite credit. The solution: Go for an upgrade, and if you're in American's AAdvantage program, booking Cathay's "R" fare (the upgradeable Premium Economy code) nets you 100% base award miles, 1.5 Elite Qualifying Points per mile, and 20% Elite Qualifying Dollars.

**Reason #6: Asia Miles Are Easy to Get**

No Cathay Pacific Miles? No Problem.

Transfer **Starpoints** to Asia Miles (25,000 to 40,000 required), or **Amex or Citi Points** to Asia Miles (30,000 to 45,000 required).



**Sweet Redeem Survey: Cathay Pacific Upgrade to Business Class**

Departure City	Availability to Hong Kong			Availability from Hong Kong		
	Handful	Hopeful	Hooray	Handful	Hopeful	Hooray
Boston	March, April, June	July	July, Aug. to Jan.	March, May, June, July	July	Aug. to Jan.
Chicago	March, Aug., Nov.	Sept., Dec.	Nov., Dec., Jan.	March, Aug.	Nov., Dec.	Sept., Dec., Jan.
Los Angeles	Aug., Oct., Dec.	Sept., Jan.	March, Nov., Dec., Jan.	March, Aug., Dec.	Nov., Jan.	March, Sept. to Jan.
New York (Newark)	March	Aug.	Sept. to Jan.		Aug.	Sept. to Jan.
New York (JFK)	March, July	Aug., Sept., Oct.	Aug., Sept., Nov. to Jan.	March, July	Sept.	Aug. to Oct., Nov. to Jan.
San Francisco	Aug. to Oct.	Nov., Dec., Jan.	Jan.		Aug.	Sept. to Dec., Jan.
Toronto		Oct., Nov.	March, Sept., Oct., Dec., Jan.	March	Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.	Sept., Oct., Dec., Jan.
Vancouver	Oct.	Sept., Dec.	Oct., Nov., Jan.	Oct., Dec.	Sept.	Oct., Nov., Jan.

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

**Handful:** Our most recent research shows that award space is available 4 to 8 days during the months indicated.

**Hopeful:** Our most recent research shows that award space is available 9 to 12 days during the months indicated.

**Hooray:** Our most recent research shows that award space is available for 13 days or more during the months indicated.

## Seat Beat

# Getting United's Best International Seats on 85 Domestic Routes

Where to find free “In-Class Seat Upgrades” through little-known aircraft-deployment anomalies.



Seat 2A



Seat 2A

**You call that a seat?** This month, in our third FCF installment about getting an international seat on a domestic route, we look at **United Airlines**. In the last two months we've looked at [American](#) and [Delta](#).

Again, we compare Seat 2A on two different flights. They are both from Washington, DC, to/from San Francisco in Business Class: Seat 2A on Flight UA525 and Seat 2A on Flight UA424.

It's the same airline.

It's the same route.

It's the same seat address: 2A.

But from there on they *go their own way*.

Flight UA424 uses an international aircraft—a B757-200—with *international* Business Class seats.

Flight UA525 uses a domestic aircraft—a B737-900—with *domestic* First Class seats.

On international flights, Business Class is usually *Business*

*Class*. On domestic flights, however, First Class (despite the name) is a big comedown in comfort and overall experience on United (its transcon being the exception).

United has completed its international lie-flat Business Class seat rollout and is in the process of [introducing new Business Class seats](#). It's an opportunity to get a double upgrade on domestic routes, meaning not only an international premium seat, but a lie-flat seat at no additional cost.

If you know the 85 different domestic flights on which United uses aircraft with international Business Class seats, you'll have a simple way to get an “in-class seat upgrade.” How can you possibly know those 85 flights? Sit down, buckle up, and read on.

## It Starts with the Type of Aircraft

**United's B777-200s** and **B767-300s**: On one route, Chicago-Newark, both aircraft offer the “**United First**” suite, which has a 22-inch-wide seat that converts to a 78-inch-

long flat-bed. Seats on the B777-200s are configured 1x2x1, while those on the B767s are 1x1x1. Otherwise the seats are identical: 18.8-inches wide converting to a 76-inch-long flat-bed, and a 15.4-inch touchscreen monitor.

**United's B767-300s and B767-400s:** (Business Class only): both have lie-flat Business Class seats (75-inches long, 20.6-inches wide, and a 15.4-inch touchscreen monitor) in a 2x1x2 layout.

**United's B787-8:** These have lie-flat Business Class seats (78-inches long, 20.6-inches wide, and a 15.4-inch touchscreen monitor) in a 2x2x2 layout.

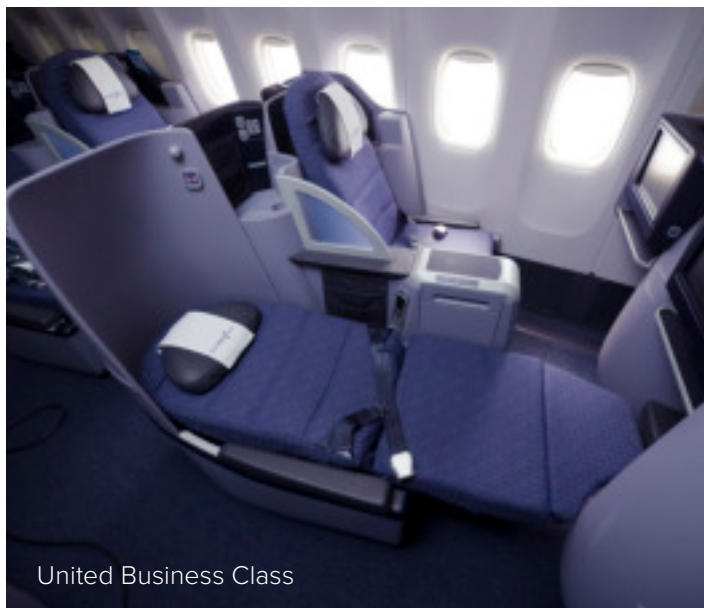
**United's B757-200:** These have lie-flat Business Class seats (76-inches long, 20.6-inches wide, and a 15.4-inch touchscreen monitor) in a 2x2 layout.

### When to Pay Cash for an International Seat on a Domestic Route

First Class fares for flights within the continental U.S. have taken a nose-dive over the past few years, which is why we think that mileage upgrades and free mileage awards are very often not the better deal on many routes.

A good example is Washington, DC-Chicago, a route on which United flies the B737-900 *and* the internationally configured B757-200.

If you book United flight UA221 (a B757-200) with a new international lie-flat Business Class seat, the lowest domestic First Class fare is \$460 round-trip, the same as United charges for the B737 flight! That makes an award ticket or upgrade pointless, given the return on miles of less than one cent.



United Business Class

### When to Maybe Consider Paying with Miles for an International Seat on a Domestic Route

**The Return-on-Miles Math:** On the Washington, DC-San Francisco route, United uses a B757-200. This route offers an okay return on miles because fares aren't cheap—a Business Class ticket starts at \$1,014. United charges 50,000 miles for a Business Class ticket, which equals about 2¢ per mile (\$1,014 divided by 50,000). An even better alternative: Use 35,000 Lufthansa miles or 40,000 Singapore miles.

**Mileage Upgrade—not worth it:** The math for an upgrade on the Washington, DC-San Francisco route: Subtract the published Business Class ticket cost (\$1,014) from the upgradeable economy ticket (\$566 including co-pay), and then divide the savings by the cost of miles (40,000): \$1,014 minus \$566 is \$448, divided by 40,000, yields a return of 1¢ per mile.

**Getting Miles:** [United is a point transfer partner](#) of Chase Ultimate Rewards. Or, [buy the miles directly from the airline](#) when they're on sale, about every other month or so.

### Good Connections Count

Keep the flight numbers and routes mentioned in the chart in mind when connecting to get a better seat. When flying El Paso-Newark, for example, connect in Houston to catch UA557 so that you get the B767-300; when flying Houston-Paris, go via Washington, DC, to catch UA1011 so that you get the B767-400.

### FIRST CLASS FLYER GROUND RULES

Everybody knows how frequently airfares change (some estimates claim that there are up to 500,000 fare changes daily). Because that's a few too many for First Class Flyer to keep up with, FCF cannot guarantee that all fares discussed will be available when you go to make a booking. Also, for the sake of quick and easy "executive summary" format, all fare rules and restrictions can't possibly be included. Fares quoted usually include the average taxes and fees for the routes in the chart and are round trip.

### Why Pay Top Dollar for an Inferior Seat?

FCF's insider **cheat sheet below shows the routes and the flight numbers** on which United currently uses an internationally configured aircraft, so you can identify the opportunities when selecting flights through your travel agent or online.

#### Where to find United's International First and Business Class Seat on Domestic Routes – *continued on P13 & P14*

Route	Departure Flight	Days of Operation	Return Flight	Days of Operation	Aircraft
Chicago - Newark	UA385	Mon. to Sun.	UA1062	Mon. to Sun.	B767-300
	UA366	Sun. to Fri.	UA77	Mon. to Sun.	B777
	UA436	Sun., Wed.	UA792	Sun.	B752
	UA1959	Wed.	UA2015	Sun.	
	UA516	Sat.	N/A		B777
	UA446	Sat.	UA308	Sun., Mon., Tues.	B752
	N/A		UA2001	Wed.	
Denver - Houston	UA2049	Mon. to Sun.	UA1126	Mon. to Sun.	B788
Houston - Newark	UA936	Mon. to Sun.	UA508	Mon. to Sun.	B767-400
	UA557	Mon. to Sun.	UA385	Mon. to Sun.	B767-300
	UA1979	Sat.	UA663	Sun.	B752
	UA67	Sat.	UA1161	Sat.	
	UA1867	Sat.	UA1534	Sat.	
	N/A		UA687	Sat.	
Houston - San Francisco	UA404	Mon. to Sun.	UA721	Mon. to Sun.	B788



## Where to find United's International First and Business Class Seat on Domestic Routes – *continued on P14*

Route	Departure Flight	Days of Operation	Return Flight	Days of Operation	Aircraft	
Houston - San Francisco	UA937	Sat.	N/A		B788	
Houston - Washington, DC	UA1057	Sun.	UA762	Mon. to Sun.	B767-400	
	UA1011	Mon. to Sat.	N/A			
Los Angeles - Houston	UA1963	Sun.	N/A		B752	
Washington, DC - Los Angeles	UA325	Mon. to Sun.	UA706	Sun. (12th)		
	N/A		UA411	Mon. to Fri. (also on Sun. 19th)		
Washington, DC - San Francisco	UA424	Mon. to Sat.	UA727	Mon. to Sun.		
Newark - Denver	UA1821	Mon. to Sun.	UA1771	Sun. to Sat.		
	N/A		UA749	Mon. to Sun.		
Washington, DC - Chicago	UA221	Mon. to Sun.	UA225	Mon. to Sun.		
Denver - San Francisco	UA268	Sun.	N/A			
Washington, DC - Honolulu	UA145	Thurs., Fri., Sat., Sun.	UA144	Thurs., Fri., Sat., Sun.		B767-400
Newark - Honolulu	UA15	Mon. to Sun.	UA14	Mon. to Sun.		B767-300
Newark - San Francisco	UA912	Mon. to Sun.	UA779	Mon. to Fri., Sun.	B752	
	UA800	Mon. to Fri., Sun.	UA535	Mon. to Sun.		
	UA1978	Mon. to Sun.	UA443	Mon. to Sat.		
	UA1991	Mon. to Sun.	UA1071	Mon. to Sun.		

## Where to find United's International First and Business Class Seat on Domestic Routes

Route	Departure Flight	Days of Operation	Return Flight	Days of Operation	Aircraft
Newark - San Francisco	UA1885	Mon. to Fri., Sun.	UA441	Sun., Mon., Tues., Fri.	B752
	UA1878	Mon. to Fri.	UA414	Mon. to Fri., Sun.	
	UA418	Mon. to Sun.	UA233	Mon. to Fri., Sun.	
	UA637	Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri., Sat.	UA1799	Mon. to Fri., Sun.	
	UA936	Mon. to Sun.	UA1796	Mon. to Sun.	
	UA1920	Mon. to Fri., Sun.	UA726	Mon. to Sun.	
	UA212	Tues. to Sat.	UA1884	Mon. to Sun.	
	UA1483	Sat., Sun.	UA213	Mon., Tues., Fri., Sat.	
	UA792	Sat.	UA443	Tues., Fri., Sat.	
	N/A		UA577	Mon. to Sat., Sun.	
N/A		UA212	Mon. to Sat.		
Newark - Orlando	UA1905	Mon. to Sun.	UA1601	Mon. to Sun.	B752
	UA1788	Wed., Thurs., Fri., Sat.	UA686	Wed., Thurs., Sat.	
	UA1784	Sat.	UA1716	Wed.	
	UA1527	Sat.	UA1727	Sat.	
	N/A		UA1530	Sat.	
	N/A		UA1764	Sat.	

\*Always recheck aircraft type at the time of booking as aircraft can change by the week. FCF research is based on flights for the week of March 12, for example, as it's impossible to check every route over the next 12 months.

**The Suite Spot**

# How Anyone Can Save Up to 82% in Cash or 43% in Miles on British Airways' First Class Suite + "Where the Seats Are Cheat Sheet"

**Normal Lowest Airfare:** \$5,596 round-trip to London from Seattle with a 150-day advance purchase requirement; up to \$10,144 if you miss that deadline.

**Usual Lowest Award Cost:** 136,000 miles to/from Boston, Chicago, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, Toronto, and Washington, DC off-peak (peak is 160,000); 170,000 miles to/from Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco,

San Jose, Seattle, and Vancouver off-peak (peak is 200,000).

Not only does BA have great First Class award availability for solo passengers on many routes, but FCF research shows eight routes that offer award space for four passengers, which is very unusual.

Most airlines, given the small size of the First Class cabin, usually only offer award space for one passenger.

**Sweet Redeem Survey: British Airways First Class – continued on P16**

Departure Cities	Availability to London			Availability from London		
	Handful	Hopeful	Hooray	Handful	Hopeful	Hooray
Atlanta	Aug., Oct.	March, April to June, Sept., Nov., Dec., Jan.	March, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec., Jan.	March, April, July, Sept., Oct., Dec.	July, Oct., Nov., Dec.	May to July, Aug., Sept., Nov., Jan.
Boston	June, Oct.	March, April, May, Aug., Sept.	March, April, May, June, July, Aug., Jan.	July, Oct.	March, June, Sept.	April, May, June, July, Aug., Nov., Dec., Jan.
Chicago	March	Jan.		March, April, Jan.		
Denver		Oct., Nov. to Jan.	Nov. to Jan.	Dec.	Dec.	Oct., Nov., Dec., Jan.
Houston	March, May, Sept., Oct.	April, June, Nov., Dec., Jan.	July, Aug., Dec., Jan.	March, July, Oct., Jan.	July, Sept.	April to June, Aug., Nov., Dec., Jan.
Las Vegas	Nov., Dec., Jan.		Dec.	Nov., Dec., Jan.	Dec.	
Miami			Jan.		Jan.	
New York (Newark)	April, June, July, Aug.	March, Jan.	July, Aug., Jan.	April, Jan.	Aug.	Aug., Jan.
New York (JFK)	April, June, July, Aug., Sept.	March, Jan.	July, Aug., Jan.	March to May, July	Jan.	June, Aug., Jan.

## Sweet Redeem Survey: British Airways First Class

Departure Cities	Availability to London			Availability from London		
	Handful	Hopeful	Hooray	Handful	Hopeful	Hooray
Philadelphia	Sept.	March, July, Aug.	Jan.	Aug.		Jan.
Phoenix	Nov., Jan.	Dec.	Jan.	Nov., Dec.	Jan.	
San Diego	Oct. to Dec.	Jan.	Jan.	Dec.		Jan.
San Jose	Dec.	Jan.				Jan.
Seattle	July, Dec.	Oct., Nov., Jan.	Nov., Jan.	Aug., Oct., Nov.	Dec., Jan.	Jan.
Toronto	May, July, Sept., Nov., Jan.	Oct.	March, April	April, Sept., Nov. to Jan.		Oct.
Vancouver	Dec.		Nov., Jan.	Dec., Jan.	Nov.	Nov., Jan.
Washington, DC	July, Sept.	Aug., Jan.	July, Aug.	July, Jan.		Aug.

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

Handful: Our most recent research shows that award space is available 4 to 8 days during the months indicated.

Hooray: Our most recent research shows that award space is available 9 to 12 days during the months indicated.

Hooray: Our most recent research shows that award space is available for 13 days or more during the months indicated.

### Even Better: BA Partner Award Opportunity

**Save up to 85,000 miles (43%)** by booking the Suite through Japan Airlines' loyalty program ([accessible to Starwood players](#)). Inventory through JAL is often similar to BA's own. Cost is 100,000 miles round-trip London to/from Boston, Chicago, Miami, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, Toronto, Vancouver, and Washington, DC; and 115,000 from Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, and Seattle.

### No British Airways Miles? No Problem.

**Transfer Starwood Points to BA:** 111,000 to 140,000 miles to/from Boston, Chicago, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, Toronto, and Washington, DC; 140,000 to 160,000 miles to/from Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Las Vegas,

Los Angeles, Miami, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle, and Vancouver.

**Transfer Amex Rewards or Chase Ultimate Rewards Points** to British Airways.

**Another Great Option: "Miles + Money"** reduces the miles required for an award ticket by upping the cash portion. But you must have 50% of the miles required for the flight in your BA account.

New York-London off-peak mileage cost in First Class is 136,000 plus \$1,256 in taxes, but via Miles + Money it comes down to 68,000 miles plus \$2,666. In effect, you are buying 68,000 BA miles for \$1,410 or 2.1¢, not a bad rate.

**Transfer Starwood Points to JAL:** 80,000 to 95,000 round-trip—up to 36% fewer miles than many airlines charge for Business Class.



## No Miles or Points in any Program? No Problem.

**Purchase Amex Rewards Points:** They cost 2.5¢ each (500,000 annual purchase limit). Using this strategy, a First Class award costs \$3,400 to \$5,000 round-trip (plus award taxes at about \$1,150+) for a ticket that can cost \$20,000+.

**The Suite:** 14 semi-enclosed cabins (no privacy doors), configured 1x2x1. Each has a 78-inch-long flatbed with a quilted mattress and a 15-inch-wide monitor.

[Experience the British Airways suite in detail.](#)



British Airways First Class Suite

## Routes with the First Class Suite

**To/From London:** Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New York (JFK), Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle, Toronto, Vancouver, and Washington, DC.

**Your North American Departure Not Listed?** You can easily connect from almost anywhere in the U.S and Canada on the same or a separate ticket, depending on the mileage program used to get the award.

**Not Flying To/From London?** British Airways serves cities all over Africa, Asia, Europe, and the South Pacific, any of which can be added for more miles; cost depends on the region. [British Airways' destinations here.](#)

## How to Get 82% Off British Airways' Suite When You Don't Have Miles or Points

That's how much you could save through its Alaska Airlines partnership if you take advantage of [Alaska's current mileage-purchase bonus—up to 40%](#). (The carrier offers the bonus every two to three months.) That brings the cost of Seattle-London (and from all other U.S. gateways) down to \$4,145, the cost to buy 140,000 Alaska miles. The walk-up fare can be as much as \$23,417 from Seattle. First Class award availability using Alaska miles is often similar to BA's.

### In Brief

**Lufthansa:** Rolls out its new [A350-900](#) on the Munich-Boston route starting March 14 (Business Class, Premium Economy, and economy). On the departure side, mileage availability looks good for April, July, August, and November through February 2018, and on the return side, April through February 2018.

Business Class costs 105,000 miles round-trip. Asiana is a better deal at 80,000 miles round-trip. Both airlines are Starwood partners. Air Canada is the best Amex points partner, at 110,000 miles.



Lufthansa Business Class

## Airline Spotlight

# New Lie-Flat Seats Plus Hard-to-Beat Business Class Fares to the South Pacific

Why Hawaiian Airlines is a new smart choice to New Zealand.

Time to refine your mental world map. Hawaii and New Zealand just got a lot closer, thanks to very important changes at Hawaiian Airlines on its New Zealand route.

In short: New lie-flat Business Class seats have arrived on its fleet of A330-200s, along with special fares to New Zealand.

**Adventure travelers take note:** Fares don't even require an advance-purchase! In other words, you can wake up one morning and buy a walk-up fare. Wake up and walk up at the right time, and you can save 55% (\$4,865) off normal Business Class fares offered by the other major airlines flying to New Zealand.

## Hawaiian Airlines New Business Class Seat

It's on A330-200s from Honolulu to Auckland, as well as to Tokyo, Sydney, and Brisbane. And on Feb. 18, it made its debut on the New York-Honolulu route. (See alert [here](#) for more details.)

The 18 **Business Class** seats are configured 2x2x2, convert to a 76-inch-long flat-bed, are 20.5 inches wide, with a 13-inch monitor, two USB ports, and full AC power.

## Special Business Class Fares to New Zealand

### Hawaiian Airlines offers low Business Class fares

**year-round** (no-advance purchase and no-minimum stay is required). The fares allow a free stop each way in Honolulu—think of it as a free second destination. Hawaiian Airlines flies non-stop from 11 U.S. cities—including New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle to Honolulu (route map [here](#) and [here](#)), where you make the connection to New Zealand and Australia.

The airline's Los Angeles-Auckland Business Class fare is \$3,628, whereas American and Air New Zealand charge \$4,820 with a 50-day advance-purchase requirement. The fare zooms to \$7,611 (52%) if you miss that deadline.

**New York and other U.S. Gateways:** When it

comes to trip-planning, most of us are Point A to Point B thinkers. In other words, we typically only search for non-stop flights. It's understandable. Time is scarce, changing planes is tiring. But on New York-Auckland you have to stop somewhere, so why not Honolulu, especially if the stop is free? (A First Class ticket to Hawaii can easily cost \$2,000+.) Honolulu could also be a good place to stop for many as it is mid-way from New York: It's 11 hours NY-Honolulu and 9.5 Honolulu-Auckland.

**Hawaiian's New York-Auckland Business Class fare is \$3,960**, whereas American charges \$6,034 (50-day advance-purchase requirement) and \$8,825 if you miss the deadline. The connection is in LA and you have to ask yourself, isn't Honolulu more come-hither as a stopover? Especially if I can save \$4,865 (55%) and spend a few nights at a five-star hotel.

## Misc. to Know

**Seasons:** Lowest fares are now through July 18, Aug. 4 through Oct.3, and Oct. 19 through Dec. 18.

**Maximum stay:** 1 month

**Earn Miles:** [American](#), [Delta](#), or [Hawaiian's](#) own program.

**Hold-friendly Airlines:** Hawaiian will hold a fare from three to seven days to Auckland. Cost: \$6.99 to \$8.99.



Hawaiian Airlines Business Class