



Life in the FAST LANE

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Before You Buy Plane Tickets, Remember These Four Things

Source: *Wall Street Journal*, By Scott McCartney March 9, 2026

When to buy, which way to fly and other money-saving travel tips for airline travel

Just when you thought you had airlines figured out, new research shows changes in carriers' pricing strategy that shred some long-held ticket-shopping beliefs and open new ways to save money.

Airline prices change by the minute. Airline pricing strategies change gradually, affected by the economy, competition in the industry and new tools carriers have to target different types of consumers. How to get the best price for an airline ticket remains a confounding quest, and often a losing battle. But knowing the latest trends in fare-pricing can help, at least a bit.

Here are four ticket truths worth noting:

1. Many nonstop flights are now cheaper than connecting flights

It used to be you could consistently save money if you were willing to connect instead of taking a faster, more expensive nonstop. But that was when airlines needed connecting customers to fill empty seats, and when they were attacking each other's hubs. Now flights are so full that airline pricing favors nonstops more often.

Expedia Group and Airlines Reporting Corp., collected and analyzed billions of dollars worth of airline tickets bought in 2018. They found no real correlation between price and number of stops.

"This myth that nonstops are always more expensive is simply not true," says Chuck Thackston, managing director of data science at ARC.

Hopper studied the nonstop question and found nonstops cheaper in about one of every three queries.

It's basically a supply-and-demand issue. Airlines would rather fill seats on each flight with nonstop passengers, because they don't have to split the fare between two flights. Since demand for seats is high, airlines can now fill planes with a lot more nonstop passengers than in the past. So their pricing strategies increasingly make connecting flights more expensive so connecting customers don't take seats that they think will get sold to nonstop passengers.

Analysts say nonstop savings can most often be found in markets with low-cost competition driving down nonstop prices. Where it doesn't work: monopoly nonstop markets, where nonstop prices will be high, and international markets, where nonstops are still often more expensive.

Peter's Comment: That's what a travel advisor does – don't go at it alone!!

Call +1 813 475 5989 first or +1 813 777 5569, in our office and she'll give you the peace of mind you deserve. In the old days travel agents got commissions – no more – now we charge a modest fee because we work for you and not the ones that pay the highest commissions. You'll do better with us.

2. Sunday and Tuesday look like the best days to check for discounted prices, sort of.

The study by ARC and Expedia found that fares generally can be 20% lower on the weekend and sometimes as much as 36% cheaper if you buy on a Sunday.

That's consistent with previous research. But other recent studies don't find as large a difference because they are based on searches for the lowest fare, not actual tickets sold. The tickets-sold pool includes lots of expensive business trips bought during the week. But there is still at least a small difference.

A big-data analytics firm called 3Victors uses search results from almost 22 billion queries made in 2018. It found that in many markets, shopping on the weekend does yield cheaper prices, but only by \$2 or \$3. The company also found that Tuesdays can often be the cheapest day of the week to buy, again by only a few dollars.

"It does matter if you're looking for a sale fare," says Rick Seaney, chief executive at 3Victors. "They just don't have many sales anymore."

Airlines run sales and specials on the weekend so business travelers, who typically buy during the workweek, don't cash in on discounted prices. People shopping on the weekend are usually looking for vacations and family trips, and are especially price-sensitive. A discount may get them to pull the trigger and book a trip.

Tuesday was the go-to day for the cheapest tickets for years. Airline pricing executives would come to work Monday, tally up weekend sales and launch a sale with newspaper ads on Tuesday. Now pricing is largely a computer-controlled, 24/7 business. Airlines can tailor their best prices to specific days and target shoppers with online offers

When they do run flash sales, they tend to be early in the week, favoring Tuesdays marginally. "That's the only thing left that humans are managing," Hopper's Mr. Surry says.

The highest prices tend to come on Thursdays and Fridays.

3. Staying over a Saturday night can save money—except at beach destinations.

The Expedia/ARC study compared trips that included a Saturday night and trips that didn't in the same markets. It found that while staying over on a Saturday isn't necessary for a low fare, you can generally find lower fares if you do.

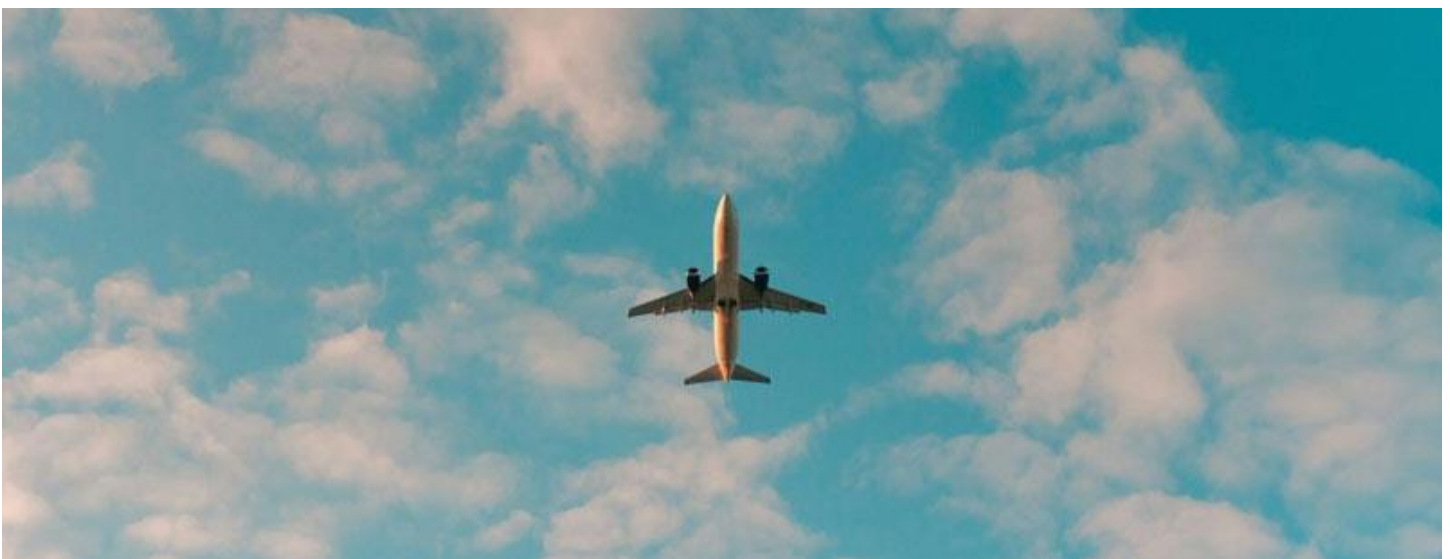
On average, airline tickets were 25% less expensive if they included a Saturday-night stay, ARC says.

While Saturday-night stay requirements have been eliminated in most domestic tickets, largely as a result of widespread competition from low-fare airlines, many discounted international fares still require a Saturday-night stay.

Hopper found that savings for trips to Europe that included a Saturday night averaged almost 40%. Domestic flights showed savings of less than 3% on average in the study.

4. The historical link between oil prices and airfare has been broken

Traditionally, airfares and oil prices have fluctuated together. Fuel prices account for roughly one-quarter of an airline's operating budget. When oil prices go up, fare hikes.



Airline pricing strategies have changed, so travelers intent on landing the lowest fares need to change some of their strategies as well.

Except lately, fares and fees have just been going up, even when oil prices drop, according to Wall Street research firm Macquarie Capital.

The Expedia/ARC study found the same disconnect. It also showed that ticket prices on popular domestic and international routes increased about 5% last year over 2017.

The reason, again, centers on strong demand and industry consolidation. Airlines aren't setting prices so much based on their costs anymore. So if you see oil prices jump higher, no need to wait to buy tickets hoping airfares might drop if oil drops.

Bonus Intel on Airline Tickets

Here's more of what those recent studies found on airline tickets:

* There's a huge range in the price difference between basic-economy fares and standard economy prices for the same flight.

Basic economy, which means no assigned seats until shortly before departure and other reduced perks, is only about 10% cheaper in some markets. In others, it can be half the price or less.

Smaller gaps seem to exist in leisure markets like Hawaii and Florida, the Expedia/ARC study found. Larger gaps exist in strong business-travel markets like New York, Dallas and Houston.

* The cheapest prices are typically found three months to three weeks before departure. "Once you get inside 30 days, you're at the mercy of airlines, because it's just going to go up," Mr. Seaney of 3Victors says.

Mr. Surry of Hopper notes that how far in advance you buy is a much bigger factor in price than what day of the week you make your purchase.

The Expedia/ARC study found three weeks before departure was the sweet spot for buying. But because it looks only at tickets sold, it doesn't include lower prices offered further out that consumers didn't buy because they procrastinated or just couldn't make plans early enough.

* Monday and Friday are the most expensive days to travel. Tuesdays and Wednesdays are the cheapest days to fly. Because who wants to fly on Tuesday or Wednesday?

My Final Thoughts: Dumb Men . . . OK It's Our Turn!

- ✓ **How many honest, intelligent, caring men in the world does it take to do the dishes?**
 - **Answer: Both of them.**

- ✓ **Why don't women blink during foreplay?**
 - **They don't have time.**

- ✓ **Why does it take 1 million sperm to fertilize one egg?**
 - **They won't stop to ask for directions.**

- ✓ **How does a man show that he is planning for the future?**
 - **He buys two cases of beer.**

- ✓ **What is the difference between men and government bonds?**
 - **The bonds mature.**

- ✓ **Why are blonde jokes so short?**
 - **So men can remember them.**

- ✓ **How many men does it take to change a roll of toilet paper?**
 - **We don't know; it has never happened.**

- ✓ **Why is it difficult to find men who are sensitive, caring and good looking?**
 - **They all already have boyfriends.**

- ✓ **When do you care for a man's company?**
 - **When he owns it.**

- ✓ **Why are married women heavier than single women?**
 - **Single women come home, see what's in the fridge and go to bed. Married women come home, see what's in bed and go to the fridge.**

- ✓ **How are men and parking spots alike?**
 - **Good ones are always taken. Free ones are mostly handicapped or**
 - **extremely small.**

- ✓ **Man says to God: "God, why did you make woman so beautiful?"**
 - **God says: "So you would love her." "But God," the man says, "why did you make her so dumb?" God says: "So she would love you."**

Fond Memories



Yes, we have an important drivers' safety briefing about what to do and what NOT to do when you drive in Europe.



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High up high in the Alps for a delightful lunch.



Please stay healthy and happy. I'm looking forward to the great times we will have together again with my Team on one of the fabulous tours we are planning for 2026. All the best to you, **Peter**

