

# Flight Booking Tips



"A journey is best measured in friends, not in miles." - Tim Cahill

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📖 So it has come down to the point of "no return" for planning your trip. Unless you purchase an overpriced refundable ticket, you are about to take a bold step forward and seal the deal on your trip.

If you ask 10 people on a flight what they paid for their ticket, you will probably get 10 different answers. Getting the best price on tickets has become something of a dark art. Use these tips and secrets to save money before you book.

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## Booking Cheap Tickets

📖 There are an abundance of ticket websites out there to help you find the best deal for a flight. There are also additional things that you can do to leverage these tools more than the average traveler.


Here are some insider secrets:

- 🕒 Buy your flight **21 - 45 days** in advance. Other than last minute deals, you will pay more as your date to leave approaches. Sometimes buying too soon also brings penalties, shoot for the middle.
- 🕒 Unsold seats are drastically discounted **3 days** before departure.
- 🕒 Never, ever fly on weekends! Try to fly on a **Tuesday or Wednesday**.
- 🕒 Try not to fly within **7 days** before or after a holiday. Check your destination's local holidays and festivals as well.
- 🕒 If you are buying a round trip ticket, staying longer than **90 days** usually results in a higher fare. Make sure you check on just buying two 1-way tickets instead.
- 🕒 Search for tickets **after midnight EST** in the middle of the week. This is when airline databases are updated and sometimes you can grab a cheap ticket that has been returned back to the system.
- 🕒 Take a bus or hitch a ride to the closest major airport hub, rather than leaving from your smaller hometown.
- 🕒 Make sure your luggage is not over sized or overweight. Check individual airline sites for rules.

- ✖ Flights with longer layovers usually have lower price tags.
- ✖ Early morning flights are more painful but usually cheaper.
- ✖ Fly into the largest city on the continent you are visiting. Take budget airline hops or travel overland from there to reach your destination. For instance, it may be cheaper to fly into Brussels (a major business hub) and then hitch your way to Amsterdam rather than flying straight there.
- ✖ Always use frequent flier programs. It may take years, but the miles DO add up and may come in handy in the future.
- ✖ Being as flexible as possible can get you a cheaper ticket. Do not specify flight times, number of stops, etc.
- ✖ Never buy refundable tickets if they cost more.

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## Book Budget Airlines

 Here are a few consolidator websites that check lots of databases to find the best deals.

### Places to book discounted flights:

[Kayak.com](#) - Kayak is a site that searches lots of other ticketing sites, one of my personal favorites

[Airfareplanet.com](#) - A lesser known new site that has turned up some good trans-Atlantic fares for me. (Unfortunately, flights must originate in the US to qualify).

[Orbitz.com](#) - A good website for basic flight searches, good deals on cars and hotels sometimes as well.

[Priceline.com](#) - bid your own price on airfare for cheap deals or you can do regular flight searches. Flights must originate in the US, but sometimes you can grab tickets on clearance through the auctions.

### Other options for booking discount tickets:

- 📖 [Expedia.com](#) - Great all around travel booking site
- 📖 [Orbitz.com](#) - A good website for basic flight searches
- 📖 [Travelocity.com](#) - use the "flexible ticket" option to get deals on domestic flights.
- 📖 [Hotwire.com](#) - Good deals on flights, hotels, and rental cars.
- 📖 [Cheaptickets.com](#) - a long time favorite of budget travelers.
- 📖 [Skyscanner.net](#) - very interesting twist.
- 📖 [Sidestep.com](#) - much like kayak.com.
- 📖 [Cheapoair.com](#) - good deals on international flights here.

**TIP:** It is still in BETA phase, but once you have your ticket, go sign up at [www.yapta.com](http://www.yapta.com) (free) and you can monitor the fare. If the price of your ticket goes down, many airlines will provide you with a voucher or discount when approached.

Once you have found a flight, go to that carrier's website and search for the same flight to compare prices.

Sometimes you can get the exact same flight direct from the airline minus a \$10 - \$15 markup fee added on by the

ticketing site. Also, by going direct to the airline you eliminate some potential slips like not receiving credit for your frequent flier miles.

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## Refundable Tickets

📖 Most tickets that normal travelers purchase are stamped "non-refundable". If you are buying your ticket well in advance like many do, this sounds a little scary. What if something comes up? What if someone gets sick? Here are some things to keep in mind:

- 🚫 It is not worth the price difference to make a ticket "refundable".
- 🚫 Your travel insurance may come with a trip cancellation policy which means that you can get your money back. Some are based on medical reasons and some are non-conditional.

**Just because an airline says that a ticket is non-refundable, sometimes they are!**

There are usually stipulations which they may or may not tell you about for medical problems, etc. Clearing houses and ticket consolidators are infamous for this - they will almost always issue a refund if you contact them with your sob story within 24 hours of departure. They may charge you a steep "change fee" but it is still better than losing the face value of the ticket.

Regardless, if you cannot go on your trip for some reason - **tell the airline in advance!** If you don't, they will be needlessly paging your name in the airport and maybe some poor vagabond on standby can have your seat!

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## What about RTW tickets?

📖 RTW stands for "around the world" ticket and is a special ticket that allows you three or more stops along a route that you choose. There are usually strict rules in place such as making sure that all the stops are in the same direction, time allowances, etc. If you are planning a real RTW trip, this may be the way to go to save money. Otherwise, you are sacrificing some flexibility in your plans.

Different airlines have different rules, so research the ticket thoroughly. One thing to note is what happens if you have to come home for an emergency after having used only 1 or 2 of the stops.

- 🚫 Check out Bootsnnal's [RTW trip planning tool](#).

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## What about trains?


📖 Trains were once the method of choice for travel around Europe. They still are a useful and very enjoyable means of travel, but the truth is that with the advent of new budget airlines, you can fly cheaper than taking a bus or train usually!

Booking train tickets can be more complicated than booking flights, so it's nice to have some outside help. Here are some resources:










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## Budget Airlines

 Budget airlines are a new no-frills, "mostly" reliable way to travel, particularly around Europe and Africa. Many times you can get a flight for cheaper than a bus, train, or sometimes taxi! This is made possible because the governments in popular destinations subsidize the airlines to bring in tourists.


Check Wikipedia for a list of [Budget Airlines](#).

### Here are some things to remember:

-  You get what you pay for. The queues are longer, seating is chaos, and delays happen.
-  Don't even think about a free meal or beverage - bring your own snacks!
-  Luggage size and weight restrictions may be more strict than regular airlines and the penalties are stiff.
-  Allow plenty of time at the airport check-in and gate, they save money by hiring less attendants. Use online check-in if it is offered.
-  There is fierce competition between these airlines. You can cash in by signing up for newsletters or checking their sites frequently for new deals and specials, many sometimes offer flights under US \$2! (taxes are additional)
-  Some routes are shut down during the low seasons because of lack of passengers.
-  The same philosophy applies as regular airlines - the sooner you buy your ticket the better the deal.

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## In conclusion

 Nothing beats the feeling that you get when you click the "buy" button on that expensive ticket. Regardless of whether this is your first trip or not, you will feel the excitement and adrenaline sweep through your body. You are now on your way!

Source: <http://www.startbackpacking.com/tickets-7.html>

# 5 Dirty Secrets of Airfares

Know them and improve your chances of landing a better deal on your next trip.

By Donna Rosato, Money Magazine staff writer

Buying an airline ticket has never been a simple task - the rules of the game are always changing. But if you know how the game is played, you'll have a better chance of saving money.

There's more at stake for your travel budget these days: So far in 2006, airfares are up more than 10 percent over last year, the biggest jump since 1995 and a return to pre-9/11 fare levels, according to data from the Department of Transportation.

Here are five "secrets" that will clue you in on how to find the best fares.

## 1. Low cost carriers don't always have the lowest fares.

Low cost carriers JetBlue, Southwest and AirTran have rapidly expanded the past few years, bringing lower fares to many markets and burnishing their reputations as discount airlines. But low cost airlines don't always offer the lowest fares. That's because traditional airlines, which have spent the past few years in bankruptcy court slashing their own expenses, are aggressively matching or undercutting their low-cost rivals.

And though airlines like JetBlue, Southwest and AirTran generally have lower operating costs than traditional airlines, they're feeling the squeeze of rising fuel prices too. That means you shouldn't count out traditional airlines when looking for the best deals.

For example, a late August, roundtrip non-stop flight from New York to Orlando was \$547 on JetBlue but just \$504 on Delta Air Lines. Keep in mind that low-cost carriers have more consistent pricing, cap their highest fares, don't have as many restrictions and typically offer a larger number of seats available at lower prices than traditional airlines.

So, it may be worth paying a bit more to fly them, especially if you're flying somewhere at the last minute or may have to change your itinerary.

## 2. You may pay more in taxes and fees than you do for your airfare.

Fees and taxes have always been part of the equation for air travel. But in the last few years, airline and government-imposed charges have escalated, especially on overseas trips.

Fuel surcharges and government-imposed security fees in particular have made airline travel more costly and sometimes add up to more than the cost of your base ticket price.

For example, this summer, Virgin Atlantic Airways was offering \$198 roundtrip flights from the U.S. to London but that didn't include \$210 in additional taxes and fees.

Make sure you're comparing apples and oranges when you're buying an airline ticket by factoring in all charges, not just the base ticket price.

Many airlines don't show the extra fees until you're ready to book, though third-party ticketing sites like Orbitz and Sidestep do.

### **3. You can mix and match fares to get better deals.**

Many airlines offer last minute weekend specials that are super cheap but may not go exactly where you want. You can combine two separate deals and still save, says George Hobic, founder and publisher of Airfarewatchdog.com, which scours the airline world for hidden fare deals.

For example, say you want to go from Boston to San Antonio but don't see any deal on that route. If there's a Boston to Atlanta flight for \$128 roundtrip and an Atlanta to San Antonio trip for \$108, you can buy both.

Hobic says it's fine to fly two different airlines -- most airlines, except Southwest and some smaller carriers, will transfer your bags to another airline but be sure to leave yourself enough time between connections on different airlines because they might be flying out of different terminals.

### **4. Your computer may be preventing you from getting the best deals.**

Most Web sites use cookies, which are text files placed on your hard drive by a Web page server and are used to tell the Web server that you have returned to a specific page and retrieve information about you. This simplifies the process of recording your personal information, such as billing addresses, but also tracks the results you were viewing.

So, if you're checking fares for a vacation to Baja and return to the same Web site, the fare search engine may return the same results you viewed earlier rather than the new results, thanks to the cookies.

Luckily, it's easy to get around this by clearing the cookies on your Internet browser each time you do a search.

## 5. The most popular travel Web sites don't have the same information -- or the best deals.

It's a mistake to assume that you'll find the exact same fares on Travelocity, Orbitz and Expedia, the biggest online travel agent sites, says Hobica. The sites negotiate deals with specific carriers and often have exclusive deals. So it pays to check all three and then check out individual carrier sites -- and not just to avoid the \$5 to \$10 booking fees that third-party sites charge.

Hobica says airlines increasingly are selling their best fares on their own Web sites, so sites like Travelocity and Orbitz (which don't have JetBlue and Southwest fares anyway) shouldn't be the only place you look.

The bottom line for fliers: Airfares are a constantly moving target, changing as much as three times a day. Sales come and go quickly. So, if you want to find the best deals, you'll have to shop around. But knowing how the rules work will make you a savvier shopper.

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[Steal your travel agent's tricks](#) With the ExpertFlyer Web site, you can get an insider's peek into fare classes and seat availability.

Source: [http://money.cnn.com/2006/08/30/pf/airfare\\_secrets.moneymag/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2006/08/30/pf/airfare_secrets.moneymag/index.htm)

## Airfare Tips When Purchasing Your Ticket

- 1) Time of day does not matter when purchasing your ticket(s)
- 2) Airfare rates change daily
- 3) Airfares increase at the end of each week
- 4) Lowest airfares are NOT necessarily on the low-fare airlines (i.e. Southwest, Jet Blue, etc.)
- 5) If you can, try and purchase your tickets 3-4 months in advance
- 6) Best travel days are Tuesday, Wednesday or Saturday's
- 7) Best time to purchase your tickets is either on a Monday or Tuesday
- 8) Sometimes First Class prices can be as low as coach prices - so don't be afraid to check out these prices when searching for your ticket prices. There are usually over 100,000 first class tickets that have been discounted at any given time.
- 9) Also, on-time leaving **does not** mean you are in the air and on your way! It only means you are **away from the boarding gate!**
- 10) Go to [Farecompare.com](http://farecompare.com) to compare your airfare with others.

11) If you are worried that your luggage may not arrive when you do?? Think about shipping your luggage door-to-door! Check out

[Luggage Free](#)

[First Luggage](#)

[Carry My Luggage](#)

12) Sign up for **free** airfare e-mail alerts as soon as you can. Travelocity has one that is great!

13) Before you purchase your tickets, do a search for the worst airports to fly out of.

14) Now that you are armed with these tips, go out and purchase your tickets and have fun during the summer!

## **ON-LINE AIRFARE INFO**

There are a total of 21 links on this page for cheap airfares as well as other information.

[Europe By Air](#)

Ms Emily Burns P2001, said she found cheaper flying rates within Europe by this web site then purchasing a Eurail Pass.

[The Savy Traveler](#)

Mr Robert Daniels F/L01 & B/P02, stated that this is an awesome website re intercontinental flights on how to get the lowest fare. They have great rates on "Afgan Airlines"

[Best Fares Travel Magazine](#)

"This site is great, but requires an annual membership fee of about \$60, to get full access to the site. But you still can check out the abbreviated deals. If several people go in together on a subscription, the results may be worth it. Mainly consolidates all the current specials from different airlines."

[Priceline](#)

[Travelocity](#)

[Expedia](#)

[Fly 4 Less](#)

[1 Travel](#)

Use this one if you do not care which airline you fly. FYI: This can be a slow site to come up.

### [STA Travel](#)

STA is a student travel services organization. You can pick up your Eurorail passes, student airfares, International Student I.D. Card, Insurance, and much much more. (if you just need the International Student I.D. Card, then you can go to USD's University Center Box Office to purchase this card) STA offices are located at 4475 Misson Blvd #F, Corner of Mission Blvd & Garnet in Pacific Beach; 858-270-1750.

Open Mon - Fri 10am - 6pm & Sat from 10am - 5pm.

953 Garnet Ave, Pacific Beach CA; 858-270-6401

743 Fourth Ave, 1st Flr, San Diego, CA; 619-544-9632.

SDSU Aztec Center, 619-594-4589. (call to get specific directions)

UCSD Price Center, 9500 Gilman Dr, La Jolla; 858-452-0630. (call to get specific directions)

### [Travel Abroad - Student Universe](#)

This site is an online travel agency. The site specializes in discounted air travel for students, which negotiates exclusively on students behalf.

### [GoAbroad](#)

Comprehensive online resource for study abroad, internships, etc.

### [Orbitz](#)

### [Low Cost Airline Info](#)

This site lists 15 no-frills airlines operating in North America, 34 in Europe and 5 in Asia. No-frills means no-frills! No free meals, no seat assignments, no refunds of any type and certainly no frequent-flyer points. But heck, if it get's you from here to there and saves you a few hundred dollars, why not!\*

Also, if you are allergic to cats, Cheapseats.com has done a study and these are the airlines that allow cats to travel in the passenger section: AirTran, Alaska, American West, American, ATA, Continental, Delta, Hawaiian, Jet-Blue, Northwest, Spirit, United & US Airways. But do not count on them to tell you if there are going to be cats in the passenger section.\*

Those airlines that do not allow cats in the passenger section are Aloha (except for travel within Hawaii), Frontier, Midwest, Southwest and Sun Country. \*

You should inform the airline that does allow cats in the passenger section that you are highly allergic and to seat you far, far away when you make your reservations and also when you check-in!\*

### [Zoom Airlines](#)

they only fly from 3 U.S. cities to London-Gatwick, but only on certain days: San Diego, Ft Lauderdale and New York JFK airports. They also fly from 6 Canadian cities: Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Montreal Trudeau, Calgary to London-Gatwick but only on certain days. You can also fly from Canada to Paris France. Check out their web site for more information.

**If you wish to travel by air in Europe while there, here are a few web sites for European travel that you may be able to purchase tickets before you leave the U.S. or have them delivered to an address in the UK or Europe for your pick up.**

### [Flight Savers](#)

### [Cheapest Flights](#)

### [Airininja](#)

### [Ryan Air](#)

### [Last Minute](#)

### [Low Fare Airline Info](#)

### [Airlinesickets.us](#)

scroll down to bottom for a listing of various airlines with specials.

Following are also some phone #'s in London for possible cheap tickets to Europe:

The Wholesalers - 0990-22-44-66

The Flight Index - 0800-496-5424

Cost Cutters - 0800-496-5565

Dial a Deal - 0800-496-5969

SeatSavers - 0800-496-5646

Source: <http://www.sandiego.edu/lawabroad/information/airline.php>