

INSIDER TIPS THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT AIRLINE MILES AND POINTS



Wondering how you can earn miles in your daily life? Confused as to whether or not your miles will expire? Read on for must-know miles tips for the frequent, and not-so-frequent, traveler.

- Take online surveys to earn miles. So long as you have time to spare, you can take surveys from websites like e-rewards and e-miles. You'll earn miles when you take the surveys. Usually, you'll only be able to collect a few hundred miles, but it's an easy way to get to a redemption goal if you're already close. It'll also help keep your miles account active.
- Signup for your preferred airline's newsletter list. Whenever there's a chance to earn more miles, you'll get an e-mail.
- Check out an airline's partner airlines. For example, American Airlines is partners with Air Tahiti Nui and Fiji Airways, which is excellent if you're booking an exotic vacation. United Airlines is partners with Singapore Airlines, which is considered to be one of the best airlines for business class in the world.
- You're allowed to credit miles from a flight to any program within that airline's partnerships or alliances. You don't need to credit miles from a flight to the same airline that you traveled with. When you credit everything to one program, you'll be able to quickly build up a miles balance all in one place, which can make them useful quickly.
- Continue earning miles to make sure that the ones you already have don't expire. Many programs will expire your miles within about 18 months. Time can pass quicker than you expect, so don't assume the miles will still be around when you're ready to use them. Read the fine print to find out exactly how long you have to use the miles. Also, when you continue to collect miles, you may be able to reset the time limit for the ones you already have. This is where having an airline credit card comes in handy. Or, book that flight you've been considering!
- With miles, you may be able to see more places than you planned on, and all for free. You may have more flexibility with an award ticket than you would on a regular ticket. For example, some miles programs will let you add a stopover to your itinerary, and that stopover can range from a few days to a few months. Now you can look into Honolulu hotels, even if Hawaii wasn't in your original plans!
- Don't redeem miles for merchandise. Yes, you may be able to get a brand new toaster with 30,000 miles, but that's not really a great value. It's not even a good idea to use miles to off-set a portion of your ticket. The best way to use miles is for award flights.
- Don't ever pay money for your miles. A lot of websites will advertise that you can purchase miles for a certain amount of money. The only time you should consider that is if you're extremely close to qualifying for a specific award that you've been waiting to get.

Most people don't make the most of their miles. By reading the fine print, you'll be able to save more and also make them go farther than you ever thought possible.

This article was contributed by Fiona Moriarty of Hipmunk, a travel website that offers customers a fast and easy way to find the best travel deals.

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