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What Miles & Points are Worth: Airline Miles

MARCH 14, 2013 BY LUCKY

61 COMMENTS

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Welcome to what will undoubtedly be the most controversial part of this series. There's nothing quite as fun as valuing airline miles on the internet, because I'm about to be called an idiot by people that value their miles somewhere between 0.5 and 12.5 cents each. So I'll once again make reference to my disclaimer in the introduction of this series by saying that these are my subjective valuations based on what I typically redeem my miles for, and based on what I value those flights at (*not* their retail value because in virtually all cases I wouldn't otherwise pay for first or business class). I've also added several programs below that I didn't value last time, which I hope you guys find useful.

Since there's a lot of information below, I figured I'd summarize my valuations upfront, which are as follows:

- Air Canada Aeroplan – 1.3 cents/mile
- Air France Flying Blue – 1.1 cents/mile
- Alaska Mileage Plan – 1.6 cents/mile

Loyalty 2031
Delta, et al. v. Loyalty
CBM2014-00096

- American AAdvantage – 1.8 cents/mile
- AviancaTACA Lifemiles – 1.2 cents/mile
- British Airways Executive Club – 1.3 cents/Avios
- Delta SkyMiles – 1.3 cents/mile
- Korean Air SkyPass – 1.4 cents/mile
- Singapore Airlines KrisFlyer – 1.6 cents/mile
- Southwest Rapid Rewards – 1.4 cents/point
- United MileagePlus – 1.8 cents/mile
- US Airways Dividend Miles – 1.6 cents/mile
- Virgin America Elevate – 2.0 cents/point
- Virgin Atlantic Flying Club – 0.8 cents/mile

With that in mind, here are my explanations:

Air Canada Aeroplan – 1.3 cents/mile (previously 1.3 cents/mile)

Going back a couple of years Air Canada Aeroplan miles were hands down the single most valuable mileage currency out there. Then after a [devaluation of their award chart](#) and [the addition of fuel surcharges](#) for travel on most of their partner airlines, they took a big hit.

There's still some value in their program, though. Business class between the US and much of Europe, for example, costs just 90,000 miles roundtrip, and you're allowed either one stopover and one open jaw or two stopovers. If you travel on Brussels, Swiss, United, and US Airways there won't be any fuel surcharges either. So while Aeroplan miles aren't what they used to be, they are still a good option for those with a Membership Rewards balance they're looking to redeem for premium cabin travel.

MY TRIP				90,000 MILES	
DEPARTURE	New York Newark (EWR) → Brussels (BRU)			Tue Dec 3, 2013	
 United Airlines Business	Departure : EWR 18:15 →	Arrival : BRU 07:50 ⁺¹ Direct	Duration : 7h 35min	Change flight	
RETURN	Brussels (BRU) → New York Newark (EWR)			Tue Dec 10, 2013	
 United Airlines Business	Departure : BRU 10:00 →	Arrival : EWR 12:50 Direct	Duration : 8h 50min	Change flight	

SUMMARY		1 Passenger
FLIGHT REWARD	90,000 Miles	
Miles to Redeem	90,000 Miles	
Taxes, Fees & Surcharges	Details	
Amount (taxes included)	\$95.90 USD	
TOTAL :	90,000 Miles + \$95.90 USD	

Great use of Aeroplan miles without fuel surcharges

Best credit card(s) for earning Aeroplan miles: [American Express® Premier Rewards Gold Card](#), which offers 3x points on airfare, 2x points on gas and groceries, and 15,000 bonus points for any year in which you spend \$30,000 on the card. Also the [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Personal Card](#) and [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Business Card](#), which offer one Starpoint per dollar spent on all purchases, and two Starpoints per dollar spent at Starwood properties. Points can be transferred to Aeroplan at a 1:1 ratio, and for every 20,000 points

transferred you get a 5,000 point bonus, meaning you're essentially earning 1.25 Aeroplan miles per dollar spent.

Air France Flying Blue – 1.1 cents/mile (not previously rated)

Flying Blue miles can be quite valuable in a limited set of circumstances. You can redeem them for one-way travel on Delta at half the price of a roundtrip (which you can't do directly through Delta's program), and as long as you're originating in the US there are no fuel surcharges. Furthermore, they can be redeemed for travel on Aeromexico without fuel surcharges between the US and South America, which is another great option given how much award space they release. They even have lower pricing than Delta in many cases. For example, roundtrip business class on Delta between the US and Israel costs just 100,000 miles, assuming there's award space at the saver level (while Delta would charge 120,000 miles for the same award).

These miles have also become more valuable for travel on Air France. Previously Air France gave their own Flying Blue members and Delta SkyMiles members access to the same saver award space. Nowadays they only [give Delta access to a part of that inventory](#), to the point that they've blocked off Delta award redemptions for travel on Air France for just about the entire summer. So while Flying Blue does charge hefty fuel surcharges, it may just be the only practical option for redeeming on Air France.

Monday, June 17, 2013						
Washington, Dulles International (IAD) DC - > Paris, Charles de Gaulle (CDG) - France United States of America						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
June 17	June 18	June 19	June 20	June 21	June 22	June 23
from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	no flight available	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*
June 24	June 25	June 26	June 27	June 28	June 29	June 30
from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*
July 1	July 2	July 3	July 4	July 5	July 6	July 7
from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*
July 8	July 9	July 10	July 11	July 12	July 13	July 14
from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*
July 15	July 16	July 17	July 18	July 19	July 20	July 21
from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*	from 50 000 Miles + 447.70 USD*

Flying Blue business class award space between Washington and Paris for this summer (none of the space is being released to Delta SkyMiles members)

Though a word of caution — Flying Blue's call center is indescribably useless and excruciatingly painful to work with. You've been warned.

Best credit card(s) for earning Air France Flying Blue miles: [American Express® Premier Rewards Gold Card](#), which offers 3x points on airfare, 2x points on gas and groceries, and 15,000 bonus points for any year in which you spend \$30,000 on the card.

Alaska Mileage Plan – 1.6 cents/mile (previously 1.5 cents/mile)

Mileage Plan is one of those programs that's sooo close to being awesome. They partner with many airlines across multiple alliances, so the flexibility of the miles is great, in theory. Unfortunately they have some rules that really prevent these miles from being more valuable. One of those rules is that you can't mix partner airlines on an award ticket. This can be really tough to do given that multiple airlines are needed to get to some destinations, and that can require multiple award tickets.

Furthermore as of now they don't allow one-way awards on partner airlines, though [rumor has it](#) that one way awards will soon be possible on select partners.

That being said, Alaska recently [unveiled their mileage redemption chart](#) for travel on Emirates, and while it's not amazing, it certainly adds some value to the program. First class to the Middle East or India is 180,000 miles roundtrip, while first class to Africa or Asia is 200,000 miles roundtrip.



Emirates onboard shower suite


Those are decent redemption rates though they aren't amazing, Then again it's one of Emirates' few mileage redemption partners, so it'll have to do. So I think the miles deserve a bit of a boost compared to last year, though I really can't value them at over 1.6 cents each.

Best credit card(s) for earning Alaska Mileage Plan miles: [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Personal Card](#) and [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Business Card](#), which offer one Starpoint per dollar spent on all purchases, and two Starpoints per dollar spent at Starwood properties. Points can be transferred to Mileage Plan at a 1:1 ratio, and for every 20,000 points transferred you get a 5,000 point bonus, meaning you're essentially earning 1.25 Mileage Plan miles per dollar spent.

American AAdvantage – 1.8 cents/mile (previously 1.8 cents/mile)

The value of American miles remains unchanged for me over the past year, which is a great thing. For me their most useful single partner is Cathay Pacific, which continues to release a good amount of first class award space between the US and Asia. Not only is it a great value at 135,000 miles

roundtrip for first class, but they release quite a bit of availability both 11 months out and within a couple of weeks of departure.

Cathay Pacific Airways			
12:50 21 Mar SFO	18:50 22 Mar HKG	 Cathay Pacific Airways CX0879	First
Total journey time: 15 hours 00 minutes		> Only 5 reward flight seat(s) left in this class	

Five Cathay Pacific first class award seats available on a single flight

American miles are also great for travel to South America given both American's route network and their partnership with LAN. Star Alliance and SkyTeam can't even begin to compete on that front. And their partnership with Etihad is also great for travel to the Middle East and India.

Their other partners certainly come with some weaknesses, though are still useful in many instances.

American also has [a distance based award chart](#) which can be extremely lucrative for travel to multiple destinations, and is both one of the best kept secrets and values in the airline industry.

Malaysia Airlines [recently joined OneWorld](#) which opens up a lot of new destinations using American miles, and Qatar Airways is [expected to join the alliance next year](#). These partnerships really solidify the value of American miles, and are really narrowing the gap between Star Alliance and OneWorld.

Best credit card(s) for earning American AAdvantage miles: [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Personal Card](#) and [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Business Card](#), which offer one Starpoint per dollar spent on all purchases, and two Starpoints per dollar spent at Starwood properties. Points can be transferred to AAdvantage at a 1:1 ratio, and for every 20,000 points transferred you get a 5,000 point bonus, meaning you're essentially earning 1.25 AAdvantage miles per dollar spent. For the sign-up bonus it's also worth considering the [Citi AAdvantage Visa Card](#), [Citi AAdvantage American Express Card](#), and [Citi AAdvantage Business Visa Card](#), each of which offer 50,000 miles after spending \$3,000 within four months.

AviancaTACA Lifemiles – 1.2 cents/mile (not previously rated)

Last year a lot of attention was given to the Lifemiles program, given that AviancaTACA joined the Star Alliance. They have a rather unconventional [award chart](#) for a non-US frequent flyer program, if for no other reason than that they don't impose fuel surcharges on award redemptions. What's also quite interesting is that as long as you have 40% of the miles needed for a redemption in your account, you can purchase the remaining miles for 1.275 cents each.

So why am I not valuing these points more highly? Because of their ridiculous policy to not allow cabins to be mixed on an award ticket. If you book a first class award you can't have any segments or the ticket in business or coach class, for example. So if you want to book a first class award and live in a small city with single cabin service you're out of luck. Or if you're connecting somewhere within Europe that's only served by an aircraft with business class and coach... no soup for you! If they'd change that silly restriction I'd say their miles would go up in value by about 25%, but as it stands I just find these miles kind of impractical to redeem.

Best credit card(s) for earning AviancaTACA Lifemiles: [Lifemiles Visa Signature Card](#), which offers one mile per dollar spent, and one additional mile per dollar spent on AviancaTACA.

British Airways Executive Club – 1.3 cents/Avios (previously 1.1 cents/Avios)

About 18 months ago British Airways [devalued their award chart](#), which was a big blow to the value of their Avios. Instead they now operate exclusively on a distance based award chart, which I've come to appreciate more by the day.

Iberia

AVIOS REDEMPTION TABLE (per flight)

Next table is applied to direct flights operated by the Iberia Group and IB code.

Bands	Distance in miles	Blue Class	Full Fare (Tourist)	Business
1	1 - 650	4,500	6,750	9,000
2	651 - 1,151	7,500	11,250	15,000
3	1,152 - 2,000	10,000	15,000	20,000
4	2,001 - 3,000	12,500	18,750	25,000
5	3,001 - 4,000	20,000	30,000	40,000
6	4,001 - 5,500	25,000	37,500	50,000
7	5,501 - 8,500	30,000	45,000	60,000

Avios award chart

I've found myself redeeming Avios lately more than any other currency, because there are certain markets in which they're invaluable. A one-way coach award for a distance of less than ~650 miles costs just 4,500 Avios one way, which is an incredible value, whether you're trying to get from New York to Toronto or Lima to Cuzco.

My major frustration with Avios redemptions to Europe was that at the time they imposed fuel surcharges for all their transatlantic flights, though nowadays they don't impose fuel surcharges on [Ae Lingus](#), [Air Berlin](#), or [Iberia](#) if you play it right.

So while Avios typically aren't the best currency to have for aspirational redemptions, they're *extremely* practical to have for everyday redemptions.

Best credit card(s) for earning British Airways Avios: [British Airways Visa Signature® Card](#), which offers 1.25 British Airways Avios per dollar spent. For more flexibility the [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Personal Card](#) and [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Business Card](#) are also good, given that they offer one Starpoint per dollar spent on all purchases, and two Starpoints per dollar spent at Starwood properties. Points can be transferred to British Airways at a 1:1 ratio, and for every 20,000 points transferred you get a 5,000 point bonus, meaning you're essentially earning 1.25 Avios per dollar spent. Lastly, another great option is the [American Express Premier Rewards Gold Card](#), which offers 3x points on airfare, 2x points on gas and groceries, and 15,000 bonus points for any year in which you spend \$30,000 on the card. Points can be transferred 1:1 to British Airways.

Delta SkyMiles – 1.3 cents/mile (previously 1.1 cents/mile)

It shocks me that I'm saying this given the [lack of Air France business class award space using SkyMiles](#), though I think the value of SkyMiles has actually gone up lately due to a variety of factors. Generally speaking SkyTeam gets all the "sloppy second" airlines, so for the most part the airlines you can redeem your miles on aren't all that exciting. Furthermore you can't redeem your SkyMiles for international first class, so for me that makes SkyMiles less valuable than AAdvantage and MileagePlus miles right off the bat.

But we've seen some improvements lately that make SkyMiles much more attractive, including:

- Delta is [no longer imposing fuel surcharges](#) for travel on Virgin Australia, which is huge. They release the most business class award space between the US and Australia, now making SkyMiles the most valuable points currency for travel to Australia, in my opinion.
- [Alitalia](#) and [Korean Air](#) awards are now bookable on delta.com (both of which were previously an absolute pain to book).
- China Southern [started Airbus A380 service between Los Angeles and Guangzhou](#) with what looks like an amazing business class product with excellent award availability.

Flight	Stops	Depart	Arrive	Aircraft	Frequency Reliability ?	Available Classes ?		
						Description	Code	Seats
0 Connections								
CZ 328	0	LAX 11/09/13 10:00 PM	CAN 11/11/13 5:20 AM	380	Unavailable NA / NA	Business - Award & Upgrade	I	9

At least nine China Southern business class award seats available on a flight

So I do think the above has made SkyMiles more valuable. In my opinion they're the most valuable mileage currency for travel to Australia and Tahiti (given that they partner with both Air Tahiti Nui and Air France), and have also become extremely competitive to Asia.

Best credit card(s) for earning Delta SkyMiles: [American Express Premier Rewards Gold Card](#),

which offers 3x points on airfare, 2x points on gas and groceries, and 15,000 bonus points for any year in which you spend \$30,000 on the card. Points can be transferred 1:1 to Delta SkyMiles.

Korean Air SkyPass – 1.4 cents/mile (not previously rated)

When most people think of SkyTeam frequent flyer programs Delta SkyMiles comes to mind. But if you're like me and like to redeem your miles for international first class, it's Korean Air's SkyPass program you should be looking at.

They have [reasonable first class redemption rates between the US and Asia](#). For example, flying to Japan or Northeast Asia costs just 160,000 miles roundtrip. What's actually best about them is the amount of first class award space they consistently release. It's common to see 2-5 first class award seats per flight, which isn't the case for most airlines.

Flight	Stops	Depart	Arrive	Aircraft	Frequency Reliability ?	Available Classes ?		
						Description	Code	Seats
0 Connections								
KE 2	1	LAX 03/27/13 11:05 AM	ICN 03/28/13 7:45 PM	332	Unavailable NA / NA	First - Award & Upgrade	A	2
0 Connections								
KE 18	0	LAX 03/27/13 12:00 PM	ICN 03/28/13 5:30 PM	388	Unavailable 68% / 20m	First - Award & Upgrade	A	4

Flight	Stops	Depart	Arrive	Aircraft	Frequency Reliability ?	Available Classes ?		
						Description	Code	Seats
0 Connections								
CZ 328	0	LAX 03/29/13 11:00 PM	CAN 03/31/13 5:20 AM	380	Unavailable NA / NA	First - Award & Upgrade	P	5

Tons of first class award space!

They also allow one way awards for travel on Korean Air at half the cost of a roundtrip, though for partner airlines roundtrip travel is required.

The one major downside of Korean Air is [the booking process](#), which is unnecessarily complicated and restrictive. Still, for first class on SkyTeam airlines, this is the way to go.

Best credit card(s) for earning Korean Air SkyPass miles: [Chase Sapphire Preferred® Visa Card](#), which offers double points on dining and travel and a 7% annual points dividend, the [Ink Plus® Business Credit Card](#) and [Ink Bold® Business Charge Card](#), which offer 5x points on office supply stores, cable, TV, phone, and internet, and 2x points on gas and hotels, and the [Chase Freedom® Visa Card](#), which offers 5x points in rotating quarterly categories.

Singapore Airlines KrisFlyer – 1.6 cents/mile (not previously rated)

The past year has been *amazing* for the value of KrisFlyer miles. *Amazing*. Early last year Singapore began making first and business class award redemptions in their new products available at the save

level. It's ridiculous it took so long, given that their new product was nearly fleet wide, yet you couldn't redeem for it at the lowest level since they were trying to "protect" the cabins. It wasn't until early last year that they actually allowed KrisFlyer members to redeem for it at the saver level.

Then late last year they began [allowing saver award redemptions in Suites Class](#), which was almost completely off limits with miles up until that point. Singapore Suites is probably the most aspirational airline product out there, so being able to redeem miles for it at a reasonable cost is *awesome*. Last May I [wrote a post](#) explaining all the basics of redeeming KrisFlyer miles for travel on Singapore Airlines (though note at the time Suites Class redemptions weren't permitted, so that's not reflected in the post).



Singapore Airlines Suites Class

Singapore has rather reasonable premium cabin redemption rates, and while they impose fuel surcharges, they're quite mild. For example, San Francisco to Hong Kong roundtrip in first class costs 140,250 miles plus ~\$371.30 in taxes and fuel surcharges.

Given that booking through KrisFlyer is one of the only ways to redeem miles for travel in Singapore Airlines longhaul premium cabins, I'd say these have quickly become one of my most coveted mileage currencies.

Best credit card(s) for earning Singapore Airlines KrisFlyer miles: [American Express Premier](#)

[Rewards Gold Card](#), which offers 3x points on airfare, 2x points on gas and groceries, and 15,000 bonus points for any year in which you spend \$30,000 on the card. Points can be transferred 1:1 to KrisFlyer.

Southwest Rapid Rewards – 1.4 cents/point (not previously rated)

Southwest has a revenue based frequent flyer program, where the cost of an award ticket is directly tied to the cost of a paid ticket on that flight. For “Wanna Get Away?” fares you can book an award ticket at the rate of 60 points per dollar — that’s a rate of ~1.66 cents per point. By booking an award ticket vs. a revenue ticket you’re giving up at least six points per dollar that you’d otherwise earn, which knocks about 10% of the value off. I also think it’s worth knocking a bit more off since redemption rates are higher for “Anytime” and “Business Select” fares, which brings me to my valuation of 1.4 cents per point.

BUSINESS SELECT®	ANYTIME	WANNA GET AWAY?®
<p>\$220 Sample Base Fare + Excise Tax**</p> <p>X</p> <p>120 Pts Per Dollar</p> <hr/> <p>26,400 Points Required</p>	<p>\$200 Sample Base Fare + Excise Tax**</p> <p>X</p> <p>100 Pts Per Dollar</p> <hr/> <p>20,000 Points Required</p>	<p>\$100 Sample Base Fare + Excise Tax**</p> <p>X</p> <p>60 Pts Per Dollar</p> <hr/> <p>6,000 Points Required</p>

Rapid Rewards redemption chart

Best credit card(s) for earning Southwest Rapid Rewards points: [Chase Sapphire Preferred® Visa Card](#), which offers double points on dining and travel and a 7% annual points dividend, the [Ink Plus® Business Credit Card](#) and [Ink Bold® Business Charge Card](#), which offer 5x points on office supply stores, cable, TV, phone, and internet, and 2x points on gas and hotels, and the [Chase Freedom® Visa Card](#), which offers 5x points in rotating quarterly categories.

United MileagePlus – 1.8 cents/mile (previously 1.8 cents/mile)

Fortunately nothing major has changed with United since the last time I valued them, so I think they’ve maintained their value pretty well. I still love United miles for how generous their routing rules are, for the fact that they allow one stopover and two open jaws on a roundtrip award ticket, and for how reasonable the change fees and policies are on award tickets compared to virtually any other airline.

United’s partnerships have more or less remained the same since last May, with the exception of Qatar Airways, which they lost as a partner. Some aspects of using United miles remain frustrating — Swiss doesn’t release any first class award space at all, Singapore doesn’t release any longhaul first

class award space, and Lufthansa only releases first class award seats at most 15 days out, and I've found as of late they're getting stingier and stingier even at that point. So that really does limit the aspirational redemptions using United miles, at least for those that need to plan in advance.



You can still redeem for Lufthansa first class within 15 days of departure

On the plus side a lot of Star Alliance carriers have improved their business class products lately, making for some attractive business class redemption opportunities.

So not only does United have amazing airline partners, but their miles are just so easy to use, between a (mostly) functional website, computers that automatically price awards (rather than leaving you at the mercy of clueless agents), extremely reasonable fees, and generous routing rules.

Best credit card(s) for earning United MileagePlus miles: [Chase Sapphire Preferred® Visa Card](#), which offers double points on dining and travel and a 7% annual points dividend, the [Ink Plus® Business Credit Card](#) and [Ink Bold® Business Charge Card](#), which offer 5x points on office supply stores, cable, TV, phone, and internet, and 2x points on gas and hotels, and the [Chase Freedom® Visa Card](#), which offers 5x points in rotating quarterly categories.

US Airways Dividend Miles – 1.6 cents/mile (previously 1.5 cents/mile)

US Airways, US Airways, US Airways... what can I really say? I love 'em with a passion. I hate 'em

with a passion.

There's no doubt with the upcoming merger my valuation will be changing soon, though as of now they still have a gem of an award chart. [For 90,000 miles you can fly from the US to Asia via Europe as I recently did](#), and that's an amazing value. In a way flying business class is more desirable lately, as we've seen more and more Star Alliance airlines introduce fully flat business class products.

Even though they [got rid of off peak business class awards to Europe](#) I still think the value of their miles has gone up, as we're seeing more of a trend in Star Alliance whereby airlines release business class award seats instead of first class space.



Austrian's new business class

Best credit card(s) for earning US Airways Dividend miles: [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Personal Card](#) and [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Business Card](#), which offer one Starpoint per dollar spent on all purchases, and two Starpoints per dollar spent at Starwood properties. Points can be transferred to Dividend Miles at a 1:1 ratio, and for every 20,000 points transferred you get a 5,000 point bonus, meaning you're essentially earning 1.25 Dividend Miles per dollar spent. It's also worth considering the [US Airways Premier World MasterCard®](#) for the sign-up bonus, given that this card probably won't be around for long given the upcoming merger.

Virgin America Elevate – 2.0 cents/point (not previously rated)

The past couple of weeks I've been [focusing quite a bit on the value of Elevate points](#), as they have some really unique and lucrative partner redemption opportunities.

Virgin America has a revenue based frequent flyer program, meaning redemptions costs for travel on Virgin America are based on the revenue cost of a ticket. Regardless of what the fare is, each Elevate point gets you roughly 2.2 cents towards the cost of a ticket. Factoring in that you're not earning the usual five Elevate points per dollar spent on airfare when redeeming points, I think it's fair to value Elevate points at about 2.0 cents each.

Flight Information		Main Cabin	Main Cabin Refundable	Instant Upgrade to Main Cabin Select	Main Cabin Select	First Class	First Class Refundable
Non-Stop							
Flight 740	View Seats						
08:30 AM SFO Depart		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10:30 AM SEA Arrive		\$89	\$388	\$233	\$388	\$438	\$531
Flight Information		Main Cabin	Main Cabin Refundable	Instant Upgrade to Main Cabin Select	Main Cabin Select	First Class	First Class Refundable
Non-Stop							
Flight 740	View Seats						
08:30 AM SFO Depart		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10:30 AM SEA Arrive		3,628 pts +\$2.50	17,535 pts +\$2.50	10,326 pts +\$2.50	17,535 pts +\$2.50	19,861 pts +\$2.50	24,186 pts +\$2.50

Correlation between paid ticket and redemption ticket

In addition to that there are some [amazing partner redemption options](#) which have fixed pricing, especially for travel on Hawaiian, Singapore, and Virgin Atlantic. The problem is that the “gems” on the chart are very limited in scope. For example, the Hawaiian award chart is most valuable for travel between the west coast and Hawaii, while the Singapore award chart is most valuable for travel on longhaul flights in coach. Certainly not a program that's for everyone, though definitely a goldmine for some.

Best credit card(s) for earning Virgin America Elevate points: Virgin America Visa® Signature Card which offers one point per dollar spent. In comparison Membership Rewards points only transfer to Virgin America at a 2:1 ratio.

Virgin Atlantic Flying Club – 0.8 cents/mile (not previously rated)

There's no polite way to say this, these miles are bloody useless. While British Airways has partner redemptions on which you can not only get decent mileage costs, but also not pay fuel surcharges, that's not really the case with Virgin Atlantic.

You can redeem miles for travel on Virgin Atlantic with massive fuel surcharges, and those partners without fuel surcharges really aren't a very good value.

Outward journey	Sat 09 Nov 2013	Return journey	Sat 16 Nov 2013
<p>New York - London Flight No. VS026</p> <p>07:40 Sat 09 Nov 2013 New York (John F Kennedy) → 19:40 Sat 09 Nov 2013 London (Heathrow)</p> <p>Chauffeur-driven car?</p> <p>Cabin: Upper Class Duration: 7 hrs, 0 mins</p>		<p>London - New York Flight No. VS025</p> <p>19:25 Sat 16 Nov 2013 London (Heathrow) → 22:40 Sat 16 Nov 2013 New York (John F Kennedy)</p> <p>Chauffeur-driven car?</p> <p>Cabin: Upper Class Duration: 8 hrs, 15 mins</p>	
<p>Please note:</p> <p>The prices displayed above are subject to change and are not guaranteed until payment is made and accepted. Optional supplements selected during the booking process may increase the total fare.</p>		<p>80,000 miles</p> <p>USD 1,107.20 Taxes, fees, charges and Carrier imposed surcharges</p> <p>Currency calculator Fare breakdown Fare conditions</p>	

High taxes, fees, and fuel surcharges for travel on Virgin Atlantic

One bright spot to their program has been that you can convert miles into Hilton HHonors points at a 1:2 ratio, but now that [Hilton has destroyed the value of their program](#), the above valuation of miles is more reflective of my reduced valuation of Hilton points.

Best credit card(s) for earning Virgin Atlantic Flying Club miles: Virgin America Visa® Signature Card which offers one point per dollar spent. In comparison Membership Rewards points only transfer to Virgin America at a 2:1 ratio.

The [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Personal Card](#) and [Starwood Preferred Guest American Express Business Card](#) offer one Starpoint per dollar spent on all purchases, and two Starpoints per dollar spent at Starwood properties. Points can be transferred to Virgin Atlantic at a 1:1 ratio, and for every 20,000 points transferred you get a 5,000 point bonus, meaning you're essentially earning 1.25 miles per dollar spent. Lastly, another great option is the [American Express Premier Rewards Gold Card](#), which offers 3x points on airfare, 2x points on gas and groceries, and 15,000 bonus points for any year in which you spend \$30,000 on the card. Points can be transferred 1:1 to British Airways. The [Virgin Atlantic American Express](#) is also worth considering for the sign-up bonus.

Conclusion

This has been a *great* couple of years for the value of airline miles. Without exception my valuation of miles has either remained the same or gone up from last year, which is extremely rare. Unfortunately the same can't be said for hotels, which I'll be valuing in the next installment. I definitely wouldn't take the current mileage values for granted, as I wouldn't be surprised to see a similar slaughtering of

airline award charts next year as we've seen with hotel charts this year.

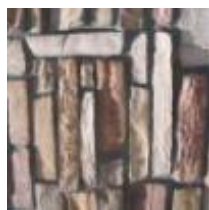
So, release the hounds, I wanna hear what you guys think. Agree or disagree with the above valuations?

(In the interest of full disclosure, some of the above links earn me a referral bonus, and all are for the best available offers for each card — thanks for your support!)

MORE FROM ONE MILE AT A TIME



Why Membership Rewards is more or less dead to me (for now)...



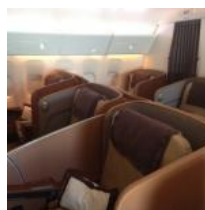
Which credit card to use to maximize American and Delta miles?



What Miles & Points are Worth: Credit Card Points



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