

# Alissa Haupt reveals how she saved \$400 by staying in Japan for four days

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WANT to know the secret to finding the cheapest flights? It doesn't involve waiting for specials, but just takes patience, good search skills and maybe a stopover in Japan.

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THE best way to find cheap flights is to be flexible. If you can search more destinations over more dates, you'll be much likelier to find a flight within your budget. (Unless, of course, your budget is the same as that for a new used car. If that's the case, stop reading this and go back to browsing Facebook. You're set.)

When searching for transpacific or transatlantic flights, I use a method called the continent-to-continent trick. Simply put: search for departures from every large city on the continent you're leaving from, going to every large city on the continent you're arriving on.

I used this trick when I traveled from Shanghai to Minneapolis last May, and I booked a transpacific flight for \$200 USD, from Tokyo to Los Angeles.

Flight from Shanghai to Los Angeles were about \$900 when I needed to fly. So, even with travel costs, I saved about \$400 by visiting Japan.

To find the flight, I started my search five months ahead of time. I used the ITA Flight Matrix, the software which powers most flight search programs, to find flights departing either: Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, Tokyo, Osaka, or Bangkok; and arriving in either: Chicago, New York, Newark, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Atlanta, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, or Portland. (ITA lets you enter one city, and then search all airports within up to 2,000 miles from it. You don't have to enter these cities manually).

Early searching catches the worm.

Early searching catches the worm.*Source:Supplied*

Even though I had only approximately a week's worth of days I could travel on, I searched for a whole 30 days of dates starting from the middle of May.

On one of my possible travel days, Tokyo to LA one-way was only \$200, and as I had always wanted to visit Japan, I went ahead and booked this leg as my main flight home.

Closer to my travel dates, I booked the two matching flights to get me to and from my transoceanic flight. To get to Tokyo, I found a flight leaving Shanghai on Spring Airways, the

biggest no-frills, gets-you-there-but-that's-all airline in China. The ticket was \$150 USD, and it arrived in at Ibaraki airport, a three-hour bus ride from Tokyo central.

Tickets from LA to Minneapolis on the day I needed were about \$300 one-way, but flights from LA to Milwaukee, with a connection in Minneapolis, were only \$90. I went ahead with the cheaper fare and simply walked away once I arrived at my home airport.

Using the continent-to-continent trick does have its drawbacks. As you are booking several tickets, the other airlines have no responsibility to get you to your final destination in the event of a delay. To prevent this from happening, I give myself long layovers. For this trip, I had (obviously) several days in Japan and 15 hours in Los Angeles.

Traveling in Tokyo made for a great four days. I had accommodations for \$4 a night in a cute capsule-style youth hostel, thanks to a mess-up on the British Expedia site (but that's another story). On the bus into Tokyo, I made a friend who helped me navigate the crazy Tokyo metro, and then showed me some of the coolest sights and things to see. My total costs of sleeping, transport, food, and entertainment for four days in Japan was \$170 USD.

All together, I spent \$610 to get from Shanghai - Tokyo - Los Angeles - Minneapolis, including the expenses of a trip to Tokyo. The same flights from Shanghai - Los Angeles - Minneapolis would have cost me \$1,000, so I saved approximately \$400 USD by traveling in Japan and using the contingent-to-continent trick to help me find a sweet-spot of a cheap flight.

***This post originally appeared on [Alissa Haupt's personal blog](#). Follow her on [Facebook](#).***



The real and beautiful Mt Fuji. *Source:Supplied*

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