

How I Flew Around the World in Business Class for \$1,340

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What's This?



By Alissa Haupt2013-10-15 19:28:44 UTC

I recently booked a round-trip set of flights from Minneapolis to Shanghai in business class.

I needed to head back to China to resume teaching English after the end of the photo season in Minneapolis, where I was shooting portraits and wedding photos. I had one week free with which to travel between the two cities, so I planned the craziest round-the-world hop.

See also: [United Airlines Site Glitch Results in Nearly Free Flights – Again](#)

I booked the set of flights using US Airways miles. My route, from Minneapolis – Chicago – Frankfurt – Istanbul – Bangkok – Seoul – Shanghai – Zurich – Munich – Chicago – Minneapolis, included my way home for Christmas during my three-week break.

Here is what my flight path to Shanghai looked like:



The cost of the trip was 90,000 US Airways miles.

In June, I opened my US Airways Master Card, which gave me 30,000 miles after my first purchase. In August, US Airways had a sale of frequent flier miles: buy up to 50,000 miles and get the same amount for free. As it costs 90,000 miles to travel between North America and North Asia in business class, I purchased 30,000 US Airways miles for \$1,200 and got the final 30,000 miles for "free."

US Airways is a part of Star Alliance, so with those miles I was able to book travel on any of the company's airline partners. (In fact, despite booking with US Airways, none of my flights were on that carrier.) US Airways is unique as its awards are booked without a computer to tell the booking agent whether or not the reward flight travels over too many miles or segments.

For example, US Airways reward tickets are supposed to have eight flight segments or less. I was able to book my 10-segment reward after talking to a few different booking agents. US Airways also is unique because it allows you to have an unlimited number of layovers that are 24 hours or less, and one stopover – of any time length – in a city in the same region of your destination. My region was North Asia, so I used my free stopover in Seoul.

To get my 24-hour stopovers, I simply had to search the reward availabilities on Star Alliance partners. I used United.com to search for reward availability, segment by segment, starting with the hardest first. I made a spreadsheet and a [Google map](#) to note available flights and piece them together like a jigsaw puzzle.

Eventually, I ended up with this itinerary:

- Minneapolis to Chicago on United (15-hour layover in Chicago)
- Chicago to Frankfurt on Lufthansa (24-hour layover in Frankfurt)
- Frankfurt to Istanbul on Lufthansa (8-hour layover in Istanbul)
- Istanbul to Bangkok on Turkish Airways (20-hour layover in Bangkok)
- Bangkok to Seoul on THAI (Three-day stopover in Seoul)
- Seoul to Shanghai on Asiana (My final destination)

In December:

- Shanghai to Zurich on Swiss (24-hour layover in Zurich)
- Zurich to Munich on Swiss (24-hour layover in Munich)
- Munich to Chicago on Lufthansa (12-hour layover in Chicago)
- Chicago to Minneapolis on United (Home for two weeks over Christmas)

My final itinerary looked like this:



In my spreadsheet, I made a note of every flight number, airline and departure time. I called US Airways to book the award and fed the agent each flight segment. I was able to put the flights on hold for three days.

Once I was certain I wanted to travel on these dates, I called back to book the reward. I had to hang up and call again several times before I found a booking agent who was able to book the tickets for me. The final ticket cost 90,000 miles plus \$140 in taxes.

See also: [Crowdfsource Your Next Vacation With These 8 Sites](#)

The total cost of the flights was \$1,340, including \$1,200 to purchase 30,000 miles and \$140 in taxes on the award booking. That is a decent price in economy between Minneapolis and Shanghai, and a *great* price to fly around the world in business class. According to my quick search on Kayak, it would have cost somewhere between \$5,000 in cash to fly between Minneapolis and Shanghai business class on my dates, and \$19,000 to book the trip around the world.

The actual flights were incredible. I felt a bit strange, as I didn't really need the experience of flying business class. But it was really fantastic to have flat beds up in the sky and eat gourmet multi-course meals on each flight. I really appreciate that I was able to fly in such mega-luxury.

More so, it was really wonderful to have the ability to hop around the world for one week. I ate wild-roast sausage in the rain in Frankfurt, attempted to only speak German for 24-hours straight (with mixed success) and fired a BB gun at a balloon over the Sea of Marmara in Istanbul (my first time firing any gun, ever). I partied the whole night long with hostel-mates in Bangkok, then had a Thai massage (hangover cure?). I ate Bi Bim Bap in Seoul, and toured tunnels dug by North Koreans under the Demilitarized Zone.

Needless to say, I am really looking forward to the second half of this award when I'll experience Switzerland for the first time and see the Christmas markets in Munich.

Most of my knowledge I gleaned on how to book this reward ticket came from the travel blog [Milevalue](#). It's a travel blog run by a 26-year-old guy who writes easy-to-read blog posts on how to find and book overly complicated reward flights.

Travel for me is about freedom – the freedom to be and explore new places, to meet new people and share ideas. Traveling doesn't need to be as expensive or unattainable as it appears. You just have put in a little leg work.

This post originally appeared on [Alissa Haupt's personal blog](#). [Follow her on Facebook](#) as she travels the world.

Image: Alissa Haupt