“Best Practices” for Booking International Travel

International Flight Booking requires more work than booking a domestic flight, especially if you want the most economical and/or the fastest route to your foreign destination. With multiple airlines serving your destination and different time zones, it does make it more challenging to plan your trips. It assumes that you can get to your destination using airlines only. If this is not the case, then coordinating airline schedules with trains and ferries adds another layer of complexity. There is typically less competition in international travel, so getting a deal is not always possible when booking International Flights.

Planning your route - Be Flexible
The first thing you will notice is traveling from North American to Europe or Latin America involves flying late in the evening or overnight. This is for logistical reasons. It allows airlines to make a return trip within a 24 hour period which produces more revenue. It may shock your system to have dinner at 9 pm only to be awakened two hours later to have breakfast.

- Non-stop or direct international flights carry a hefty premium. If you are willing to connect to another flight, you could end up saving hundreds of dollars. You are not likely to find multiple daily flights to your international destination. Many airlines only fly on certain days of the week to the international cities. You'll need to factor this into your planning process.

- Consider foreign airline operators as an option to your domestic airlines when traveling abroad. Domestic airlines often force you to take the international flight through a hub. Foreign airlines may allow you to take a direct flight at a location more convenient to you. Foreign airlines may also be more service oriented; offering you multiple meals and other perks while domestic airlines simply transfer their domestic limited service model to international flights.

- Seasonality also impacts the price of an international airline ticket. If you are planning an import trip from China, consider this: Asia’s high travel season is from May to October and low season is from November to April. Flying during the low season will undoubtedly save you money on your international business trip.

- For international travelers flying during peak season, buying your tickets three to six months in advance is advisable. Two to four months ahead is the recommended timeframe for booking an international flight during low season. Last minute deals are almost non-existent in international travel. For the business person traveling abroad, this requires good planning practices if you want to fly economically.
Make these cost-saving choices when booking:

- Book mid-week travel.
- Use alternate airports.
- Request electronic tickets for travel.
- Use the same carrier when possible.
- Book connecting rather than non-stop flights.
- Purchase in advance to receive the lowest fares.
- Consider a broad window of departure and arrival times.
- Stay a Saturday night or a minimum stay of 7 or 10 days, depending on the destination.
- Be aware with the lowest fares there are restrictions, cancellation and change fees.
- Make sure you have a proper visa for travel to countries with visa requirements.
- Look for the lowest fare, not just your carrier of preference.

Stick to your plans:

- If possible, don't change the original ticket or itinerary to avoid extra costs.
- Airline change fees are typically $35–$150 per ticket, in addition to any increase in the new fare.
- For non-refundable tickets, most airlines apply a substantial change fee and require changes to be made within a certain time limit or the ticket loses all value.