

THE  
**BOOKON**®

CHEAP  
INTERNATIONAL  
TRAVEL

SAMPLE

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# STOP DREAMING AND START TRAVELING

A friend pointed to the label on a kiwi fruit, and I saw that it said "Product of Italy". She sighed and slipped a brilliant green slice into her mouth. After savoring the bite, she said, "This is what the Italian sun tastes like!"

My friend, however, was only guessing.

She has never been to Italy; or anywhere outside of the U.S. for that matter. She has imagined many journeys and will take any opportunity to enjoy even the smallest hints of her dream destinations - hence, the delight over a slice of imported kiwi.

### **The High Costs of Travel**

Like many other people, my friend thoroughly believes she cannot afford a trip to Italy, Europe, or even somewhere close by.

While she is correct in thinking that travel can be a costly endeavor, she is definitely wrong in insisting there aren't "deals" out there that can accommodate her budget while satisfying her desire to see the world.

### **The Low Costs of Travel**

Of course, the problem of expensive travel fees has only two possible solutions. Because no one is destined to remain "stuck" at home if they really want to travel, and if a wallet or

bank account struggles to support the "travel bug", it means the individual must choose between two options:

- Becoming a permanent "armchair traveler" who enjoys touring the world via books, magazines, resources on the web, and imagination; OR
- Mastering the art of cheap international travel.

As you may have guessed, my kiwi-loving friend is an armchair traveler - finding many ways to experience a place (or just the idea of a place) without paying a visit.

While this is unique, interesting, and creative, it hardly compares to actually standing in the sunlight, smelling the air, and taking in the native sights and sounds.

That is why I suggest you choose option #2, and learn how to enjoy international travel without emptying your bank account to do it.

### **The Best Choice**

*The Book On Cheap International Travel* is going to show you how to succeed in that second and far more preferable option.

Cheap international travel is much easier than it used to be thanks to the Internet. Not only does the use of a reliable browser and a high speed Internet connection allow you to rapidly search for interesting places to travel, but is one of the best ways to get the lowest price on the most important component of any journey - the airfare.

In fact, most people insist that the one true impediment to traveling the world is the simple fact that flying is so incredibly expensive. However, if you know how to look for tickets, when to go on journeys, and how to get some bonus deals, you can really see the world.

## Airfare and the Internet

As we said, the most important part of traveling is the "getting there" bit, and for most of us in the modern world it means flying expensively from one place to another.

When planning an international journey, we often face a serious hurdle when we start looking at the prices asked by airlines for tickets that take us to another continent or many thousands of miles from home.

Fortunately, there is now the option of using the Internet for all of your travel planning - particularly airfare.

While we will dedicate most of this book to providing you with tips for scoring the lowest prices for this key item, consider that the use of the Internet for your cheap international travel planning will also allow you to:

- Find the best prices on international airfare - no matter where you are going;
- Locate great deals on car rentals - if that is something you hope to do;
- Book yourself into affordable, unique, and convenient accommodations on almost any budget;
- Find deals for group travel that can cut costs substantially;
- Book package deals that let you visit many destinations for a discounted price. And these bargains can often "roll" your airfare, ground transportation, food, accommodation, and sightseeing into one impressively low price;
- Use online resources to learn about your locations ahead of time, and even create maps, itineraries,

and more (see the Resources section at the end of this book for some of the most useful websites);

- Discover if the language barrier or other cultural issues will have to shape the way you travel, and also find resources in your destination (such as guides who speak your language or tips for getting around without a lot of difficulty);
- Find ways to save money on shopping; particularly if you are interested in getting local goods and products; and
- Use the Internet to get accurate feedback, information, and suggestions from fellow travelers. Rather than merely hoping to stumble upon a fantastic beach, pub, or inspiring location, you can usually identify such spots through online resources.

Best of all, these things are done using a computer and without any out of pocket expense or additional fees. It is simply a matter of spending time finding the information, doing some comparisons, and making the choices in order to enjoy affordable international travel.

### **The Joys of Travel**

While I did agree with my friend that it seems we never have enough time or money to see the many different places in the world, it does not mean that we cannot get out and see all that our budget allows. Thankfully, in this wonderful age of the Internet, we can use online resources to see and do a lot more than ever before - and all at a discounted price.

Our dollars are stretched farther than they have ever been in the past, and we have so many affordable and "budget" options, that it is a pity to remain, daydreaming, at home.



So, whether you are a dedicated armchair traveler who is tired of imagining the million and one places you could go, or you are someone who is interested in mastering the art of cheap international travel, this is the book for you.

We'll begin with a look at the "planning stage" of travel. This is an important issue, and though we won't spend a great deal of time on it, you must use the tips this chapter contains to ensure you make the very most from even the most affordable or low cost travel options.

Next, we focus on the best solutions for finding cheap international airfare - including tips for scoring upgrades.

After that, we'll spend a bit of time considering ways of getting the best deals on airfare to specific destinations such as Europe, Asia, and more by using "shoulder seasons".

Finally, we'll consider business airfare, and how to save money on this upgraded, but not as exclusive as First Class, form of international travel.

So, if you're ready, let's get begin at the very beginning and consider just how to start traveling anywhere in the world at an affordable price.



# TRAVEL 101

## How Do You Travel?

Close your eyes and envision yourself at your destination...

It doesn't matter if you are picturing yourself at the foot of the Eiffel Tower or one of the Pyramids at Giza, on a beach in Jamaica or in the hustle and bustle of central Moscow. Just take one second to get a clear image of yourself in the location of your choice.

Now...Do you see yourself alone? Perhaps you're with a group of friends? Maybe you see yourself as part of a much larger group tour? You may even see yourself doing some travel independently and some with a group of people.

Be very honest with yourself about the way you envision your travels, because you are not going to enjoy a journey if it is done in a way you dislike.

Take an example: Let's say you want to see Paris and parts of France. Let's also say that you are not someone who enjoys riding on a bus and being guided through various attractions like museums and historic sites. In this case, a group tour is not the best option for the *entire* journey.

However, a group tour that gives you one or two days of guided visits to major attractions may not be a bad idea - especially if you don't speak the language and have never visited the destination before.

## First Steps

Taking the time to picture yourself abroad is always the essential "first step" to making the most realistic and affordable travel plans. You have to understand exactly "how" you intend to travel, and only then can you determine if that is a viable approach, if you have to "flex" a bit to get what you want, and if your budget requires you to make a few alternate arrangements.

The options available to all travelers are very basic and include:

- Individual travel
- Group trips
- Package Deals

These three methods of traveling are the most common ways of visiting different parts of the world.

While other methods are available, they are usually too restrictive to be included in a list for the general public.

For example, many people will volunteer for work exchanges to get a "free vacation", or some visit their familial homelands on affordable "birth right" trips. Still others join in on charitable or diplomatic trips abroad.

These, however, are not common ways of enjoying low cost international travel. If they appeal to you, by all means do the research and take a chance, but if you want more control over the journey, it is best to use one of the three primary approaches suggested above.

## Be Inspired

Keep in mind, you can mix things up if that helps you get the trip you intended. In fact, you **MUST** make this a consideration because traveling is not just about getting there cheap. Travel is about seeing the things that matter to you and doing the things you had hoped to do.

Many people are inspired to travel when they hear or see something that really appeals to them. A photo of a special location, a documentary about a city or historic location, photos from a friend's trip abroad...all of these things have very specific places and sights that motivate someone to visit the destinations too.

This has to be the first thing you use to arrange for affordable international travel because it is your actual goal.

With that in mind, let's consider the most common ways of traveling:

## Individuals

By using the word "individuals", we don't mean that you must travel entirely on your own to find good deals. What we are describing are individuals, couples, and small groups numbering less than ten to twelve in size.

While this may seem like the most expensive way of traveling because few discounts will be extended, it can still be an amazingly affordable means of visiting all parts of the world.

How is that possible? Couples can stay easily find affordable flights, and they can be some of the most flexible in terms of last minute deals and unique opportunities during a trip.

## Groups

We have all seen the "group discount" offers on almost any sort of travel or recreational site. From discounted air and ground transportation to low cost sightseeing fees, groups just seem to get some of the best opportunities to save money.

Naturally, this tends to mean that you are locked into a fixed itinerary. However, if you have been very honest with yourself about the things you want to see and do, it will be much easier to determine if you should join in on a group tour.

Here's a good example: Two women wanted to visit different parts of South America. They were very limited in time and financial resources. They found a group tour that included an option for discounted airfare to the country in which the trip began.

This group tour also included all ground transportation, affordable accommodations, and several of the key destinations and sights that they really wanted to see.

Because this tour was rather short, the two women were able to make plans for affordable accommodations in the final city on the tour and to then do a few simple day trips as well.

They were able to combine the good prices of a tour with a bit of individual travel, and enjoy the lowest pricing possible. They might have just done the group tour and then headed home as well, and it always pays to consider whether booking with a group - or creating your own - would be a good idea.

Additionally, with group tours (and some package deals) you can often keep costs under control by "opting out" of some additional or alternative features.

As an example, a group tour of England may include day trips to locations like Oxford or historic homes, but these trips add to

the total cost of the journey. So, you can elect to remain "free" for that day.

Deciding to enjoy a free day, morning, afternoon, or evening on a group tour is going to reduce the cost of the trip, since most "extra" tours come with fees.

## **Your Own Group**

This too is something to consider. If you have a large social group, big family, or any other type of group interested in making a trip to an international location, you can save tremendous amounts of money by using group discounts. You can even, as the person organizing the trip, get your travel costs covered in full.

Depending upon the agency or firm with which you work, you can create your own group itinerary and work with a knowledgeable expert to organize a remarkably affordable international trip.

## **Package Deals**

We've talked about the benefits of the Internet, and perhaps nowhere else can the financial benefits be seen than in the many package deals available.

Though not all packages include the same "components", when you use them for cheap international travel you can often roll the following into one affordable deal:

- Airfare;
- Accommodations;
- Ground transportation or discounted rental cars (not all nations allow foreign drivers);

- Sites, experiences, and tours; and
- Some meals, tips, etc.

Millions of people have used package deals as a great way to make a first or introductory visit to a faraway location, or to enjoy a full "dream" vacation to a place they have wanted to see for a long time.

Package deals can be found for individuals, small groups, and large groups. Additionally, in a way similar to group tours, many package deals have a lot of options within a package.

For example, you might be able to choose from different land tours or opt for a bit of free time away from a group. This can cut the costs of the package and yet allow exploring a destination affordably on your own.

### **Cheap Isn't Cheap**

After reading about traveling affordably, you are probably already thinking of a handful of locations you would like to see. Before jumping into your travel planning, however, let's take a second to look at one final factor - the difference between "cheap" and "cheap".

There are two ways to understand the word cheap when using it to describe travel. The first is to mean low-cost, affordable, and economical. The second means low quality, shoddy, and unsatisfactory results on every level.

You can easily mistake affordable travel with the less than desirable options, but the Internet can really step in and save the day. This is because you can use everything from maps to forums and feedback to identify the best resources. As long as you have been honest with yourself about what you want, know some of the essential things you want to see and do, and accept the need for flexibility, you can find cheap international travel that isn't cheap at all!



## Hit the Road

Now it is time to roll up those sleeves, and start making plans. Always keep the mandatory first steps in mind as you do so:

- Do an honest assessment of the way you would like to travel;
- Don't shortchange your vision or hopes to keep the "bottom line" reduced.

For instance, heading to Italy to see the famous Lakes Region means spending a day or more in this spot. If you jump on the cheapest group tour you find, you may see the lakes only through the window of your bus as you drive through the region.

So, don't skip the details when making plans!

- Pick and choose from individual, group, and package travel deals to get the best bargains; and
- Know cheap from cheap. The Internet is your best tool for making travel plans, but not all services are the same. Find those that meet your needs, budget, and your personal level of quality.

Now that you know the first steps, let's get busy finding the best ways to score cheap international airfare.



# HOW TO FIND CHEAP INTERNATIONAL AIRFARE

## How To Book Cheap Flights Online

Anyone mastering the art of affordable, or even downright cheap, international travel has probably already got a head full of different theories, opinions, hints, and tips for getting themselves a cheap price on their flight.

Rather than itemize those theories (which may not be all that accurate or effective), we'll begin with a single, very simple rule:

Forget all that you already know about  
"cheap flights."

How and why is that good advice?

The advent of the Internet and the handful of reliable discount travel websites have caused some pretty measurable changes to occur. And the rapid and ongoing changes in these sites mean that you have to take a flexible view of them if you are to get the most out of them.

### Getting the Most Out of the Internet

As an example, there was a time when it was widely held that staying over on a Saturday night and booking the return for a Sunday would result in lower airfare.

The reality? That no longer holds true.

Today, few airlines make any distinction between prices for flying on Saturdays or Sundays. The few exceptions are airlines that do not fly on Saturdays at all, such as the Israeli airline El Al.

In fact, most airlines and discounted airfare sellers prove this to be true by showing buyers a variety of screens during the purchase process. There is always one that shows the different rates available for those who elect to use "flexible dates", and for the most part, the Saturday and Sunday fares will usually be identical.

## Know the "New" Rules

So, to help you book the cheapest flights online, let's review the rest of the standard rules and recommendations that actually are true.

Although the old "fly Sunday" rule no longer applies, the following "days of the week" guidelines can often get you a much cheaper ticket:

- **Depart on Wednesdays** - This is truly the cheapest day of the week to leave for most destinations. The reason behind this isn't exactly clear, but most travel experts say that it is a day that is the most likely to have a lot of empty seats (after all, who leaves for their vacation on a Wednesday?). Because of the empty seats, the airlines are willing to release them at the deepest discounts.

- Book on Tuesday - A commonly and widely accepted discount travel theory was proven correct by a recent study. In it, the study looked for the best time of the day, and the best day of the week to buy airline tickets. What they discovered is that Tuesdays at 3 PM (EST or Eastern Standard Time) seems to be the proverbial "witching hour" for scoring the least expensive airfare.
- Book early - We don't mean that you need to book months in advance (we'll get to that point in a few moments). Instead, we mean that anyone willing to get on their flight in the pre-dawn or middle of the night hours tends to be rewarded with a deeply discounted airfare.
- Book early, part 2 - Not only will your willingness to take a very early flight, or one of the famous "red eye" flights, get you lower prices, but if you get up early in the morning and go online at that time to book a flight, you can often get discounted tickets and a lot more options. Though many airlines are actively releasing empty seats throughout each business day, the main flood of tickets appears very early in the day.
- Avoid any flights on pre-holiday days - Though this one may be the proverbial "no brainer" we do have to remind you that booking any trip around holidays like Christmas, Thanksgiving, or holidays celebrated in the country in which you are traveling, will mean higher airfare no matter what time of the day you book. Instead, go two to three days ahead of the rush and leave two to three days later.

The last minute rule is also something to reconsider. It used to be said that booking only at the last minute was the one way to get the best rates. Instead, consider the following:

- Book your flight and then hit the same site 24 hours later. You may find that a deeper discount is now available. Ask about options for canceling and re-booking at that lower rate.
- Be ready to leave in a few days if you can. For example, if you follow our rule about looking for discounted airfare on a Tuesday, you might find that you can hit a really appealing destination on Thursday or Friday and then return later the following week, but only if you are ready to go almost immediately.
- The opposite of the "last minute rule" applies too. However, it is NOT going to save you loads of money if you book three to six months ahead of time. Rather than going that far in advance, set yourself a six week limit. One study found that you will save the most money on pre-arranged trips when you book about six weeks prior to the actual journey.

The financial component is the primary issue where cheap international travel is concerned. That means that you should make the cost of the flight a major priority. Just consider the following tactics:

- Look for the fare and not the destination. Sometimes, you are able to search for flights based on the price you are willing to pay. Look for the fares in your desired price range and see if it puts you in the destination you prefer, or if it is somewhere you might consider traveling.
- Consider two different airlines. Some of the world's best airfares are found on one way tickets. That said, it may not be a price available from the same airline for the return trip. This might be the reason that the total cost of the airfare on a single line is not such a

deal, but there is a good "work around". Book the one way TO the destination on the lowest price and find the lowest fare on the ticket FROM the destination as well. Don't worry if it is two airlines - it is the fare that counts.

- Think about connections. Look at any of the cities with fares already on sale. Can any of them be used to create connecting flights? This is a common way to develop a discounted price for your airfare.
- Buy an entire package. Often, you can get an entire travel package with your flight and hotel for a price that is lower than the airfare prior to the package being offered. This is because an airline or travel firm that has no "takers" for these deals within a couple of days of departure is likely to let the entire thing go for the proverbial "song". And this is a good way to get the entire trip for less than the originally quoted airfare.
- Don't go too far and ignore round trip options. Something that many people do is to avoid the round trip option altogether when searching online for flights. This usually because they have been told it is not a way to save money. However, this is wrong and you can easily miss a big deal by doing it. So - look at ALL of the options - including round trip.

Think about departure geography and multiple flights. For example:

- All of the world's airlines use "hubs". As an example, in the United States, the city of Detroit has a few airlines that rely on the large, international airport just outside of the city as one of their central stopping locations or hubs. When you are booking international airfare, try to find the airlines' hubs and

see if there are special fares for those who accept a layover in one of those cities.

- Consider driving. We don't mean trying to drive to Europe, but instead we mean you might want to consider the financial feasibility of renting a car and driving to a different airport. Why? Many airlines have a major monopoly on specific airports, and this allows them to always demand premium prices for their fares. If you are willing to "do the math" and see if it is cheaper to just rent a car and drive 100 miles or more to a different airport, it could be the difference between a costly ticket and a deeply discounted one.
- Think about connecting flights. If you book connecting flights it can often leave you with a lot of cash in your pocket. The trick, however, is to be sure that you are giving yourself adequate time to make each of the legs of the flight you plan.
- Look at Business and First Class, special bargain offers, and any "two for one" opportunities. No matter what, you should never ignore any possible price option as you might be pleasantly surprised by clearance deals and seasonal specials. This is something very common to areas in their "shoulder seasons" (which we will look at later), but it is also something that does happen without any detectable reason - sometimes, airlines just put tickets on sale!
- Don't forget that some of the startups and small carriers might offer you some substantial deals too. Though these are not always airlines that show up on the discount sites, that is starting to change. Don't avoid the "no name" or "new name" brands if it is a way of saving major money on the airfare.



- Be flexible. This should be considered THE essential rule of obtaining cheap international airfare (or cheap travel deals of any kind). If your travel website has a "flexible dates" option on their search engine, by all means check that box.

Why? Doing such simple things as adding days to your trip to avoid "peak" days or holidays, taking a departure date that isn't precisely the one you entered in the search, and considering a variety of different formats to the trip (rather than insisting on a non-stop flight) will always pay off. Always.

"Okay," you might say, "that all sounds very reasonable, but isn't there some way to streamline or abbreviate all of these steps and tactics?"

That is another of those "yes and no" sort of issues.

For instance, there are websites that specialize in directing travelers to the most affordable options for their intended destinations. They do this in a number of different ways, and through a range of different systems, but the goal of this site is to give buyers the most options and to allow them to fly based on their preferences - even it is to find the absolute, rock-bottom, lowest fare.

These are the sites to continually rely on if you are hoping to find the most direct route to cheap international airfare.

However, these sites don't always beat out some of the methods we described above. It is essentially a matter of how much work you are willing to do to save some money on the cost of the flight.

For instance, are you willing to use various websites and tactics that will help you build the lowest possible airfare, or would you prefer to work with a site that extends really fair and excellent

bargains, but not necessarily the "bargain basement" price you had hoped for?

Would you be willing to look at all of the airline websites to see if buying directly from them is a more affordable route?

Is there really such a substantial cost difference? It helps if you understand the answer to one of the most ongoing questions related to airfare:

## Why Do Different Sites Show Different Fares?

Let's say that you are a traveler on a long-distance flight to Asia. You are in a Coach seat and you turn to look at the person next to you. That person is on the exact same flight as you, but the airline that you are both using may not see it in such simple terms.

Instead, they see that you each bought a "product" from them. One of you may have booked a full fare two weeks earlier and paid the highest price, but the other of you may have accepted a nonrefundable fare and travel at an off peak time in order to get a lower price.

This is an example of the way that many airlines seek to manage their products through a process that is broadly known as revenue management.

What is it? To keep this as simple as possible, airlines want to fill every single seat on every single flight. This maximizes their profits. However, they understand that there is some sense in keeping a few of the "full fare" seats set aside for the last minute buyers.

To achieve this two part goal (filling the plane and profiting off of last minute shoppers) the airlines will actually divide up all of the available seats in several ways.

For example, they have seats that are sold three weeks ahead of time, two weeks ahead of time, etc. They also reserve a set number of seats for the last minute buyers.

By doing this, they can get a much higher price from the later buyers, but there are serious risks involved. The most obvious is that they end up with an unsold and empty seat.

To help cut down on these risks, airlines also started to divide the tickets for available seats into further subgroups by applying some unique consumer psychological theories.

As an example, there are restrictions, nonrefundable fares, and the old Saturday Night rule that required the traveler to spend Saturday night at the destination (this is a way of cashing in on business travel fares since most business travelers opt to remain at home on the weekends).

All of these things have been done because they relate to consumers' ideas of "value".

For example, the Saturday Night rule gives travelers that discounted fare if they sleep at their destination on a Saturday night.

The thought being that business travelers like to go home for weekends, and leisure travelers are away during weekends. This would mean that business travelers will still pay full fare while the many leisure flyers get a nice discount.

This perception of value for staying on the Saturday night sold lot of tickets, and yet things have started to change.

## **Modern Pricing**

This is due to the Internet, the economy, and the ever increasing competition between airlines and the many websites offering travelers the best rates possible.

Now, a lot of airlines are using what is known as a "bid price" to get rid of seats that might not sell at the full fare.

The online ticket selling sites that most travelers use to book their seats sell this "inventory" and they work directly with the airlines to get the current prices that they will accept.

As an example, Airline XYZ has ten seats on a flight leaving for Portugal in six days. They use their private formula to determine the lowest amount they can accept for that seat without losing money.

The online sellers are given access to this data, and if they have someone willing to pay the price (plus any extra fees that the sites tend to add), the ticket goes for that "bid".

In other words, the airline determines that some seemingly arbitrary figure - let's say \$678 is the price they must get. This is made available to the websites with access to pricing data. The various websites then allow their buyers to search for airfare via a wide array of methods (by location, pricing, departure date, etc.).

Now, a buyer interested in two of those tickets sees that the fare is in a range they can afford. They use the website of their choice to purchase the tickets.

However, that buyer may not pay only the flat \$678 per ticket.

Because they are not purchasing directly from the airline, they may have a few added convenience fees or other fees tacked on.

The best sites limit these to only nominal amounts, but some sites add a much higher amount to the final price tag.

So, the reason that some sites have different prices is pretty simple:

Some of the affordable airfare sites are asking more from their buyers than other similar sites. They charge for the convenience of booking through their site.

### **It Adds Up**

Consider that the following items may bump up the cost considerably:

- Taxes and fees that are confirmed when you purchase;
- Non-refundable service fees; and
- Transaction service fees.

So, this tells you that you must know the website's policies before booking if you are concerned that you are not getting the best rates possible. Be aware that few sites make it easy to understand where the extra fees originate.

Often, it is only when someone asks for a refund on the "guaranteed lowest prices" that they find that they are first refunded by the airline through which the ticket was sold and then the amount tacked on by the discount seller.

Great, you might think, the one good method I thought for getting the lowest possible pricing is not as reliable as I thought!

We would advise that you shouldn't leap to such a conclusion.

### **The Value of Comparing**

Instead, just understand that it is up to you to do some comparison shopping in order identify the current prices from all

of your preferred discounters, and to find out if one is adding a bit too much to the final price.

The best way to do this is to

- Use at least four different providers to get pricing;
- Watch for such terms as "nonrefundable" and "transaction service fees" to understand the risks and costs; and
- Always check the "flexible travel dates" option to get the best possible fare.

Yes, it is a lot of work, but well worth the effort.

Of course, a lot of people become pretty tempted when they see the discount made on things like Business and First Class seats.

After all, there are some instances of one or two upgraded seats going for nearly the same price of the full fare Coach seats.

This is a matter we touch on in the final chapter, but for now it does bring up the idea of upgraded travel.

Most people interested in cheap international travel wonder if "upgrades" are still available, and if they are a viable option for those hoping to score cheaper flights.

Let's take a bit of time to explore the matter...

## The Coveted Upgrade...Is it Still Possible?

Anyone who has ever experienced the "joys" of Coach travel on a long distance flight (please insert sarcastic snort here) has probably dreamed of an upgrade.

Just comparing the crowded seats all jammed together in two-thirds of the plane to the roomy lounge chairs that recline back into something similar to a bed in the other areas makes it easy to see why so many people seek a coveted upgrade.

Naturally, these upgrades don't just rain down on those hoping for a bit of good luck. In fact, in the age of the Internet, they rarely show up at all on international flights at all.

(Interestingly enough, a recent study done on domestic travel in the U.S. revealed that up to 90% of First Class passengers were people who had been upgraded for one reason or another)

### **International Upgrades as Mythical Beasts**

Consider that airlines are now asking for more surcharges and fees than ever, and keeping close track of them via complex computer systems. They are also using computers to pre-seat the entire plane.

For example, many airlines let you choose your seat immediately upon completion of payment.

This locks in the seat and allows the airline to know exactly how many people will be on the flight. This usually eliminates the need to bump people because of overbooking, and, well...there goes the most common route to an upgrade.

So, how does the cheap international traveler get themselves upgraded?

It is harder than ever to get any *undeserved* upgrades, though not impossible.

More often than not it will be the result of a few things:

- Good luck (or some might see it as bad luck);

- A bit of cunning; or
- Earning/buying it.

Let's explain each of these things in order to show you how you too might get yourself an upgrade.

### **Good Luck or Bad**

Many airlines have a nasty habit of overbooking their flights, especially domestic flights but some international carriers are still up to this little tactic.

This is because they don't believe that all of the passengers will show up, but when they do, you can benefit.

For example, let's say that you arrive for your international flight. You have purchased a full Coach fare and suddenly the gate agent is making the announcement that there is a need to "bump" people.

Now, you could just sit in your chair shaking your head no as they keep asking for volunteers, or you could leap at the chance for a major score.

Approach the gate agent and very kindly say that you are willing to consider accepting a bump off the flight if the airline is willing to rebook you with an upgrade (as well as any other special incentives they might provide for giving up the seat).

More often than not, they are happy to do so in order to get the current flight on its way.

Something to keep in mind is this works best when you have no checked baggage. That can mean that you may not win out with this method if you have already checked a large suitcase that was loaded on the plane.



Does it mean you should always pack light in order to take advantage of the opportunity for an upgrade?

That is certainly something to consider, and you may want to go online in the days before your flight to see if the plane seems heavily booked as it is an indicator that this scenario might easily arise.

How is any of this bad luck? If you have made travel plans, it means that they could be put on hold for a lengthy period of time.

This is because the upgrade to First Class may be for the next flight departing, and not necessarily the current one.

That is something to consider if you have arranged the journey to take in some sights you had longed to see and the bump will prevent you from doing so.

In other words, this method of scoring a free upgrade could easily be a serious "win" if you can take a left instead of a right as you enter the cabin; or it could be a bit of good luck that costs you something in return (such as a day or two at your destination).

Only you can know if it is worth any sacrifice, but if the flight is a long one, it most likely is worth the delay.

### **A Bit of Cunning**

When searching for discounted airfare, be sure that you look for any tickets that allow you to become "upgrade eligible".

This is a very tricky tactic used by airlines to block out most of the Coach seats from receiving upgrades - even if they are deserved.

For example, when an airline has overbooked an international flight, they will use electronic "metrics" to find the passengers eligible for upgrades.

This might be someone who is a high-ranking frequent flier (who will be able to cash in the miles for an upgrade) or the person who bought the option to upgrade. Usually, this fills the upgraded seats and leaves everyone else glaring jealously.

You can also use a few other cunning tactics such as:

- Choose the route - A lot of people have been upgraded on international flights because they chose a route that was routinely overbooked due to its popularity.

Places frequented by groups and families are the best options as they are usually packed and will be oversold.

- Dressing well - It may sound petty, but it is often true that someone offered the upgrade is given the chance because they are not wearing flip-flops, trainers, grungy jeans, and a cheap sweatshirt.

Instead, the person who "looks first class" may be the one happily escorted to the front of the plane when it is time to hand out options for upgrades.

- Arrive very early - Don't ever think that a mad dash on to the plane at the very last minute will ensure that you are bumped to First Class because there are no "good seats" left.

Though it has worked for many people who are willing to put up a fuss over a seat that they believe is "unacceptable", the typical result of the late arriver is to get one of the lousiest seats and no overhead storage.

Instead, arrive very early (dressed well, of course) and discreetly tell the agent that you would greatly appreciate the option to upgrade if one became available. It helps if you have a "sob story" that isn't too dramatic - bad back, too tall, slight case of flight anxiety, etc.

- Look for any inconvenience - The TV display is broken? The guy next to you is taking up one and a half seats? The armrest doesn't work? You don't want to be next to the bathrooms?

If an inconvenience is reasonable enough, many airlines will consider an upgrade if no other Coach seats are open. Just don't be obnoxious with the complaints and try to wait until the flight crew is not frazzled in the pre-flight activity.

- Choose seating in a cunning way - If you can choose your own seat at the time you book, elect to sit in the "bulk head" area.

Why? This is because the area is often needed by families and many airlines ask you to move to accommodate them. And if the plane is full...well, you may get a lucky break!

- Use earshot "hovering" - There are still some check in situations in which the agents have control over the seats.

So, ask about available seats when you initially check in and wait within earshot of the check in at the gate.

It is not unusual for some upgrades to be made when you check in right at the last minute after all of the other passengers have made their way on board.

However, this could also result in the same thing as the person who uses the mad dash technique too.

- If you have a title, try using it at check in - This one may seem shabby, but if you are a "titled" person of any kind - a doctor, minister, judge, etc. - you can often put this on your reservation and see if it holds any weight when upgrades are offered.
- Use credentials - If you are a blogger or travel writer, tour operator, or professional travel expert, some airlines respond to your request for an opportunity to document their First Class or Business experience.

## Earning It or Buying It

The last method for getting an upgrade is a bit obvious - you can try to pay for it. However, we don't mean just buying the First Class or Business seat.

Instead, we mean that you can use a few good tactics to nab some of the best seats at deep discounts.

No, that isn't "free" per say, but it sure beats the full fares, which are often triple the cost of Coach.

You can do this by:

- Becoming a Frequent Flier or Loyalty Program Member - Join all airlines frequent flier programs and start building up the miles.

If you are a true "cheap" traveler, you might find that you are hitting the 50k mileage mark every year, and that will bump you into almost any airline's elite status. This gives you a lot of options - including the occasional First Class upgrade.

You can really improve your chances at getting a lot of "perks" by becoming a mileage runner - this is someone who uses their chosen airline to take the low cost and high mileage flights purely to increase their miles. Many flights of this kind cost around two to five cents per mile, which is a tremendous savings when a First Class upgrade is possible on an international trip.

- Ask about privileges - Some airlines offer what are known as First Class seating privileges. This is a special fare that allows you to get a Coach Class fare but to get seating in the First Class area.

This is usually a nonrefundable ticket, so if it is used strictly to get that First Class seating, it could be a disappointment if it doesn't "pan out".

- Look for upgrade certificates online - Many of the online auction sites are treasure troves for those seeking upgrade vouchers and certificates.

When people cannot use them before they expire, they try to make a few bucks by auctioning them off online. This means you might be able to get an upgrade for as little as a few bucks!

- Know the partners - Many airlines have partners that share Frequent Flyer membership. If you book with one of the partner's and have membership, you might increase chances of upgrade offers.

So, can you upgrade? Yes, but it isn't easy or all that common. You can use the tactics above, but some are risky and can find you on a 12-plus hour flight in one of the worst seats possible.

It is up to you to determine if it is worth the effort and hassle.

A lot of people have good stories about "the time I was upgraded..." but as you will discover, most such stories have to do with luck, cunning, or because they paid something extra.

Instead, it is best to use a reliable method to book long distance flights, and we have covered most of the sound and reasonable methods earlier in this chapter.

Even with all of the tips and tactics that we have suggested throughout the chapter, however, there is still one other way to get the lowest possible pricing...

## The Secret of Scoring the Best Deals on Airfare...and it May Surprise You!

Of course, the one "tried and true" method for always scoring the very best deals on airfare is to travel during the "shoulders".

Known as the "off season" in some places, the shoulder seasons are delightful chunks of time between what are often called low and high seasons.

This means that the weather is usually good, the crowds are usually absent or limited, and most of the travel related services (airfare, hotels, etc.) can be nabbed at deep discounts.

This "secret", of course, is not something widely advertised by the airlines, but it is always a period of time when the cost of travel is notably lower than the high season, and often the same price as the true "off" season.

How do you find these fares? In the next chapter we are going to look at traveling around the world using this shoulder seasons approach, so if you are ready, let's dive right into the best times to travel around the world - and all while saving serious money!

## CHAPTER 3:

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# GOING FOR LESS

## Using "Shoulders" to Book the Cheapest International Airfare Possible

Let's begin learning about the best times to travel and get cheap international airfare by understanding "shoulders" a bit more.

As already explained, shoulders used to be called by the generic term "off season", but that is not necessarily the most accurate way of describing them.

Instead, they are precisely as they sound - a sort of turning or curving point in the season that is not the highest, but not even close to the lowest.

Early spring in Germany, autumn in Greece, and late spring in Japan...these are times when conditions are quite nice, but most travelers have not yet made their way to the region.

It is a time when airlines specific to an area, such as Air France or Japan Airlines, may feel a bit of a decline in their business and seek to enhance the bottom line by dropping the prices on their fares.

The enormous global carriers also experience the pressures of seasonal declines too, and compete by offering their own shoulder specials. Even the smallest carriers relax pricing a bit when it is not the high season.

This same way of thinking applies to hotels and accommodations too.

The shoulder seasons are one of the biggest secrets of cheap international travel and airfare because they are not necessarily "THE" time to go to a specific area, but they are awfully close to the best times of the year as well.

Thus, if you are willing to accept some of the "downsides" to shoulder travel, you can find yourself seeing some of the most popular and attractive locations for a fraction of the normal cost.

What are the downsides? They include such issues as weather being good, but not reliable. For example, the rainy season in parts of Asia may overlap into the shoulder season.

There are many attractions or sights that may be "closed" for the season or have only limited hours.

And as with all travel (at all times) there are always the different festivals, events, and celebrations that can cause pricing to bounce back up. For example, Easter in many parts of Europe is celebrated with weeks of activity, and traveling during the Easter holiday may be costly and difficult in some parts of the continent.

## Know What to Expect

Consider some basic facts about scoring the best deals on airfare using shoulders:

- Shoulders tend to be during the North American spring and late autumn seasons (such as between Easter and Thanksgiving).
- However, some shoulder seasons are also outside of traditional school vacations.



- Also, be very careful about booking during what you THINK is a shoulder season, but which may be a time when local festivals or national holidays are occurring.
- Avoid mistakes with shoulder season traveling by opting for flexible travel dates when researching prices. Often this will show a huge difference between departures on certain days, and help you keep down costs and hassles.
- Try to book very close to the region's "high season" as this tends to promise the best weather conditions. Additionally, this can help to ensure that your journey is not delayed or cancelled due to seriously inclement weather. (Clearly, this means that you might also want to consider investing in traveler's insurance if you are using the "shoulders" tactic)
- Round trip airfare is always priced by the departure date. If you fly during peak and return during a shoulder, you will pay the premium fare.

This information shows you that you can get the most restricting part of travel - the costly airfare - at a bargain price if you are willing to skip the high season.

Yes, you might not see the most impressive seasonal sights in some of the world's most coveted locations, but you can (if you know the secrets) still enjoy peak weather, great scenery, and zero crowds.

## Places to Visit During Shoulder Seasons

We would love to say that all locations of the world are great during the shoulder seasons, but that is not true.

Some parts of the world experience extremes of weather so unpredictable that it is foolhardy to plan a visit. Other places have no definable "good season" between their distinct periods of wet or dry weather.

Still other places never see any real "downtime" that could constitute an affordable "shoulder" period.

Rather than go "willy nilly" through a list of places and dates that do have shoulders, we have divided them up by popular regions. We are going to give you a "heads up" about some of the activities (such as festivals and holidays) that occur during the shoulder seasons that might increase the cost of travel or make traveling a bit of a challenge.

As already mentioned, Easter in a lot of Europe is a time of ongoing events and celebrations. You might find that even small villages have few affordable accommodations because so many travelers are visiting a particular site or religious event.

While we cannot list all of them, we will try to provide you with some of the major issues that can bump up airfare, cause problems with accommodations, impact travel, and make a shoulder season visit less successful than it should be.

Our goal is to help you find the best times to book your flights to specific regions of the world, but we won't recommend any specific airlines for doing so.

Why not? This is just not a viable thing to attempt. Airlines change rates so rapidly and some make special deals available during low seasons that it is impossible to say whether one company or another is more favorable to shoulder travel.

What we can reemphasize is that this is one of the most important times to do comparison shopping and research. Take a few days to look for the right prices, and be flexible in what you are willing to do.

## Final Shoulder Season Reminders

Remember the tips from the earlier chapters and be ready to:

- Compare the costs between Coach, Business, and First Class. There are often some surprising finds.
- Be willing to use flexible dates.
- Shop the fare and not necessarily the destination.
- Consider stopovers and connecting flights to get even lower rates.
- Look at the benefit of a package deal as this might provide an "all in one" vacation abroad.

With those things in mind, let's begin to look at some of the most popular shoulder season destinations. We are going to itemize the best (and the worst) times to use the shoulder seasons to see, and look at the following areas:

- Europe;
- Asia;
- Africa;
- Australia and the South Pacific;
- The Caribbean;
- The Middle East; and
- South and Central America, and Mexico

We are going to try to keep things as simple and general as possible, but we are also going to give you a "heads up" about

the different festivals and holidays that tend to have a negative impact on any shoulder season visit to the specific region.

SAMPLE

## CHAPTER 4:

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# CHEAP AIRFARE TO EUROPE

Europe is a good destination at any time of the year, but even so there are shoulder seasons. Remember that many people will insist that shoulder seasons have a general timeline, but neglect such facts as simple as this:

*England and Greece are both considered to be Europe, but do not have similar travel seasons.*

So, what does that tell the savvy budget flyer and traveler? It tells them that a calendar of shoulder seasons is a very powerful travel tool.

With that in mind, however, we do have a few "general" travel tips for those considering booking their flight during a time that is considered to be a shoulder season.

### **General Shoulder Season Tips for Europe**

Many of these apply to the other areas of the world, and should be used as standard suggestions and tips.

- Consider the Destination - Those who follow the general "April through mid-June and September through October" definitions of the shoulder season are running some risks with a few European locations.

For example, spring and fall are noticeably cooler times in Mediterranean Europe - and that means that spots like Italy, Spain, Greece, Croatia, and southern France will experience high season prices and crowds.

- Remember Seasons - When challenged by the options between pre or post summer travel, remember that seasons will vary and create conditions that may be unfavorable to your trip.

For instance, the Alps may have a lot of snow during the spring months but be very easy to traverse in the autumn. The Mediterranean region is amazingly green and verdant in the spring, but dry, parched, and sometimes unpleasant in the autumn.

- Europe to Yourself - There are also some popular destinations that are empty during the peak seasons. This means that you may want to plan certain trips during peak times if it lets you enjoy the sights without the crowds.

One great example of this is Paris, which many residents say feels empty and abandoned during the months of July and August, even though all of the typical shops, restaurants, and sites are open and operating.

- Remember Holidays - Cities never experience much "down time" and locations like Rome, Paris, London, and Barcelona are active on a year round basis.

However, in the days or weeks before major holidays - such as Christmas or Easter - things can feel very "high season" in terms of prices on flights, accommodations, food, and more.

- Short Hours Abound - One of the "downsides" of shoulder travel is that many of the sights and attractions have to use short hours because of shorter days.

Some locations are closed altogether during portions of the shoulder season too. This can make the difference between a rewarding journey and a frustratingly empty one - so be aware of this one shoulder season glitch.

- Do Research - What all of these tips tell you is that it is best to do the research based on the location. Luckily, we've done a lot of it for you by creating this useful "shoulder calendar" below.

Additionally, Europe is notorious for a lot of festivals that lead to trouble with airfare and accommodations.

You will want to avoid:

- Belgium - in the city of Binche there is an annual Carnival on the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday prior to Ash Wednesday. In fact, the entire Lenten and Easter season is very busy and features festivals almost daily.
- Bulgaria - in March is the Baba Marta Festival, which is a wine festival that brings huge crowds. In early May is a film festival in the city of Sofia that can also crowd the capital.
- Croatia - the spring boating festivals bring huge numbers to the different lakes and rivers throughout the month of March.
- Czech Republic - Prague has an annual Half Marathon in March that sees participants from 55

countries, and this can boost prices in the city. April is the time of the Easter Market in Prague as well.

- Denmark - the day after Easter is a national holiday, and in late May they have a massive Carnival as well as Common Prayer Day.
- Finland - in the last week of May there is the World Village Festival.
- France - in Nice there is a huge annual Mardi Gras event in the days before Lent which packs the city, and Paris is also very crowded with its own Carnival. In the cooler months there is La Toussaint and Le Jour Des Morts on November first and second. These are bank holidays and many areas come to a standstill.
- Germany - the Easter season is marked by a tremendous number local festivals and celebrations, and in late April many Bavarian villages have Saint George's Parade, which is a daylong event that can make travel difficult. November is the time of Martinsfest or Saint Martin's Festival and it too is widely celebrated with fairs and special events.

Also, the Hamburger Dom (the Hamburg Fair) runs from November until Christmas and brings many tourists. Lastly, pay attention to any notices about Shutzenfeste - which are Marksmen's Festivals that occur all over Germany throughout the year. These are huge contests that still draw enormous crowds.

- Hungary - every March is the Budapest Spring Festival that draws locals and travelers from abroad.
- Italy - as a primarily Catholic country the Easter season is marked by many celebrations and



community events. On March 19, the Saint Joseph celebrations occur in Sicily, and this is a major event. In November, the San Martino festival is widely celebrated with parades and wine tasting events too. Naturally, the same warnings apply for the Christmas season too.

- Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania - The month of March is when the spring crafts fairs are held in Vilnius. This is also the month for the International Children's Film Festival in Latvia as well. April is the Jazzkaar in Estonia as well.
- Norway - in May is their National Day, which sees a lot of domestic travel, and the Bergen International Festival occurs in late May. April 14 and October 14 of each year is Faredag, and this finds most city markets packed with people selling food, handiwork, and more.
- Paris - Holy Week (the Easter holidays) causes high prices and serious crowding in the city.
- Poland - in Catholic Poland the month of March is usually when Palm Sunday is celebrated and many family gatherings occur - which can restrict travel and limit accommodations in some areas. In April, Krakow hosts the huge Theatrical Reminiscences, which has an international following.
- Portugal - December is their shoulder season, but during the first weekend in December (the holiday of the Immaculate Conception) the city of Lisbon can become impossibly crowded.

On May 13 and October 13 of every year the Nossa Senhora de Fatima occurs in Estremadura and sees hundreds of thousands of pilgrims - meaning travel can be difficult.

There are carnival celebrations before Ash Wednesday as well, and this can also lead to some travel challenges. November 11 is their Saint Martin's celebration which can include huge village feasts and local festivals.

- Spain - Valencia has its huge Bonfires of Saint Joseph events March 12-19, and this brings large numbers to the region.

This country also has a massive amount of Carnival celebration during the three days before Ash Wednesday and enormous crowds gather at all of the pre-Easter and Easter events too. Just after Easter are many "ferias" or fairs that will also have large crowds.

- Sweden - in early June is the Taste of Stockholm Festival that draws large crowds, and another Beer and Whisky Festival in September. There is also an apple festival in southern Sweden in September that attracts a lot of visitors.

In Stockholm the night of April 30 is Walpurgis Night, and the city is crowded with revelers.

- Switzerland - the Alp Aufzug or the Procession to the Alps is an annual migration of animals into the pasturelands of the Alps, and though picturesque it can bring travelers to a stop.

A short time before Lent is the Fastnacht or Carnival and this too is a widely celebrated event - particularly in Basel

- Tuscany - during the Easter holiday it is not unusual for the entire region to be flooded with European tourists.

- United Kingdom - November is the annual Guy Fawkes Night that can lead to some difficulties with accommodation, and the UK in general has dozens of annual events. You must check well ahead of your departure to be sure you won't encounter difficulties with accommodation or travel during a shoulder season visit.

## Best Shoulder Season Spots in Europe

Below are the most highly recommended times to see the different parts of Europe, receive the lowest airfare options, and enjoy the many perks of shoulder season travel.

- March

UK, Ireland and Scotland - wildflowers are appearing, the weather is very nice, and yet few tourists are around. (Through April)

- April

All of the major cities throughout Europe are in their best spring weather, but the many crowds don't come for another two months! Get the best of café culture at this time and into early June.

All of the European Alps Region - you can even get some late season skiing in if you time it right! (Especially in Tignes, France)

The Mediterranean region - weather is good and crowds are sparse. Enjoy the beaches almost to yourself!

- May

Mediterranean Cruises - the weather is great, but prices are lower by around 20% than those of the high season a few months later.

Scandinavia - wildflowers, cool temperatures, and no crowds.

- September

All of the major European cities - the crowds depart and the cities are less crowded, while the weather is a delight.

Greece - the summer tourists have departed and the islands are now peaceful and pleasant. (Through October)

Scandinavia - the harvest season begins and this is a good time for long drives and lots of great food.

- October

Mediterranean Resorts - the crowds are gone and the weather is still fantastic in places like Sicily, Crete, and Ibiza.

- November

All of the European Alps Region - snow is on the ground, but the crowds have only just started to arrive. (Through mid-December)

Europe alone could provide a traveler with a lifetime of affordable experiences. Whether heading to Greece in the spring or to Norway in the autumn, it is possible to find remarkably affordable flights when you book only during the shoulder season in Europe.

## CHAPTER 5:

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# CHEAP AIRFARE TO AFRICA

Africa is another enormous location that is impossible to fit into a traditional "season". While Alexandria in Egypt or Marrakech in Morocco may be in the midst of their spring, the people of South Africa are feeling the first autumnal chills.

However, most places seem to experience "shoulders" at roughly the same times of year.

Africa's shoulder season (generally seen as mid-May to mid-June and then mid-September to mid-October) overlaps with several national holidays or festivals, and they are:

- Egypt - the Pharonic Race departs from Cairo each November, the Abu Simbel festivals happen twice per year in February and October, and the Cairo International Film Festival is in November and December.
- Ethiopia - religious festivals are abundant here and the Timkat period each January sees huge crowds in Addis Abba, while Christmas is also extremely busy too.
- Ghana - the Akwasidee festival is celebrated every 42 days and the Hogbetsotso Festival is on the first Saturday of November.

- Ivory Coast - the Bouake Carnival occurs at the end of March, the Fete du Dipri is held in Gomon in April, and the Fetes des Masques occurs every November in the region near Man.
- Kenya - Madaraka Day occurs on June first and is a nationally celebrated day. Every September is the popular Nairobi International Book Fair that packs the city, and the Mombasa Carnival occurs each November.

The Africa Concours d'Elegance is an annual auto race near Nairobi, and this too draws enormous numbers.

- Lesotho - the Morija Arts & Cultural Festival begins on the first Thursday in October and draws huge crowds.
- Mali - in April is their Fete des Masques, in December is the Crossing of the Cattle festival in Diafarabe and both bring great crowds.
- Morocco - a large New Year's celebration occurs every year in the Moroccan Sahara.
- Nigeria - every October is their Durbar Festival.
- Rwanda - September 25 is Kamarampaka Day which is a nationally celebrated event.
- South Africa - the Augrabies Extreme Marathon is a seven day event in October that attracts many visitors, the Hermanus Whale Festival occurs every September and lasts a full week. I

n March is the wildly popular Cape Epic bike race that lasts ten days and draws thousands of travelers,

the Splashy Fen Outdoor Festival runs in March and is incredibly popular (it takes place near Underberg), and in late March and Early April the Absa Klein Karoo National Arts Festival occurs and draws tens of thousands.

- Tunisia - in April the city of Carthage is given over to the ten day Carthage Jazz Festival.
- Uganda - the Bayimba International Festival of Music and Arts occurs every September and is very popular.
- Zanzibar - each February is their Sauti za Busara music festival that brings thousands of viewers to see the 400+ musicians.

You also want to do specific research about any of the African locations you are considering as there are many smaller events and festivals that can easily impair traffic, cause difficulty with accommodations, and bump up prices.

### **Best Shoulder Season Spots in Africa**

Below are the most highly recommended times to see the different parts of Africa, receive the lowest airfare options, and enjoy the many perks of shoulder season travel.

- March

Botswana - this is the time when flood plains begin to dry and lots of wildlife is on the move. (Through April)

Eastern Africa - the wildlife viewing is at its best and the Great Migration is coming to an end.

- May

Mediterranean Cruises - the weather is great, but prices are lower by around 20% than the high season a few months later. If you are hoping to roll a cruise into a trip to northern Africa, this is a good time.

- September

Morocco - all of the European travelers have departed but the weather is still fine and lovely.

South Africa - Safari prices drop at this time because the foliage is much less dense. (Through early October)

- October

East Africa - the rain season occurs and makes it possible to do a lot of bird watching.

Kenya - the migration is ending but the animals are still readily seen. (Through November)

- November

Botswana - take your chances because this is when the rains may begin, though the landscape is very appealing.

Don't let the size of Africa deter you from seeking bargains during the shoulder season.

Generally, it is northern Africa that offers the best should rates in March and April (so, plan that visit to the Pyramids or the Atlas Mountains), while eastern Africa (such as Kenya and Tanzania) is great during September and October. South Africa is also good during March and April, but later in the year is a good time too.



## CHAPTER 6:

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# CHEAP AIRFARE TO ASIA

Most of Asia is known for wildly humid and hot weather. From places in China to the southernmost points of the region, it can seem like there is little respite from the brutal conditions.

Fortunately, there are times prior to the rains when the weather is lovely and when fewer travelers are around.

Again, there are some times when local festivals and celebrations can make it tough to find an accommodation or to travel affordably. This means that your research is imperative to your success.

Some events and celebrations to remain aware of as you plan a shoulder season visit:

- Cambodia - in late November is the Loi Krathong or "moon festival" that is celebrated in many parts of the country.
- China - during the months of September and October is the annual Shanghai Tourism Festival, also in October is the Shanghai International Arts Festival. In mid-March, the Shanghai Peach Blossom Festival packs the city with many travelers from around the world. In the second week of April, Beijing hosts the Dongyue Temple Fair.

- India - the Navratri takes place during the second week of October and is a huge, national event. In November, the Diwali takes place nationally as well. Later in November, the Pushkar Fair occurs and hosts hundreds of thousands of people. The holiday of Vaisakhi is often celebrated in Punjab by huge groups of Sikhs.

In late February is the annual Holi, and this sees thousands of events with huge gatherings at each.

- Laos - the Boun Ok Phansa boat racing festival occurs in October, and from November through December is the That Luang Festival that sees thousands of people attending each day.

In March is the Boun Pha Vet festival that occurs nationally and lasts for three days. In the second week of April is Boun Pi Mai, the New Year, which is celebrated around the country.

- Myanmar - in early March is the Full Moon Day of Tabaun that is a nationally celebrated event.
- Thailand - the Bang Fai Phaya Nak event happens in Sakon Nakhon in late September, and in the second week of October is the Phuket Vegetarian Festival. The second week of November is the Thailand International Swan Boat Races in Phra Nakhon, and in Chonburi in October is the Buffalo Racing.

In Nakhon Phanom during the last week of October, the Illuminated Boat Procession occurs. The first week of November is the Phuket Carnival. Later that month, the Surin Elephant Roundup is held and is a huge event.

- Vietnam - the month of September sees the Doson Buffalo Fighting Festival in Haiphong City. In April is

the annual Whale Festival in Danang, and this is attended by large crowds.

In early May, the Giong Festival occurs in Hanoi and is a very widely celebrated event.

## Best Shoulder Season Spots in Asia

- March

Borneo - the rains are ending and yet the crowds are not yet arrived.

Burma - the best time of the year to visit is March and April.

India - good temperatures fewer international travelers.

Malaysia - beaches are almost empty. (Through April)

- April

Cambodia and Laos are experiencing good weather at this time, with low humidity and comfortable temperatures.

Sri Lanka - this is one of the best times to visit this lovely island as the weather is perfect and few visitors crowd the landscape.

- May

- Hong Kong - there are no tourists yet and the weather is extremely comfortable

Japan - Now is the time to visit. Though the gorgeous cherry blossoms have come and gone,

you will get some fine weather that is free of the usual humidity and crowds.

- Early June

Thailand - The weather in May is usually extremely hot, and then the rains come bringing June's glorious weather. The tourists arrive in late June or early July, so plan the flight in the first weeks of the month.

- October

Borneo - the rains have just started and yet the landscape is still dry and comfortable.

Japan and Korea are less crowded and the weather is cooler.

Nepal - this is the time to hike in the mountains and get great prices for destinations like Kathmandu.

- November

Thailand - things are drying out, but still cooler and you can visit the beaches without experiencing many crowds.

Vietnam - cool and dry weather occurs during this month and it is a good time for hiking and "adventure" travel.

Though Asia is a diverse and enormous region, the conditions throughout are relatively predictable. This makes it a safe bet to plan a shoulder season visit to any of the countries in the region.

## CHAPTER 7

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# CHEAP AIRFARE TO AUSTRALIA AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Visiting this part of the world can be one of the most expensive journeys imaginable. This is due to the lengthy flight times from most parts of the globe. Depending upon your location, most people leaving North America can anticipate more than 15 hours of flight time, and this usually translates to a hefty fee for the seat on the plane.

However, this wonderful location also experiences its fair share of shoulder time too. The shoulder season here usually includes only May and then early to mid-November. The cyclone season is seen as running from late November to April, during the high season this entire region is literally swarming with European and Australian tourist. This includes the waters of the region which are also packed with many cruise ships.

The events that overlap the shoulder season include:

- Australia - during the days before Ash Wednesday the city of Sydney hosts the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras that packs the city with revelers.

In May there is the Byron Bay Blues and Roots Festival in New South Wales. In September are the Birdsville Races in the Queensland area, and in December, the Woodford Folk Festival in

Queensland also draw tens of thousands of people into the region

- Cook Islands - their annual canoe festival is in November as well as the Turama festival, and both can cause some crowding. There is also a dancing contest in late May known as the Te Mire Ura.
- New Zealand - each November the Wellington International Jazz Festival brings enormous crowds to the area.
- Papua New Guinea - the Highlands Show occurs every October and features over 100 tribes.
- Tahiti - in mid-May is the Tahiti Pearl Regatta, and in the first part of November are the famous outrigger races.
- Vanuatu - the Land Diving Festival occurs in April in the city of Naghol and attracts many travelers from around the world.

### **Best Shoulder Season Spots in Australia and the South Pacific**

- April

New Zealand - enjoy the last of the good weather before winter sets in.

Sydney - this is considered a peak time to visit the city as there are few crowds and the weather is still very cool.

The Australian Outback - cooler temperatures and fewer travelers means that sites like the famous

Ayers Rock are accessible, and without the typical risk of sunburn and heat stroke! (Through May)

- May

Fiji - all 300+ islands are experiencing the end of the rains, but travelers are not yet abundant.

Great Barrier Reef - this is the lowest priced travel season for those who want to enjoy great weather, smaller crowds, and good diving. (Through August)

Northern Australia - good airfares abound at this time and the weather is simply wonderful. (Through June)

- September

Bali - enjoy the great weather before the rain season begins. (Through October)

- October and November

New Zealand - pay a visit now as the warmer weather starts to arrive. (Through December)

Tahiti and Fiji - though the entire South Pacific is experiencing great weather before the typical cyclone season arrives, the crowds are not around.

- Early December

Malaysia - experience quiet beaches and cooler weather.

## CHAPTER 8

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# CHEAP AIRFARE TO THE CARIBBEAN

The shoulder season in the Caribbean (usually the classic Mid-April to late May, and then early September to mid-December) is a time of relatively calm weather and extremely empty beaches.

Why do people stay away? The months of June through November are considered "hurricane season" and few travelers are willing to take the risk.

If you buy a nonrefundable airfare remember that you may lose out if the flights are cancelled due to the approach of a hurricane. And there is always the off chance that you can get stuck in the region if a hurricane hits while you are visiting.

However, there are actually a few of the Caribbean islands far less likely to experience hurricane issues, and they include Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao. In the southern Caribbean area, Tobago and Trinidad are also considered the least likely to get hit by a hurricane too.

Also keep in mind that travel experts tend to say that travel to the eastern part of the Caribbean until mid-September can be riskier, while the western part of the region experiences the most turbulent weather from the middle of September into November.

Also, this region is known for hosting many festivals that can cause some problems with airfare prices and accommodations.



You will want to avoid:

- Bahamas - during late October and early November due to the Governor's Harbour Homecoming Festival.
- The Dominican Republic - watch for a popular Jazz Festival every fall and check your dates carefully.
- Jamaica - there is a clash with the shoulder season in October when many areas are given over to celebrations around Peter Tosh's birthday.
- Puerto Rico - April and May are literally packed with many local festivals, but Vieques is an exception. It is usually quiet and not at all crowded.
- Aruba - In late May there is an enormous music festival that floods the island with travelers.
- Barbados - in late April their Reggae Festival leads to heavy crowding.
- Trinidad & Tobago - in early November the island's Indian residents celebrate the new Year and in late April a massive Jazz Festival and a fishing tournament overlap the shoulder season.

### **Best Shoulder Season Spots in the Caribbean**

- March  

Bermuda begins its shoulder season now through early April, and can be quite chilly.
- April

The entire Caribbean region - after Easter the prices for trips to this area drop in anticipation of hurricane season. However, that is actually many weeks away and this shoulder season lasts until early June.

- Early June

Now is the moment to get the very lowest prices for all Caribbean islands and destinations.

- September

Aruba, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago: The southern islands are the best for good weather and fewer crowds.

Bermuda has its other shoulder this month and it runs through November.

- November

The entire Caribbean region - through mid-December, and long before the holiday crowds arrive you can enjoy empty beaches and good deals.

The only iffy issue associated with the Caribbean shoulder season is the weather.

The people of the region do tend to plan their local festivals during the off season to allow for the best freedom of movement and options for people who live year round on the islands. However, most of the festivals also see their fair share of tourists. So, check the upcoming calendar of events to be sure you are truly avoiding the crowds when you visit this area.

## CHAPTER 9:

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# CHEAP AIRFARE TO THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East is a rather generic term for a huge number of destinations. This region, however, is plagued by tumultuous political activities, and it is something to keep in mind when you begin scheduling your visit.

Though many countries in the Middle East are remarkably safe for travelers of all kinds, such as Israel and Jordan, there are times when the entire region seems to be on a "traveler alert". No matter what the season or deal, make a point to just check with the State Department website for updates about any "hot spots" to be aware of, or even avoid.

With that in mind, the shoulder seasons are great times to explore the desert climate of the Middle East. The seasons run from April through May and then October through November. Any countries with proximity to the sea will tend to be cooler, though summer temperatures for most of the region are brutal. The autumn is always about desert scenery since any plants are usually scorched by the time cooler weather arrives.

The countries considered to be the most traveler friendly and safe in the Middle East are Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, and the UAE.

Apart from safety, the following festivals or events may interfere with your shoulder season plans, or boost prices due to high demand for travel and accommodations to a certain area:

- Persian celebration of the New Year in March can be celebrated in many locations.
- Abu Dhabi has national festival every March, a Film Festival in October, and a national Arts Fair in November.
- Bahrain is the site of a massive Grand Prix in April
- Dubai has a Jazz Festival each February, an Equestrian World Cup and an International Advertising Festival every March, and a film festival in early December. The country also hosts the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature in March as well. Every December the world famous "X Games" are hosted in Dubai as well, and this can lead to major crowding.
- Israel has a National Festival in Jerusalem every May and also has Shabbat every Saturday - this leads to no public transportation options from Friday evening until after sunset on Saturday night. There is the Red Sea Festival in the resort town of Eilat every March as well. Tel Aviv hosts the International Documentary Film Festival every April.
- Jordan is the site of a huge Dead Sea Marathon every April
- Oman has year round camel races that can draw huge crowds, be aware of any scheduled events. There is also the Muscat Festival in January and the Tour of Oman bicycle race each February.
- Qatar hosts the Doha Cultural Festival every March and the Tribeca Film Festival in October.

- Syria usually hosts a film festival in November in the city of Damascus, but in light of recent political upheaval travel to this region is restricted.

## **Best Shoulder Season Spots in the Middle East**

- March

Jordan is enjoying the best weather during this month and into April (this is also considered a good time to visit Egypt and Morocco and is a common "tour" option)

- April

Though not the classic Middle East, this is a time for a visit to Turkey - especially Istanbul because of lower prices and few tourists.

- May

- Mediterranean Cruises - the weather is great, but prices are lower by around 20% than the high season a few months later.

- Early June

Head to the Red Sea via Eilat in Israel for affordable fares, accommodations, and low or off season diving prices.

- September

Dubai - this is the season for camel racing and cooler days - the crowds are almost non-existent however, and this is a true "bargain" season for a luxury destination. (Through late October)

- October

All parts of the Middle East are beginning to cool down or experience the first of the winter rains. Oman and Jordan are particularly popular at such times.

- November

An ideal time to visit the Jordan Valley in Israel and to experience the pleasant temperatures and even a bit of snow at high elevations!

Syria is particularly pleasant during this season, and if it is open to travelers can be a good experience.

The Middle East is a fascinating place to travel. It is the birthplace of the world's three most famous religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), but it is also fascinating for its diverse geography.

It can be costly to fly into this region because it is a long journey from North America, and even from parts of Europe. This means that using the shoulder season is a very savvy way to get there during some good weather. Just be sure to check for travel alerts and you should have an enjoyable journey.

## CHAPTER 10:

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# CHEAP AIRFARE TO SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA, AND MEXICO

It is impossible to view Central and South America, and Mexico as one vast and similar location. Rather it should be viewed as a region with some similarities in terms of language and cultural heritage, but radically different in many other ways.

For example, when it is winter in North America it is summer in South America, and this does have an impact on the shoulder seasons.

However, Mexico is in the same hemisphere as North America, and its seasons are running concurrently. The reason we mention this is to point out that when you travel to this large area of the world, you can expect radically different weather patterns.

Remember too that some of the countries and locales are also considered places where hurricanes strike as this too can cut into savvy travel plans.

Generally, the shoulder season of South America will include the standard months of March through June and then September through November - but there are a few notable exceptions in the countries that have many different climates and zones. As an example, Brazil has the rainforests but some

parts are closer to the sea and experience year round rainy conditions.

With that in mind, let's look at some of the key times of the shoulder seasons in this part of the world, and when local events, festivals, or activities might impact your shoulder season experience and value.

- Argentina - the famous Yeite Tango Festival occurs in Buenos Aires every March, and the Manca Fiesta celebration is in October.
- Bolivia has the Phyllay Festival and the Oruro Carnival each January and the Fiesta San Miguel in September.
- Brazil - December through February is the high season for beaches. June is Boi Bumba in Brazil, which is a Carnival-like festival, and the real Carnival is in February. Reveillon is in January as well, and Cirio de Nazare and the Igreja Beer Festival are both in October.
- Chile - Patagonia is packed from July through the end of September. The Fiesta Grande in Andacollo occurs every December
- Colombia - December through March is the festival season here, December through July is the holiday season, and April and May are rainy. This is a challenging country where good weather and shoulder prices occur. January has the Carnaval throughout the country as well.
- Costa Rica has the PachMama River Festival in January.
- Ecuador - avoid booking visits later than May as the June through August season is impossibly busy.



- Guatemala has Semana Santa in April.
- Mexico sees the Feria de San Marcos in April, Cinco de Mayo in early May as well as Feria de San Marcos in that same month, the Feria de Zacatecas is in September, the Day of the Dead is in October and the Night of the Radishes is in Oaxaca in December.
- Panama has the Kuna Yala Moon Gathering every December
- Peru - This is one of the rare places of the world that is good to visit at almost any time thanks to its proximity to the equator. Machu Picchu is one of the most popular locations, and you don't want to plan a visit in February as the trails to the Andes Mountain site are always closed for repair. The Inti Raymi Inca Festival is in Early June, the Mes Morado festival is in October, and the La Diablada Festival occurs each November.
- Uruguay has the Punta Weekend in October.

### **Best Shoulder Season Spots in South and Central America, and Mexico**

- March

All parts of Central America experience the dry season from January through March.

Argentina - from December to March is the time to visit Patagonia.

Brazil - from January through May is the wet season in the Pantanal and Amazon rainforests, and though wet it is the best time to see wildlife.

Rio de Janero - With Carnival finished, the crowds are gone and everything drops in price as the good weather starts to arrive.

- April

Peru - Head to Machu Picchu now...no crowds, freshly repaired trails, and the rains are at an end. (Through April)

Patagonia - visit before the winter sets in and while crowds are gone.

Riviera Maya - after Easter the prices for trips to this area drop in anticipation of hurricane season. However, that is actually many weeks away and this shoulder season lasts until early June.

- May

Belize - the tourists are gone and prices are deeply discounted.

Costa Rica - great weather without all of the crowding.

- Early June

Baja Peninsula - few crowds and excellent weather.

Brazil - this is an amazingly good time to get a visit to the beaches as the crowds are gone and the weather is still fine.

- September

From July to September is the time to visit Patagonia for skiing and snowboarding.

Galapagos - this is the time to head to Ecuador and get the best of good weather and easier travel.

- October

Baja Peninsula - few crowds and excellent weather.

- November

Mexico, the Riviera Maya is in a pre-holiday quiet season that makes beaches very affordable and the weather great.

- Early December

Belize and Costa Rica - the rains have just ended and this place is very green and enticing - though not as lush as it will be in the coming months. (Through mid-December)

Nicaragua and Honduras have the start of their dry season now, making it a great time to get the best deals and conditions.

Because the Central and Southern American region, along with Mexico (and the Baja Peninsula) all experience radically different weather, you could feasibly spread out your shoulder season travels across many different months.

Do a bit of research into the specific region you want to visit and it is likely that you can travel from south to north enjoy the best weather and the smallest crowds...not to mention the best prices.

# BUSINESS CLASS TRAVEL

## Finding the Best Business Class Airfares

There are only two ways to look at business class travel when attempting to find it at a cheap price. The first way is as a full fare passenger who books their cozy business class seat at the surprisingly high rate that most airline demands, and then there is the second, and more preferable way.

The second method is to use some of the same tactics we suggested a bit earlier for a free upgrade to First Class. However, there are a few other ways that Coach travelers can get themselves a Business class seat apart from the standard methods.

Some of these methods might seem odd to anyone who has not tried them before, but in the era of decreasing upgrades, there are still some very savvy ways to get yourself into one of those far more humane seats - and it is particularly wise to use these methods when you are on a long non-stop flight or one that requires many hours in the air.

### **From Steerage...uh, Coach to Business Class in a Few Simple Steps**

- Set your alarm clock - How is this going to get an upgrade? Well, if you wake yourself up (or keep track of the precise time) 24 hours before your flight,

you can check in early. What would this do for you? This is what a lot of industry insiders know is "panic time" for a lot of airlines. One full day before the flight departs, the airlines automated systems review the seats left on any plane, and when the circumstances are right, they automatically start discounting upgrades to fill empty seats.

So, if you are due to leave a 2 AM (because you were very smart and booked an unpopular departure time in order to gain access to cheap upgrades), you can set the alarm clock to ring at that unholy hour. You can then go online or phone the airline to check in and find out about the discounted upgrades at that point.

Now, you might ask precisely why you have to do this at this time and not at a more amenable hour of the day. The answer is simple: A lot of people have picked up on this tactic and you could find yourself scrambling to get one of those seats at such an affordable price.

- Check in Twice - We did already mention a similar tactic to this one, but let's review how it can get you a cheap upgrade to business class. When you check in online 24 hours ahead of time, you don't always see those opportunities for a cheaper business seat. Still check in ahead of time, and then do the same when you arrive at the airport.

If you are a good and savvy traveler you will have arrived far ahead of schedule, and using the check in kiosk at the airport is going to be another good opportunity for taking advantage of unsold seats and panicky airline ticket sellers looking to make at least some profit on those seats.

The second check in process will usually give you the going rates for tickets, and often travelers are astonished to find that the business seats may be only a small amount more than the prices paid for their coach fares.

- Let the Bidding Begin - If you are an observant sort of person, you might often notice when people seem a bit stressed out, harried, or otherwise more distracted than what seems normal. This is often something to watch for where gate agents are concerned.

Why? While these people are in charge of getting everyone boarded, making sure luggage is acceptable, and generally handling all of the last minute hassles, they are also the people who can make those last, off the computer grid, decisions on upgrades.

Watch the gate agents and take note of any that are toting a pencil and pad. If you see them speak with a fellow passenger, jot a note on the pad, and show it to the passenger, you are witnessing what we'll call extreme upgrading. These are those legendary upgrades made at the gates, and they are a dying breed. However, they are possible if you are pleasant to the gate agent, let them know you are happy to discuss upgrades if available, and then stand discreetly nearby to await the opportunity.

- Use Non Business Days - You already learned that many airlines create special package prices to work around the typical business travel dates (in other words those mandatory Saturday or Sunday stays in the destination that would only be used by a traveler rather than a business professional who wants to be home for the weekends). This makes it possible for someone hoping to get a business seat to do so if

they use the two tactics above AND book their flight during a time of the week less amenable to the business traveler. For example, business class seating is less likely to be full on a Saturday red eye flight to Prague or London than it would be on a Monday flight. Consider booking a flight in this format and then seeking any upgrades.

NOTE: Fridays ARE peak business days. Though they are the official start of the weekend, many business travelers are in the air on Fridays, so don't attempt to use this day of the week if you want to get the upgrade.

- Sneak into an Elite Status - Though the frequent fliers of the world often get an elite or special status because they are so often seated in business or first class of a specific airline's planes, you can also find ways of obtaining this sort of reputation too.

It all starts with a bit of an investigation. For instance, does your preferred airline have a miles club option? If so, it is also likely to have some unspoken program that works a bit like a challenge. As an example, American Airlines has a secret opportunity known as the Gold or Platinum Challenge. It is nearly impossible to find information about it on their official website or pages, but the programs exist and can earn someone a tremendous return.

Here's how the AA version works: Contact their award travel department directly and enroll in the program you feel you can complete. Essentially, it is a 90 day period in which you must hit from five to ten thousand of their "QPoints". These are points earned for miles traveled, and they are valued based on your fare. So, if you pay a full fare for a seat, you get 1.5 points for each mile flown. Book a discounted seat and still get one point per mile. If you hit the

challenge number, you receive elite status and enjoy all of the benefits.

Some tips for using these types of options, however, would have to include:

Being aware of the fares with "codes" that prevent the mileage (each program is different and you will have to ask for all of the details); and

Track mileage yourself and change the routing of your flight if it will help you hit the mileage (as an example, you are flying into London from NYC and see that your journey is 3500 miles. You want to get closer to 5000, and so you can choose a route that takes you to Chicago or Miami before heading to London.

- **Make Your Own Business Class** - Okay, this one is not as valid as the rest, but just consider the following suggestion: If are able to use an early check in feature, and we mean a "super" early check in that costs an average of ten dollars to use, you can often be one of the first people to get on board the plane.

Why would this matter? If you give any attention to the different options that become available to you at the time of booking and in the day ahead of departure, you are already aware of the different "extras" you can purchase for as little as \$5 or \$10. These include "cut in line" fees that let you be the first of the coach passengers to board immediately after the first and business class elites.

These fees also allow you to get a better seat, such as an Economy Plus seat, a front row aisle seat of your choice, or even premium seating in an upgraded class (minus all of the luxuries).



So, you could feasibly pay the full fare, add the five or ten bucks for premium seating options, and grab yourself a front row seat, gain access to all of the bins before everyone else, and generally create your own business class seating without the hefty price tag.

NOTE: A little known secret about seating includes choosing the last row at the back of the plane. This will allow you to often end up with one or two empty seats near you if you time the flight correctly. Consider this as the opposite of that front row benefit, but be aware that some of these seats do sell out at the last minute, and keep checking the seating availability to see if you just snagged yourself a leisurely three seat spread or set yourself up for a crowded flight.

- Call Directly - The final way to enjoy affordable business seating on international flights is to work with an old fashioned travel agent.

While you will always want to have the direct dial lines for the award travel department (using general customer service numbers will rarely bring any advantages, but a direct line to the people with the power to upgrade will), you also want to consider contacting professional travel agents.

Why? These are people with access to all kinds of software programs and industry information that no consumers ever see. These are the folks with knowledge about special fare codes, insider "clubs" or challenges (like the one mentioned above) and industry consolidators that provide unpublished rates or options.

Contacting a person like this can often allow you to beat an online quote from basic travel websites and

to find those unique opportunities that can come to those willing to be flexible in order to gain the tremendous comfort of a business seat during an international journey.

## **Some Final Thoughts on Cheap International Business Travel**

Business travel is fairly close to first class. This means you can often save a tremendous amount of money on the non-air travel expenses.

For example, the ground transportation "extras" for people flying business and first class fares are often pretty astonishing. A good illustration of this is the complimentary cars that are provided to flyers on Virgin Atlantic's first and business classes. These people enjoy free ground transport to any location in many destinations because of their willingness to book business or higher.

Interestingly enough, a lot of these bonuses also transfer over to you if you are fortunate enough to upgrade. Thus, it can really pay off if you take the time to find ways to get yourself one of these seats.

Also, if you do actually travel for business reasons, you really must enroll in any frequent flier programs. It doesn't matter if your firm has you on one airline only once or twice per year because the programs tend to use miles and not numbers of time you check in.

Consider something as basic as a twice yearly flight from New York to a Middle East destination such as Tel Aviv. A single flight would rack up more than five thousand miles - one way! If you enroll in the airline's mileage program, and get a company credit card with mileage rewards, the ability to use these points could easily give you an upgrade when you buy a lower priced fare.

Don't forget that mergers and shared systems can also be beneficial when seeking a business class seat at an affordable rate.

Also, don't ignore all of those credit care mileage offers. Yes, some of them are a bit of a joke because of the restrictions and blackouts that they use, but there are some that are pretty astounding in terms of what you can gain if you are clever and willing to meet their terms.

For instance, some use partnerships for people who head to the same general destinations. As an example, a firm such as Chase and an airline such as British Airways will frequently reward new cardholders with mountains of points for opening their accounts. In fact, a recent promotion provided high end card holders with up to 100k miles for enrolling. That could have been used for two, not one but TWO, first class seats on certain flights.

We don't recommend using any offers that give you less than 30k for a new card, and we advise that you review the terms closely. Skip those cards that come with hefty annual fees and which hit their client with oddball fees such as "concierge" charges.

Be on the lookout, however, for these options because they often give you elite status rewards. You might find yourself able to use the luxury lounges, getting information about all kinds of upgrades, and enjoying luxury travel deals at discounted rates.

## Efforts Always Pay

Is it worth the effort to seek ways of getting a business class seat on an international flight? Absolutely!

Here is a final word of encouragement: A friend was trying to find a way to fly to Singapore at a far more affordable rate than was available. This is a seriously long flight no matter how you

book it. So, she used all of the tips and tactics I suggested, and she was rewarded.

How? She was able to get a full fare coach seat on a red eye.

And that, you might say to yourself, is a reward? The thing about it is that she booked it for Saturday into Sunday at 2 AM. She was able to check in early and upgrade for \$180 bucks to a business class seat. This allowed her to enjoy an incredible amount of comfort, to sleep through the longest stretch of the journey, and to get the better meals available.

Yes, she compromised by arriving at her destination at a relatively inconvenient hour, but she did so without exhaustion, jet lag, or a grumpy disposition after living in a cramped seat for tens of hours.

She also got away with no checked bag fees and ended up saving a few bucks on this issue as well. Getting off of the plane and through customs was easier than ever due to the business class status, and generally things were far more enjoyable.

Would she luck out on the way home? That did not happen, but reserving her business boarding pass for the incoming flight also allowed her to check the bags for the return flight at no fees, and she was able to use the business class lounge because of her "elite" status.

So, it does truly pay to make these efforts to gather points, find clever methods of upgrading, and generally seeking the comforts of the roomier cabins whenever possible.

The big question is just how far are you willing to go to enjoy the most comfortable and affordable journey you can? That is really the biggest secret of them all where cheap international travel is concerned.

## CONCLUSION:

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# CHEAP INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL IS IN YOUR FUTURE!

### What Have You Learned and What Will You Do with This Knowledge?

Throughout this book you have been instructed in a lot of different methods for enjoying access to cheap international travel.

You have learned that "cheap" doesn't have to mean shabby, low quality, or anything less than desirable. Instead, you have discovered that there are a lot of clever and effective ways of getting top of the line travel options for much less than normal.

Of course, you have also learned that this usually means compromising a bit to get what you want. Let's quickly review what we mean by this:

- Compromising on the travel dates means being as flexible as you can. You might opt for a red eye flight, an alternative departure date in the middle of the week or over the course of a weekend, and at a time of year other than you initially desired.

- Compromising can mean choosing to travel during the shoulder seasons for different parts of the world. However, we also learned that shoulder seasons can be some of the most delightful times due to the good weather conditions, the absence of crowds, and the generally lower prices on everything from airfare and accommodations to food and museum tickets.
- Compromising for cheap international travel can also mean being willing to do a lot of the proverbial "leg work" if it results in affordable luxuries. As an example, we have dedicated many pages of this book to methods of obtaining upgrades and accessing luxury travel options. None of these things are what could be called "easy", but they are not all that complex either. It is simply a matter of deciding if you are willing to pursue these things in order to enhance your level of comfort during a journey.
- Finally, compromising in order to get the cheapest international travel options possible does mean doing a lot of planning and research. While your dream of seeing the world may include a few days of "gypsy-like" wandering, that is rarely going to come at an affordable cost. Instead, you may have to compromise this part of your dream by making solid plans that allow you control over your expenses. In other words, your hopes of simply wandering through India for a few weeks may have to be bent a bit. Instead, you may be able to find a way to fly affordably to India, choosing fixed departure and arrival dates, and you might benefit with discounted "package tours" to different areas. In between booked tours and ground transportation plans, you can spend hours or a few days wandering the different highlights of the tour or journey.

While anyone with an unlimited budget can see the world however, and whenever they would like, the "rest of us"

have to find ways of affording this sort of luxury. Using the many tips and tactics in this book can feasibly get anyone with almost any budget out into the world at least once each year.

Whether you are seeking to fly to Tahiti for a few weeks of total relaxation or you want to trek all over Europe during the spring, we have given you methods of affordably doing so. The actual steps you take to make your travel dreams come true are up to you, but you won't find many other effective methods outside of what we have outlined in the previous chapters.

You are no longer confined to life as an armchair traveler. Soon, you could be soaking up the Italian sun and tasting the sweet fruits that grow there. You could find yourself walking along the Great Wall of China instead of staring at the photos and videos posted by others who lived the dream.

No matter what your travel plans or goals, and no matter how complex or pricey they seem, if you are willing to compromise a bit, make some plans, and use our clever tactics, you can turn your travel dreams into enjoyable reality!

We wish you the best of luck in your journeys and hope you can succeed in traveling as cheaply and as pleasantly as possible!





# REFERENCES

I am happy to provide references, but for this book I am not sure if this is conducive as my resources and references would essentially be a list of their competition...please advise

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