

# *Air Travel Companion*

A collage of business and travel-related icons including a globe, gears, and arrows.

**TRAVEL  
IN STYLE**

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# INTRODUCTION: TRAVEL IN STYLE

Air travel is an art in itself and savvy travelers know how to make the most out of their voyages. The first step is to evaluate your specific tastes and requirements. Some dream of luxurious first class trips while others find themselves far more comfortable in business class. Others know how to make the most of economy and coach seating.

No matter what, you are not going to enjoy your experience if you overspend. Exceeding your budget is not the best approach because you are more likely to feel a great deal of stress during your trip.

## **CREATING A BUDGET**

Your budget is of the utmost importance because you want to keep your spending within its limits. Once you have established how much you can spend, you can set your priorities in order to accommodate your budget. Using the information in this book can help you fulfill your desire to upgrade your flight while still staying within your means. This begins with considering the three classes of air travel.

### **FIRST CLASS**

First class seating is the most expensive but it is also the most luxurious. Your flight can be nearly as enjoyable as the rest of your vacation, and in some cases, it can be the highlight of your trip. The amenities offered to first class travelers are very appealing, making the experience one that many people dream of.

- Expedient service
- Quick boarding
- Extra room
- Ultra comfortable seating
- Entertainment
- Music
- Gourmet meals
- Beverages
- Chauffeur service to and from the airport
- Amenity kits
- Soft blankets
- Privacy
- Flat bed seating

Flat bed seating is the ultimate in air travel because the seat is generous in size and it can be reclined back parallel to the aircraft's floor. This is an ideal seat for people who are taking an overnight trip.

Some airlines go as far as to provide private cabins on some flights. These appealing amenities are certain to draw discriminating travelers who have enough money to splurge. However, many find wonderful accommodations on business class trips as well.

## **BUSINESS CLASS**

Traditionally, business class was slightly roomier and more comfortable than economy class. However, over the years business class has become more akin to first class for many frequent flyers. Some travelers enjoy the benefits of spending time in the airport lounge instead of waiting in the terminal. Other business benefits include:

- Separate check-in and boarding
- Entertainment
- Meals
- Beverages

Those who travel business class are right behind first class when it comes to priority service and amenities. Airlines are happy to make special accommodations for business travelers because the possibilities of having them travel with them for all of their trips.

## **ECONOMY CLASS**

Economy class, commonly known as coach is the "no frills" flying experience that can be a little uncomfortable at times. Travelers who want to pay as little as possible for their flights prefer this class. Some refer to economy class as "cattle class" for air and rail travel.

Amenities are scarce on this class of flight and are usually restricted to a complementary airline magazine and an airsickness bag. However, some airlines offer entertainment for longer trips. Many travelers are perfectly happy with the no frills approach as long as the savings are substantial.

Some airlines offer a premium economy class that features more amenities, better seats, and better service. Tickets for the premium economy seats are slightly higher than those in coach are, but they also earn more frequent flyer miles in many cases, so the investment can pay off in the end.

## **THE ART OF UPGRADING**

The reasons that a person would want to upgrade from economy to first class are obvious, but the prospects seem bleak. Research and ingenuity can be of great benefit to anyone who wants to upgrade to the next level. It may be easiest to move from coach to business class, but in some cases, you may be able to get an upgrade into first class for little or no money.

Upgrading is an art and you can hone your craft if you are a frequent flyer. The most important part of the process is to know the airline's policies. Some do not offer upgrades at all so your efforts will be in vain if you try to approach staff members about upgrading.

Get the secrets to making the most out of your travel including: finding the lowest prices on tickets, airport lounge information, and tips to help you get an upgrade. Part of the art is using your communication and people skills to move you to a better seat.

The art of upgrading is one of skill and luck. With enough persistence and research, you can develop a talent for upgrades. Everyone has a unique vision of his ideal trip. Evaluate your specific tastes in order to develop strategies for getting the amenities that work for you.

# 1

## PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

Preparing for your trip ideally begins quite early but you can still find great deals and potential upgrades when you make last minute plans as well. Your particular approach depends upon how often you travel. Frequent fliers often have excellent resources readily available to them. The trick is to make sure that you are privy to the necessary information that can save you a lot of money without sacrificing the quality of your travel experience.

### PLANNING

Planning begins with the destination and travelers often find great deals by researching the places they need or want to visit. Facets of planning for a trip include: personal affairs, your destination, mode of travel, packing, and accommodations. Each facet can be upgraded to its maximum potential to help you create a fantastic travel experience without breaking the bank.

### **PERSONAL AFFAIRS**

Getting your personal affairs in order is an important first step in the process. You are more likely to have a pleasant trip if you are not worrying about details that you may have forgotten at home.

- **Bills** need to be paid whether you are home or not. Make sure that you are current on your payments and that you have everything you need to pay bills while you are away, even if you plan to be back home before the bills' due date.
- **Mail** should be rerouted to your destination if you are going to be away for a considerable amount of time. Some travelers opt to get a post office box in the town they are visiting for extended trips. Others simply opt to have friends, relatives or neighbors collect mail for them on a daily basis.
- **Vehicles** should be properly stored, whether at the airport or at home.
- **Pets** that are not traveling with you can be sent to a boarding facility while you are away. A close friend or relative may be more than happy to care for your pets for a while as well.
- **Make two copies** of important information that you are taking with you. This includes visas, passports, identification cards, insurance cards, licenses and any other important paperwork you plan to bring.

Leave one extra copy with a trusted friend or in a safe place at home and take second set of copies with you.

- **Contact** people you know at the destination site if possible. They may be happy to show you around the area and they most likely have wonderful suggestions for fun and affordable activities.

## **ONLINE PREPARATIONS**

Preparing for a trip includes online preparations as well. Email is a valuable tool that allows you to access information nearly anywhere you travel. Free email accounts are available through Yahoo, Google, and Hotmail as well as other convenient web-based programs and sending yourself e-mails to use while you're away can be valuable while on your trip because you can access that Email account from anywhere.

Unless you are traveling with a laptop, you should email copies of important information and documents for quick access.

- Email yourself a list of bookmarked pages that you use frequently.
- Scan and email copies of your travel documents and identification.
- Include links to any places you plan to stay.
- Keep links to your ticket company, airline, and credit card sites readily available in an email.
- Make sure that your contact list and address books are up to date.
- Set up an auto-responder in the Email to let people know that you are away and that you will respond personally as soon as possible.

## **TRAVEL ORGANIZATION**

Organization can save you a lot of aggravation in the end. Taking a few moments to make sure that you have your personal affairs in order is just the beginning. Preparing for travel requires some forethought, especially if you are traveling out of the country.

### **1. Know your destination**

The more you know about the place you are visiting, the better. This includes local customs, popular attractions and points of interest.

### **2. Get health information**

This especially applies to necessary shots that you may have to get in order to enter some countries.

### **3. Make sure that your visa and passport are up to date and in order**

Improper and out-of-date information can cause serious delays and they can result in a cancellation. It is important to know what is

required for travel to your specific destination, since many places differ.

#### 4. **Order your plane tickets**

Some suggest that this should be done roughly two months in advance if possible.

Getting your affairs in order and preparing well for your trip can allow you to spend more time focusing on getting great travel deals and upgrades. You may find wonderful offers through commercials and other forms of advertising but make sure to do a little homework before making a commitment.

### **ADVERTISING ADVERSITIES**

Advertising campaigns can be a double-edged sword in the world of air travel. Many consumers find themselves drawn to aggressive advertisements that promise great deals but there are some drawbacks to taking an ad at face value. Consider some of the possible drawbacks of selecting a travel plan solely through advertisements.

- **Tricky language** can be deceiving. If the ad touts prices "as low as" a certain amount, chances are you are going to pay more than the advertised price.
- **Airline prices** are most likely dependent on the quality of the flight experience. It isn't probable that you will find an opportunity to upgrade your flight using standard advertised specials at face value.
- **Insider secrets** may not apply to many of the aggressive ad campaigns. You may find phrasing like "restrictions apply" in some of the advertisements.
- **Marketing campaigns are designed to make money.**

This is not to suggest that no advertised campaigns are going to save you money. It is important to do a little homework to ensure that you find the right plan for your needs. This includes last minute arrangements for travel as well.

### **LAST MINUTE TRAVEL TIPS**

The best way to get great prices on airline tickets is to plan well in advance. However, you can find money-saving last minute travel deals in little time at

all. Flexibility is a helpful trait that can help you get to your destination inexpensively.

## **FLEXIBILITY**

If you are flexible, you are likely to find inexpensive deals on travel but this leaves little room for upgrades. Last minute flights can be very costly unless you are willing to make some adjustments. This goes against the grain of luxury travel but in some cases, you can find reasonable deals for flights that are difficult to fill.

- Flight times
- Which airport to use
- Changing flights

Taking the redeye flight may not be appealing but it can save you considerable cash. If you are a night owl, this option is just perfect and if you don't mind sleeping while you travel, you may benefit from sleeping through the flight.

Sometimes you can find a better deal by driving a few extra miles to an airport that is farther away from home. There are some considerations to make if you select this approach. The cost of travel to the other airport may cancel out any savings you reap from selecting the cheaper flight.

Few things are as inconvenient as changing flights but the savings can be considerable. If you don't mind spending some downtime in an airport lounge, you may want to consider flights that require a transfer to another plane. Be careful that the delay isn't too long; some require waiting for hours for the next flight.

Remember that the airline would prefer to sell discounted tickets to passengers to having empty seats on the plane. This makes last minute travel plans a great way to snag a deal, similar to buying the last few items at a department store sale. The price may be impressive but the product isn't likely to be stellar.

## **MONEY-SAVING STRATEGIES**

Even though you may not have time to plan the last minute trip, you can benefit from having strategies for getting great deals in place. Once you are in the habit of finding cheap last minute flights, the process becomes second nature. Strategies include online deals, travel consolidator, and special programs.

Keep your favorite airline ticket websites bookmarked for quick access because these sites are your greatest resource for finding last minute travel deals. Airlines often find themselves needing to fill planes quickly before the flights leave. The Internet is the fastest way to get the message out to potential customers.

Airlines use a few methods to advertise last minute sales. Some simply post the latest deals on their websites while others go as far as to email deal messages to people that sign up for the alerts. The best time to look for these deals is in the middle of the week for flights leaving that weekend.

## **TRAVEL CONSOLIDATOR**

A travel consolidator is a type of wholesaler in the flight industry. Consolidators purchase airline tickets in bulk for deeply discounted prices. Airlines are more than happy to sell the cheap tickets because it ensures that flights are filled before departure. The consolidator makes a profit by selling the tickets separately to consumers.

Normally, it is more expensive to involve a middleman but in the case of airline travel, a consolidator can save you considerable money. The intermediary sells the tickets for a profit but the price is still significantly lower than the airline's advertised prices.

## **SPECIAL PROGRAMS**

Students can reap the benefits of organizations that specialize in travel deals for youths. Youth fares typically apply to individuals who are 18 to 22 years old, and they don't have to be in school to qualify for the specials. Some deals are for last minute flights for students who want to take a spontaneous trip with little notice.

Airlines readily recognize that many other people are looking for special savings on last minute airfare. Finding cheap flights can involve exploring vacation and travel packages that offer deep discounts for customers. All-inclusive packages are very popular options to consider.

Last minute all-inclusive travel packages work much like the travel consolidator. Companies buy packages in bulk that include airfare and hotel stays combined. When these programs do not sell in a timely manner, they are offered for considerably less money. In some cases, the package deal including hotel accommodations costs less than purchasing a single flight ticket alone.

## 2

# INCLUSIVE TRAVEL PACKAGES

Preparing for a trip is an ongoing process that continues as you become accustomed to traveling on a budget. The more you learn about the process, the better able you are to get stellar upgrades with little effort. Among the most valuable resources available is the inclusive travel package, but this approach isn't for everyone and it may not be suitable for every trip.

No matter what, it is possible to make the most out of your experience by maximizing the program to its fullest potential. This involves the ability to communicate. You don't have to plan months in advance and you don't have to snap up last minute deals in order to get the most out of your all inclusive travel package.

## **GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR PACKAGE**

The first step to getting the most out of any travel package is to become familiar with your options. The more you know about the latest trends in travel, the better able you are to spot and negotiate the best deals. Sometimes you can even score an upgrade through these programs. Consider the different types of inclusive travel packages to see which ones appeal to you.

### **ALL INCLUSIVE PACKAGES**

The all inclusive travel package is popular for good reason. Consumers have the benefit of paying for their airline ticket and their hotel stay for one deeply discounted price. The airline benefits from this approach because it is more likely to draw travelers with its specials and the hotels are guaranteed to have borders as well.

Keep in mind that the traditional all-inclusive vacation is going to be accompanied by rules and restrictions. It is important to make sure that you are comfortable with the arrangements before making any purchases. Try to find out as much about the hotel as possible. You may find that you prefer to spend the extra money to make sure that you get a great room with a view as well as other amenities.

Some programs offer little more than a flight and hotel accommodations, making it necessary for you to take plenty of money for meals and entertainment. However, you can find super-inclusive travel packages that offer everything you need for your stay in one comprehensive bundle.

## **SUPER INCLUSIVE PACKAGES**

The super inclusive travel package takes the concept of inclusive vacations to the next level. You can find inexpensive programs that offer everything from flights, hotel stays, meals and activities. This is a great way to have a carefree getaway without wasting any time trying to figure out what to do for entertainment.

The major drawback to this approach is that it does limit your activities. You may find that you would rather spend a little extra money to go scuba diving rather than paying for an afternoon visiting wineries. Make sure that the package is filled with things that you enjoy.

Super inclusive packages typically include:

- Airfare
- Hotel stay
- Meals
- Drinks
- Tips
- Activities
- Extra amenities

The extra amenities differ from one program to the next. The super inclusive option is great for people who want to take advantage of possible upgrades some programs may offer from time to time.

## **POSSIBLE UPGRADES**

Upgrades and all-inclusive travel packages do not always go hand-in-hand but resourceful travelers can find potential for an upgrade on flights. Simply asking for one is a straightforward approach that surprisingly few people use. Fewer people are traveling, making it an ideal time to make special requests. The worst that can happen is a simple "no".

Flexibility is important with all-inclusive travel as well. You may find that a booked flight has too many passengers. Volunteer to take the next flight if you are guaranteed first class seating. This is a great way to upgrade at no cost, as long as you don't mind waiting for the next available flight.

You can always opt to purchase an upgrade as well. The upgrade may be more affordable considering all of the money you save in the all-inclusive travel package. Cutting back on spending in one area allows for a little more spending in another.

Talk to your travel agent about possible fringe benefits, frills and upgrades that may not be advertised through the all-inclusive package. You may be surprised to find what a little inquisitiveness can yield.

# 3

## FINDING CHEAP TICKETS

Cheap airline tickets are not very difficult to find if you use the resources available to you. Careful planning helps a great deal but you can still find inexpensive flights by using some simple strategies. Part of the approach involves choosing a discount travel organization that offers incredible deals whether you are traveling for business or pleasure.

### **ORBITZ**

Orbitz is an excellent choice for travelers because it offers many different services and programs at discounted prices. The company is a leader in online travel across the globe. The organization helps consumers to research their destinations, plan their itinerary, and book their trips. Products include:

- Hotels
- Airfare
- Vacation packages
- Cars
- Railway travel
- Cruises
- Activities
- Extreme deals

The extreme deals are enticing because they offer amazing discounts for savvy travelers. Their vacation packages are quite appealing, offering relatively inexpensive options for couples, families, and lone travelers to enjoy.

### **ORBITZ VACATION PACKAGES**

The vacation packages offered by Orbitz allow travelers to book their hotel accommodation along with their flight. In addition to the combined savings, the company offers promotion codes for deeper discounts on vacation package plans.

The benefit of using this organization is that you can customize your package to suit your specific tastes. The cookie cutter package simply isn't for everyone. Using Orbitz, you have the means to select from a large number of

options including flights, hotels, and rental cars. The company also includes tickets to activities, attractions, tours, and shows as well.

## **PRICING CONSIDERATIONS**

Remember that the Orbitz website's prices are subject to change. The company provides sample pricing to allow visitors to get an idea of how much they can save using this approach. Prices do not include:

- Airline baggage charges
- Services charges
- Room service
- Extra person charges

Orbitz offers other great discounts and programs such as free meals and boarding for kids, free breakfast, resort credits, and dining gift cards. These little extras can take your trip to a completely new level.

## **EXPEDIA**

Expedia is a web-based company that offers everything consumers require to plan a trip. Researching tools are available through the organization's official website. Expedia operates worldwide and has affiliates in Europe and Asia as well as in North America.

Products include:

- Airline tickets
- Hotel reservations
- Car rentals
- Cruises
- Business travel
- Vacation packages
- Rewards program

The appeal of Expedia is that it caters to many different demographics, offering inexpensive travel options that are easily accessible. The site is well organized and it allows consumers to focus on the specific type of travel they seek. Expedia also offers excellent reward services as well.

## **EXPEDIA REWARDS PROGRAMS**

Travelers can maximize their savings potential by using rewards programs designed to provide deep discounts as well as fringe benefits. Two popular rewards programs are the Thank You Network and Expedia Elite Plus.

- **Thank You Network** is available at no cost to Expedia customers. Every time participating consumers book eligible travel arrangements, they earn reward points in the process. The points may be redeemed for gift cards, household appliances, electronics, and travel specials. Additional points are available for customers of participating Citibank locations.
- **Expedia Elite Plus** is a program that caters to the company's loyal customers. Travelers who book 15 hotel stays or spend \$10,000 dollars in travel through Expedia in one year are automatically enrolled in the program. Benefits include:
  - Faster points earned for rewards
  - Hotel price guarantee
  - Exclusive specials
  - Early notification of sales
  - No fees for changes or cancellations
  - Priority customer service

## **TRAVEL RESEARCH THROUGH EXPEDIA**

Expedia offers excellent resources for consumers who want to explore their options. The site offers quick information organized by the type of travel that interests visitors. You can find information about:

- Golf packages
- Spa trips
- All-inclusive packages
- Beach vacations
- Family trips
- Adventure
- Romantic getaways
- Skiing trips

# **TRAVELOCITY**

Travelocity is an online booking agency that focuses on customer service. The company's trademark *Travelocity Customer Bill of Rights* outlines what you can expect from your experience with this organization. The company guarantees that accommodations and travel are up to par. If they are not, the company works with its associates to correct any problems.

Travelocity highlights:

- Flights
- Hotel stays
- Car rental
- Train travel
- Vacation packages
- Activities
- Cruises
- Special deals
- Last minute specials

The company focuses on the customer's complete experience as well as the low pricing. Getting a great deal on travel is just part of the process. Great amenities, rewards, and outstanding experiences are of the utmost importance as well.

## **TRAVELOCITY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Travelocity offers everything that you need to have an excellent travel experience for relatively little money. Since the focus is on saving money and maximizing the quality of the packages, consumers have an opportunity to make the most of their vacations and getaways.

Educating the consumer is a big part of the process for Travelocity. The organization offers excellent information that can help your travel plans run very smoothly. Research opportunities are vast through the Travelocity website. Topics include:

- **The Travel Information Center** offers information on everything you need to know, from planning and packing to traveling green.
- **Destination Guides** allow you to explore nearly any destination imaginable.
- **Business trip information** is available for individuals and companies. The company offers global travel service specials specifically for professional travel.

- **Flight status** updates are within quick access on the site for those who are already booked.

## **LOCAL RESOURCES**

Never underestimate your local resources. Some travel agencies are more than happy to offer excellent deals for business or vacation travel. Take time to visit your local travel agent to see what deals are available. Programs like AAA can provide added benefits as well.

# 4

## FIRST CLASS UPGRADE

Few things are as appealing in travel as a first class upgrade. Ironically, many people never take the time to discover how to get an upgrade. Consider various approaches to getting into first class and see how easy it is to put them into action. Some of the simplest strategies can yield excellent results.

It's also important to keep in mind that there are delicate matters when it comes to moving up to first class for little or no money. The way you conduct yourself makes a significant impact on the possibility of getting an upgrade, whether it is on the flight or in the hotel.

### **SECRETS TO GETTING UPGRADED**

You don't have to spend hundreds of dollars to upgrade into first class. Researching your available options while engaging staff with your excellent communication skills are great approaches to moving up for little or no money.

#### **BASIC STRATEGIES**

Anyone can try these basic strategies for snagging a seat in first class. Some are simple common sense approaches that few practice. They might not work in many cases, but they are worth a try.

- **Dress for first class**  
Airlines are more likely to upgrade a passenger who is well dressed. Dressing as if you expect to fly first class or business class is an important aspect. Airlines may shy away from upgrading a person wearing athletic shoes and sweatpants.
- **Get to know the staff**  
Regular fliers can benefit from their loyalty to a certain airline as well as their pleasant manner in which they treat the staff. If you fly frequently, it behooves you to become familiar with the staff members who will be more than happy to accommodate their favorite travelers.

- **Ask for an upgrade**  
This approach isn't going to work the majority of the time, especially if you make the request with a ticket agent. The ticket agent usually has no control over such matters. However, it doesn't hurt to inquire. Better yet, the ticket agent can code your ticket to let the staff on the plane know that you are eligible for an upgrade.
- **Use your connections**  
If you know people who work in the industry, ask them to help you. If you are a travel agent, make sure to communicate this to the staff. While frequent fliers are on the top of the list for upgrades, agents are often close behind.
- **Arrive early**  
They say that the early bird catches the worm, and in this case, the early bird can catch the upgrade. If the airline has a choice between two passengers, they are most likely to upgrade the passenger who arrives first.
- **Be flexible**  
Passengers who are willing to wait for the next flight because of overbooking may be upgraded to first class in some cases. The more accommodating you are with the airline, the more accommodating the airline will be with you.

## **BOOKING STRATEGIES**

The strategies you use to book your tickets can make all the difference in your ability to get an upgrade through the airline. Making smart purchases can make all the difference in your attempt to get an upgrade.

- **Use a travel agent**  
Airlines are trying to grow a loyal following of professionals who travel regularly. A travel agent can mark your ticket with a not under Other Significant Information (OSI), alerting the staff that you are a VIP traveler for another airline. The competition for your regular business may be enough to motivate the staff to move you into first class.
- **Take the direct approach**  
While your travel agent can help you in many cases, it may be beneficial to book with the airline directly. The airline can take note of OSI details about you. It behooves you to let them know if you are a travel writer, event planner, or travel agent when you book directly.

- **Buy a coach ticket at full fare and ask for an upgrade**  
This surprising approach can work well because some airlines have a code that automatically allows people who pay full fare in coach to move to first class if a seat is available. However, this doesn't happen automatically. You have to request an upgrade.
- **Call the airline**  
The more you communicate the better your chances are to get an upgrade. Ask the airline the price of a coach ticket with first class seating privileges costs. Keep in mind that the ticket is most likely non-refundable.
- **Purchase discounted first class tickets**  
Use your resources to compare prices. You may find that you can purchase a first class ticket at discounted prices. The first class tickets are still going to be more expensive than coach is, but the price difference may be surprisingly small.

## **FLIGHT ATTENDANT HELP**

Your flight attendant can be a great resource for getting into first class. Simply asking for an upgrade is not always going to do the trick. If you spot an available seat in first class, consider some of the legitimate reasons that an attendant can move you up.

- **Overbooking** can be a considerable problem for airlines. When a flight is oversold, the airline is in a tricky position. Sometimes there are too many passengers in coach. Make sure to book a seat as close to the front of the plane as possible. Volunteering for a later flight can also lead to an upgrade or some other generous compensation from the airline.
- **Bad company** on a flight is no laughing matter. Few things are as miserable as sitting next to a troublesome passenger. If you have a legitimate complaint about the person sitting next to you, discuss the problem discretely and politely with the flight attendant. You may have an opportunity to change your seat.
- **A malfunctioning seat** is a serious problem that requires a move. If there is no room in coach and your seat is not working properly, you may be moved to business or first class. This is a very rare occurrence but you should communicate any problems with your seating as soon as you notice a problem.

## **PURCHASING UPGRADES**

The old notion that nothing is free can apply to airline upgrades. While you can expect to get an upgrade on occasion, the potential for moving up to first class without spending a dime isn't always realistic. Buying an upgrade may be the most reliable approach to getting into first class without spending too much money in the process.

### **SAME DAY UPGRADES**

You are more likely to get a great deal on an upgrade if you purchase it on the same day that you fly. Not all airlines allow people to buy an upgrade when they check in but if the airline permits you to buy one at the gate, take advantage of the opportunity. The airline is motivated to do this because it is better to make a little money on a first class upgrade than have an unused first class seat making no money.

Know your ticket. Some airline tickets simply are not eligible for an upgrade. As a rule of thumb, you can generally get an upgrade if you pay full fare for coach. However, some discount tickets are still eligible for upgrades in some circumstances.

### **Y-UP FARES**

While a Y-Up fare isn't technically considered to be an upgrade, it is definitely cheaper than paying full fare for first class. Airlines have different names for the purchases. You may see them as Q-Ups among other designations. Right now, North American flights offer these specials that code first class tickets at economy fares.

### **EBAY**

You can purchase virtually anything on EBay it seems and this includes first class upgrades. You can also purchase cheap upgrades through some travel forums. Cheaper deals require you to wait until check-in to make sure that they are valid while options that are more expensive typically allow you to confirm via telephone before arriving at the airport. Upgrades have been sold for very little money, some as low as eight dollars.

## **DOS AND DON'TS**

Your presence and personality can take you straight into first class seating or they can put you in the worst seat on the plane. Consider some simple dos and don'ts while planning your strategy. The little details can make all the difference in your flight experience.

- **Do be pleasant**  
This is especially important if you are a regular flier. Your politeness can take you into first class if you are tenacious.
- **Don't be demanding**  
You want to act the part of a first class passenger but this doesn't mean that you should be a diva.
- **Do be flexible**  
The more willing you are to work with the airline, the more willing the staff will be to work with you.
- **Don't be pushy**  
You may really want the upgrade, but being too persistent can cause you to become a thorn in the staff's side.
- **Do be appreciative**  
The crew is happy to see when a passenger is willing to share his outstanding travel experience. Demonstrating that you are likely to appreciate an upgrade will increase your chances.
- **Do not be threatening**  
Making a scene is going to do little for your cause. The airline isn't going to cave to aggressive demands and childish behavior.
- **Do be patient**  
This is especially important when things go wrong. If your flight is delayed or cancelled, you are in a good position for an upgrade if you are patient and accommodating.
- **Don't be presumptuous**  
Assuming that you will automatically get an upgrade can work against you in some cases. If you demonstrate patience and understanding, the staff is more likely to return the favor. However, if you are presuming that you should get special treatment, you are likely to be disappointed.
- **Don't make a scene**  
The airline isn't in the position to give everyone an upgrade just for asking. Those who are loud about the upgrades are not likely to be granted one. Making demands and showing off your upgrade just makes the situation difficult for the staff.

- **Do be discrete**  
The airline appreciates customers who are discrete about their upgrades, especially when others on the same flight are not getting them.
- **Do use your frequent flier status when necessary**  
If you have earned frequent flier miles, make the most of them.

# 5

## FREQUENT FLYER MILES

Frequent flyer miles were developed to build customer loyalty. The premise is similar to any rewards program you can think of including store cards, and purchasing benefits. The more you purchase, the bigger your rewards are. If you travel frequently, it benefits you greatly to make the most of your frequent flyer rewards.

### **BRIEF HISTORY OF FREQUENT FLYER MILES**

The notion of rewarding customers for repeat business goes back many years in practice. Frequent flyer programs are relatively new as they were introduced by American Airlines back in 1981 through the company's AAdvantage program. The approach is simple: track the customers' mileage and reward them once they meet certain milestones. The rewards include upgrades and free travel tickets.

AAdvantage was an immediate hit with consumers and other airlines were quick to follow. The Mileage Plus program through United Airlines emerged just a few days after the introduction of American Airline's frequent flyer program. The Mileage Plus program offered additional perks including no expiration on mileage and a 5,000 mile bonus for enrolling into the program.

Other airlines followed suit during 1981 including TWA and Delta Airlines. The heated competition created a great atmosphere for flyers who wanted to make the most of their travel experiences for relatively little money. The concept was a hit and it continues to grow.

Later, the programs began to become a little more complex, allowing customers to rack up frequent flier miles through other purchases including car rentals and credit card transactions.

### **FREQUENT FLYER PROGRAMS**

Consumers have enjoyed the benefits of collecting frequent flyer miles for decades. Savvy travelers know how to maximize their rewards by selecting the right programs for their specific needs. The first step is to know the basic

benefits of frequent flyer programs in order to select the right package for your travels.

## **STANDARD PROGRAMS**

Standard programs have much to offer customers but each program is different. When you choose a basic program for your frequent flyer miles, you have to make sure to work diligently in order to reap the maximum benefits. Elite programs are more likely to get you upgrades and other perks but you can still do well with standard programs if you do your homework.

- **Fit your program to your purchasing patterns**  
For example, if you rent cars frequently, select a standard program that allows you to rack up miles for each rental. It is important to consider the affiliates that work with the airline.
- **Consolidate your miles into one program**  
You are more likely to gain elite status with one program than you will if your miles are spread out between different frequent flyer packages.
- **Read all correspondences carefully**  
You can learn a lot about getting the most out of your program when you read the newsletters and other correspondences offered by the program.
- **Keep track of your miles**  
Arrange travel according to the possibility of getting enough miles for elite status. Communicate with the airline that you are just shy of elite status and they may bump you into an elite program if you plead your case.
- **Keep your receipts**  
This is a great way to ensure that you have all the information you need readily available.
- **Don't let your miles expire**  
You may be able to get extensions in some cases but you may benefit best from securing the miles from expiration using the program's affiliate credit card in certain circumstances.

The idea is to move into elite status in order to reap the maximum benefits from your frequent flyer program. While you can work toward elite status by racking up miles aggressively, you can opt to select elite status from the start as well.

## **ELITE PROGRAMS**

Elite programs offer excellent opportunities for travel benefits including upgrades and free airline tickets. Programs can be complex because different companies have different levels of elite status. If you are an elite traveler, you are more likely to get an upgrade with relative ease but there are other benefits to consider as well.

- **Expedient service is a big draw for elite status**  
Airlines are more apt to give priority service to elite frequent fliers. This can save considerable time during check-in and boarding. Some boast separate check-in lanes for their elite customers.
- **Baggage and other fees are often waived**  
This can lead to stunning savings for travelers.
- **Programs offer guaranteed seating for overbooked flights**  
You don't have to worry about being inconvenienced.
- **Preferred seating is available for elite members**  
This is a fundamental element of upgrades. Great seats translate into a great travel experience.
- **Bonus miles help you keep your status while earning rewards in record speed**  
Elite status for people who fly regularly builds upon itself naturally, as you travel more.
- **No blackout dates**  
You don't have to build your schedule around the airline's specific times of travel.
- **Automatic airport lounge memberships make the wait at the airport enjoyable**  
Elite members have the benefit of waiting for their flight in style.
- **No mileage limits for credit card purchases**  
Those who have elite status are less likely to have limits on the number of miles they earn through credit card transactions that build frequent flyer miles.

## **FREQUENT FLYER CREDIT CARDS**

You have two basic choices for frequent flyer credit card programs. The first is affiliated with a specific airline and the second allows you to rack up miles

that can be used with a number of different airlines. Each approach has its benefits as well as drawbacks.

Programs specific to the airline have incentives not offered by generic mileage programs. Airlines may affiliate with hotels and car rentals in order to help you get more miles for purchases you were going to make anyway using your credit card. Vacation packages and special deals offered by the airlines can help travelers earn miles quickly. It is important to keep in mind that many of these cards charge an annual fee.

Credit cards that allow you to use your miles on a number of different airlines have the obvious advantage of permitting you to use the miles as you see fit. The miles can be combined with nearly any airline special, making it an excellent approach for getting cheap airfare.

You can use either credit card program to build many frequent flyer miles for everyday purchases. If you pay off the balance every month, you can get a lot of miles when you shop for clothes, groceries, and other common products. Paying off the balance prevents the card from building interest.

## **FREQUENT FLYER UPGRADES**

When you have earned elite status through the frequent flyer program of your choice, you have many opportunities to score upgrades. Competition for loyal travel customers makes many frequent flyer programs outstanding when it comes to getting the first-class upgrade. Upgrading using mile credits can be tricky but you can find excellent opportunities with relative ease.

Remember to save the upgrades for longer flights. It makes little sense to spend your hard-earned miles on an upgrade on a short flight. If you plan to take a longer trip in the near future, continue to bank your miles for the long voyage.

Not all seats are allocated for potential upgrades since the airline wants to make sure that they fill them with people who are paying full price for first class. Timing is of the utmost importance so it is crucial to keep informed about the airlines' respective specials.

## **ELITE UPGRADES**

You can use your elite status to get frequent flyer upgrades. Some programs offer automatic upgrades for their elite customers. The higher the customer's status, the more likely he is to get an automatic upgrade. Each program

offers different levels; platinum, gold and silver levels are examples. Those who have platinum level status have priority.

Remember to check in early. You have a better chance of getting the upgrade if you arrive before other eligible passengers. This is especially true if other passengers have the same status as you do.

Timing is important, too. Select flights that are not notorious for high-level elite flyers. Choose a time and date in which few business travelers are on the move. Many are likely to have the highest status. Your agent may be privy to information about possible upgrades when you book your trip.

Time your trip for times when people are not traveling as much. For example, you are less likely to get an upgrade right before the Thanksgiving rush but you may find excellent deals if you travel on New Year's Eve. Many airlines offer specials and upgrades to encourage more people to fly during slow times of the year.

# 6

## AIRPORT LOUNGES

Airport lounges can make your travel experience much nicer. While terminals are designed to accommodate, they are not necessarily the best places to relax in comfort. They are not well known for their warm, welcoming atmospheres, either.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Many people love to visit airport lounges because they can be like a vacation in themselves. Some boast outstanding service, comfortable seating, and other attractive amenities.

- Free snacks
- Free beverages
- Complementary periodicals, magazines, and newspapers
- Free Internet connection
- Buffets
- Plasma televisions
- Fax and copy machines
- Meeting areas

Many find the airport lounge to be one of the highlights of their travel experiences. Getting into a lounge isn't easy for the everyday flyer but you can gain access to these appealing locations with a little planning.

### **GAINING ACCESS TO AIRPORT LOUNGES**

There are a number of ways to gain access to airport lounges. Some require a little research while others can take a few dollars out of your pocket. Many travelers find that the experience is well worth the effort.

- **Fly business or first class**  
Airlines are more than happy to give people who purchase more expensive seats access to their lounges.

- **Use your elite frequent flyer membership**  
The more you travel, the more likely you are to enjoy lounges regularly.
- **Buy a single use pass to airport lounges**  
You may not have elite status or first class tickets but you can usually purchase a pass to the lounge for relatively little money.
- **Invest in an airline club membership**  
Some airlines require membership for entry to their lounges. The memberships commonly cost a few hundred dollars each year but they are a great alternative to purchasing a pass for roughly \$50 each time you visit the airport, and one-time passes are not available for every airline.
- **Use Ebay and travel forums**  
These may have listings for single-use passes to airport lounges but it is important to shop with care. You may not be able to meet the terms and conditions attached to the passes.
- **Join Priority Pass**  
Especially if you do not spend a lot of money on travel every year.

## **PRIORITY PASS**

Priority Pass is a great option for people who do not travel enough to rack up elite status, and it is an affordable option for those who do not spend a lot of money on airline tickets. When you become a member of Priority Pass, you are automatically granted access to more than 500 airport lounges across the globe. There are three membership levels for the program.

- **Standard Membership** is very affordable. In fact, the annual fee for this level membership is about the same as two one-time passes to an airport lounge. However, each visit to the lounges costs about \$30 dollars.
- **Standard Plus Membership** costs considerably more out of your pocket up front but you have free access to the facilities for 10 visits. The standard entry fee applies for more than 10 visits.
- **Priority Pass Prestige** is ideal for people who fly frequently but don't want to spend a lot of money on their tickets by investing in first or business class. There are no restrictions for visiting lounges. Simply show your pass, and you have access to the facility.

# 7

## AIRLINE CLUBS

Airline clubs are ideal for travelers who use a single airline for most of their flights. If you are a loyal customer to a specific organization, it can benefit you greatly to join their club. The programs are also perfect for people who travel on business. Consider some of the pros and cons to joining an airline club before making your decision.

### **PROS AND CONS**

Nearly every situation has benefits and drawbacks. Some of the major draws of joining an airline club can be appealing to certain populations but they simply don't make sense for others. Balancing the benefits and the drawbacks is a great way to evaluate whether this type of membership is right for your travel needs.

#### **PROS**

- You can get a lot of work done while waiting for your flight if you are in the right atmosphere. Many business professionals rely on utilizing their time wisely even when they are on the go. Having access to airline club lounges is a wonderful option because you have access to work stations that are relatively quiet and comfortable.
- Annual memberships require a single payment and you don't have to worry about the program or gaining access to airport amenities. Some offer lifetime memberships as well, making them ideal for someone who flies regularly.
- Club employees can accommodate you if your flight is delayed or cancelled. You don't have to get in line with everyone else in the airport terminal if something goes amiss with your flight plans.
- Some clubs honor memberships to other airline clubs. For example, people who belong to Delta's airline club may be able to use their membership to get access to lounges in Northwest and Continental airports. Some restrictions may apply, but this is a very attractive benefit for those who don't want to rely on using a single airline for every one of their trips.

## CONS

- You can expect some inconsistencies as far as amenities from one airport to the next. The quality of service and accommodations vary from place to place even when you are dealing with the same airline. It is important to research what each airport has to offer so you are well prepared.
- Some airport lounges do not stand up to the competition and they may be overcrowded, out-of-date and simply uncomfortable.
- Memberships can be expensive and can cost considerable money. In some cases, you save a lot of money because you enjoy many of the upgrades and benefits that would normally cost extra.
- Another considerable drawback is the clubs are limiting. You may find an excellent deal on tickets with another airline but you are not going to have access to the lounge facilities if your membership is with another airline.

## **NON-AIRLINE CLUB MEMBERSHIPS**

Priority Pass is a prime example of a lounge membership that does not require you to use a single airline. Other options are available to consumers as well. Some are affordable options that are ideal for people who do not travel enough to earn many frequent flyer miles.

- **American Express Platinum Card** offers a great airport club program affiliated with Northwest, Delta, American Airlines and Continental airports. The program is honored at over 100 locations worldwide. The program costs roughly \$450 dollars a year but you have the same benefits as someone who has memberships to each respective airport in the program, saving considerable money if you were to purchase them separately.
- **Diners Club** has a nice program offering access to about 80 lounges across the globe. Membership is fewer than \$100 dollars, making it a very affordable option.

# 8

## MAKING THE MOST OF ANY TRIP

You can make the most of any trip whether you have earned elite status, joined an airline club, or whether you simply want to take a last minute trip. The planning process is an important aspect of your experience but as long as you have a strategy to use any time you travel, you are likely to have a wonderful experience.

### **PACKING**

One of the most important aspects of travel is packing and you can save yourself a lot of time and aggravation by packing intelligently for your trip. This translates into packing light for most of us. The fewer luggage pieces you take, the easier— and less expensive—your voyage will be.

Packing begins with a plan and a packing list. The list is essential for keeping you organized enough to prevent last minute panicking over necessary items you can't find. The more you know about your destination, the better.

### **DESTINATION PLANS**

The first consideration you should make is your destination. Your choice of clothing depends on factors including weather, activities, and special events slated for the trip. Making a list of clothing items that can be mixed and matched for different occasions is a great start.

- Color coordinate
- Choose travel-friendly clothes that are easy to care for
- Keep items classic and simple

Remember to consider what is considered to be appropriate attire at your destination. Dressing in layers is an excellent option because you can create different looks for different activities. Keep it simple and sort through items that are not absolutely necessary, especially items that you are going to wear only once during the entire trip.

Jewelry is not a necessity for every outfit. Select accessories that are suitable for a number of different outfits and occasions. As a rule of thumb, only bring jewelry that you can wear throughout the entire trip rather than items that you will need to pack and store.

Plan what you are going to use and wear first on your trip and pack items accordingly. Things that you will need to access first should be packed last so you don't have to rummage through everything to get to them.

## **HOTEL AMENITIES**

Make sure that you don't take anything that you can get at the hotel. Many places offer excellent amenities including clothing irons, hairdryers, and other helpful appliances that you may pack unnecessarily. This includes shampoo, soap, and grooming items.

It is important to keep in mind that the United States Department of Homeland Security as well as other entities throughout the world are limiting the number of items containing liquids passengers can carry on board for safety reasons. Stick to small travel kits rather than larger bottles of shampoo, perfumes, and other toiletries.

Always pack:

- First aid kit
- Sunscreen
- Necessary prescription medication
- Travel documents
- Identification
- Keys

These items should be readily available in your carry on luggage. Make sure to label any luggage that you are going to check in with the airline. Include your name and phone number. Some travelers include a business address as well but it is not good practice to put your home address on luggage labels.

Be sure you understand exactly what you are allowed to bring and not to bring with you in your checked luggage and in your carry on bags as well. Your airline should provide you with this information.

## **GETTING GREAT SEATS**

Now that you are well packed and you have checked the luggage size requirements with the airline, you can concentrate on getting great seats no

matter if you are traveling first class, business, or coach. Consider your personal preferences as you make your plans.

## **EVALUATE YOUR TASTES**

The perfect airline seat is subjective. Some passengers are thrilled with the idea of taking in the view from a window seat while others prefer the convenience of sitting in the row seat, especially if they want to get up to use the facilities. Window seats tend to be a little less roomy and you have to disturb people in the middle and aisle seats to get up.

The middle seat is considered the least appealing because you do not have the view, legroom or convenience of easy access to the aisle. These are perhaps the least popular seats on the airplane.

Another consideration to make is whether you prefer to sit toward the front or the back of the aircraft. As a rule of thumb, it is most appealing toward the front because you are one of the first passengers to leave the plane. While you are more likely to feel more turbulence in the back of the aircraft, many people love sitting in the two-seater window seats in the rear of the plane.

## **EMERGENCY EXIT ROWS**

The emergency exit rows are excellent seats in coach because they offer plenty of legroom, comparable to that in business class. The roominess of the area is great for extra comfort during your trip but there are some things to keep in mind before opting for this seat.

Along with the extra legroom comes extra responsibility. Those sitting next to the emergency exit have the responsibility of ensuring that the area is clear of luggage and it is necessary to know the procedures in case of an emergency. Some airlines do not allow disabled passengers and small children to sit in these seats.

Some passengers see the exit row as open space or a place to congregate, which can be a little annoying. If you want a fantastic view, you may be disappointed when you find yourself staring at the airplane's wing throughout the entire flight.

## **BULKHEAD ROW**

The bulkhead row is in the front of the area that separates the galley from the rear of the plane. Basically, this is the front of coach. These seats are appealing because no one is sitting directly in front of you. In some cases, this translates into more legroom, but not always. This is an ultra-convenient

area to sit in when you are in a hurry to get off the plane because you are likely to be one of the first people exiting this area.

This is a great seat to get if you have your eye on a potential upgrade since these seats are commonly ideal for people with special circumstances. You may have heard stories about a person getting an upgrade because he gave up his bulkhead row seat to a woman with a baby.

## **LEARN THE LAYOUT OF THE AIRCRAFT**

Some airlines offer a nice layout of the aircraft for you to explore. Some planes are slightly different from others and a great seat on one aircraft is an uncomfortable choice for another. Taking a few moments to look at online layouts of the aircraft you plan to book is a great way to determine which seats are most appealing to you.

## **HEALTH TIPS**

Traveling in comfort includes taking steps to ensure that you are happy and healthy when you reach your destination. Following some simple suggestions can make all the difference in your travel experience. This is especially important if you are planning a long trip.

## **SUPPORT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM**

Consider the atmosphere of an aircraft. You are going to be in close contact with many people. Half of the air that is circulating in the plane is recycled and the dryness of the space makes it perfect for viruses to thrive. Take some steps to make sure that your immune system is strong before you leave.

- Take vitamins
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Stay hydrated
- Drink tea, water, and tomato juice in place of soda and alcohol
- Wash your hands and avoid touching door toilet handles with your bare hands
- Board the plane as late as you possibly can

## **TAKE PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

Make sure that you dress comfortably, wearing clothes that aren't restrictive or tight. Avoid eating heavy meals right before and during the flight. Too much food can make you feel bloated and fatigued.

Motion sickness may be avoided by eating raw ginger. Some prefer to have a little ginger ale before leaving for a flight while others depend on medication for motion sickness. Skip foods that cause gas because this can make your trip very uncomfortable, especially if you feel nauseous as well as gassy.

It may feel as if it is impossible to relax but it is important to take a little time to breathe deeply and close your eyes. A little visualization and focus can lull you into a state of relaxation that opens your blood vessels and stimulates circulation.

A little exercise can help as well. Some airlines offer information about how to get your blood flowing while you are on a long flight. Avoid sitting with your legs crossed and put some of the exercises to work for you during the trip.

## **A FEW PARTING WORDS**

Travel can be hectic but you have a vast number of opportunities to experience wonderful sights and to enjoy some of the most appealing aspects of traveling. You don't have to be a high roller or frequent flier in order to enjoy the many amenities the travel industry provides for its most valuable customers. As long as you use the strategies that savvy travelers adopt, you are certain to enjoy your experience.