

GUIDE: How to BUY and FLY

Delta Air Lines



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Tips for Traveling on Delta Airlines

This is a step-by-step guide to flying Delta Airlines, I'll go over how to buy and at the best rate for the features and services you want *and* what to expect boarding and onboard a [Delta Airlines](#) flight.

[Delta Airlines](#) still one of the world's largest airlines, Delta's product varies greatly depending on what route you're flying and what class of service you choose.

What to Know Before You Book with Delta

- Member of the [SkyTeam ALLIANCE](#)
- **Caution:** Know the operating carrier to determine air ticket policies and rules
- **A Legacy Carrier** – Delta has good re-routing and more robust schedules should your flight be cancelled or delayed.
- **Less Restrictive Carryon policies in Basic Economy** – On Delta you only get a Personal Item + Full-size carryon vs. only a Personal Item on United

[Delta](#) is a member of the [SkyTeam Alliance](#), which includes airlines such as [Aeromexico](#), [Air France](#), [KLM](#), [China Eastern](#), and [Korean Air](#). Delta also has codeshare partners with airlines such as [GOL](#), [Virgin Atlantic](#), [Virgin Australia](#), and [WestJet](#), which allow Delta to sell tickets virtually all over the world. It's not always so clear which airline you'll

actually be flying but you should verify who is the operating carrier as this can determine a lot of the benefits, rules and restrictions on your flight(s).

A flight can be marketed and sold as a Delta flight, but the operating airline may be a Delta partner airline. Make sure to read the flight booking details closely to see if Delta is the operating carrier or to determine which partner airline is the operating carrier. In cases where there are multiple operating carriers including Delta look for the operating carrier over the water...this will be the carrier driving the rules and conditions for your ticket. For example on a reservation where Delta is listed as the operating carrier from Atlanta to New York JFK but Air France is listed as the operating carrier from New York JFK to Paris CDG...then Air France's rules will drive what you need to adhere to and what you get from this ticket. Air France is an alliance partner of Delta's and more and more the conditions are the same for alliance partners but for the few differences you do want to know what you get and what you can do with your ticket. Of course, Delta sells tickets to many places where they don't actually fly. In these cases, you'll likely be on Delta for one leg of your flight and connect on a partner airline.

Delta's main hubs include Atlanta, Detroit, Minneapolis, New York, and Salt Lake City. A few other focus cities include Cincinnati, Seattle, and Los Angeles. If you're flying from a small city, you'll often fly on a Delta branded plane, but the flight may actually be operated by a smaller regional airline. Many different regional airlines operate short and medium-haul flights under the Delta Connection banner. Although everything appears to be Delta to the consumer, the staff are technically not Delta employees and certain procedures may vary slightly.

Basic Economy vs Main Cabin

- Delta offers Basic Economy—US/Canada—Mexico—Central America—Caribbean—Europe.
- You can only pre-reserve standard seats *(For a \$Fee) in the window* from 7 days to 24 hours prior to departure in basic economy. *(After 24hours prior to check in*

seats assigned by Delta for \$FREE) with Basic Economy Fare.

- You must book on initial purchase the Regular Economy “Main Cabin” fare to have access to have the ability to upgrade or change your ticket for a \$Fee + Fare Difference.
- Delta Basic Economy - \$Fee for pre-reserved seats/Last to Board Aircraft/Check bag fees apply to both Basic and Regular Fares except for Transatlantic Regular Economy “Main Cabin” Fares that include 1 checked bag for \$0/No flight changes allowed with Basic Economy Fare and no Upgrades from Basic Economy.
- Medallion Members

When flying on a Basic Economy fare, Medallion Members will continue to enjoy waived checked baggage fees, Priority Check-in, Priority Boarding and Medallion mileage bonuses. However, please note Medallion Members **will not** receive paid or Complimentary Upgrades when flying on a Basic Economy fare.

- **Basic Economy is a good fare for you if** you are able to travel extremely light, won't upgrade, don't care about pre-reserved seats and will only bring a small bag onboard.

Delta was the first major US carrier to introduce a Basic Economy (E booking class) fare. This fare was introduced to compete with ultra-low-cost-carriers like [Spirit](#) and [Frontier](#). Basic Economy passengers are still seated in the same cabin as those who purchase a Standard Economy (Main Cabin) ticket, but there are a few differences. The good news is that Delta's Basic Economy fare still allows you to bring a standard sized carry-on bag plus one personal item, unlike United.

The main differences between Delta's Basic Economy and Standard Economy (*Main Cabin*) are that Basic Economy does not get a FREE pre-reserved seat assignment until check-in, ticket changes or upgrades are not allowed, and you will be in the last boarding group. Note: you can purchase a pre-reserved seat from 7 days to 24 hours prior to departure. Even the paid purchase option of a pre-reserved seat based on the 7 day to 24 hour window noted means that you may not be able to sit next to your travel

companions. Essentially, it is a use it or lose it ticket. And since you're last to board, there may not be space for your bag in the overhead bin, but you'll be able to gate check for free.

For all domestic flights and most international flights, checked bag fees are the same for Basic Economy and Main Cabin. Recently, Delta adjusted this slightly to compete with transatlantic low-cost carriers such as [Norwegian](#). On flights to/from Europe and North Africa, Delta now charges \$60 each way for your first checked bag on Basic Economy fares. Main Cabin fares include one checked bag on these routes.

The lowest fare you see for Delta is usually going to be a Basic Economy Fare. The upgrade to a Main Cabin fare varies depending on the route and specific travel dates although most often it is +\$30 each-way/\$60 round-trip to upgrade domestically from basic economy to main cabin economy. This tends to be +\$60 each-way/+\$120 round-trip to upgrade on Transatlantic flights from basic economy to main cabin economy. Other times, it can be a more significant cost difference and you'll have to decide for yourself which fare is best for you.

How to FIND and BUY a Flight with Delta

- You can buy on 3rd party sites and Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) like Expedia & Orbitz
- We recommend also considering metasearch sites like [Momondo](#) which show multiple and more obscure 3rd Party web fares.
- Obscure 3rd Party web fares can sometimes be hundreds of dollars less than what you find on Delta website (*particularly with International Travel*)
- **Caution** – Obscure 3rd Party Sites – Often charge extra change fees and are not as transparent with fare rules and change conditions in addition to adding a middle-man into your air travel purchase.
- If the price difference is minimal you want to go with a well-established online travel agency or book directly with [Delta](#).

- When booking on Delta’s site, utilize the flexible date’s option which can give you a price display based on +/- 3 days view and can help locate low fares if you have some date flexibility.
- The Delta search results display gives the option to choose between [Basic Economy](#), [Main](#), [Comfort +](#), [Premium Select](#) and [Business/Delta One](#) or [First Class](#). Note that not all of these options appear in every market.
- There is a “Compare Cabin Experiences” option to see what is included with what fare.
- For Premium Economy you need to book either the [Comfort +](#) or [Premium Select](#). The differences between these two Premium Economy fare types include: [Premium Select](#) is only available on select long-haul international market flights, offers more recline and legroom, a higher level amenity kit, priority ck-in and expedited baggage handling and security, fine dining and personalized in-flight flight attendant, and a bigger entertainment screen. On long-haul and international flights think of Comfort + as Premium Economy lite while [Premium Select](#) is the more expected Premium Economy service and sometimes a bit more.

Delta flights are sold on the majority of third party booking engines, but not all of them. The notable exceptions are CheapAir, Hipmunk, and the popular app Hopper. If you only use these sites, you’ll miss out on comparing Delta fares. Delta is sold on sites we recommend which include [Momondo](#), [Hotwire](#) and [Skiplagged](#). [Momondo](#) and [Skiplagged](#) allow you to search multiple sites to compare and get the best price.

When it comes time to book, Delta will try to entice you to upgrade to main cabin and other economy fares. Be prepared for pop-ups asking if you’d like to move to [Main Cabin](#) or accept the restrictions of Basic Economy. You will have to either upgrade at this point of the booking process or take an action to accept the basic economy restrictions to proceed with your booking.

Delta will offer a few extras while booking, such as priority boarding and In-Flight Wi-Fi and Travel Insurance, but you will reach the payment screen in just a few steps. Standard seat selection is free for Main Cabin and above.

Preferred seating is available for a fee. Checked bag fees are not charged during booking on Delta. You will have the option to pay (*if the fee applies*) for any checked bags upon check-in.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Once on the payment screen, you'll be offered travel insurance, which you may want to consider depending on your travel situation but we do also recommend comparing travel insurance plans with those offer in [Squaremouth](#) to see whether purchasing through the airline website or [Squaremouth](#) is better. You'll then proceed to enter your payment information.

After booking, you'll have 24-hours to think it over as Delta offers a generous [risk-free cancellation policy](#). Simply request to cancel by midnight the day after the ticket was purchased. There is no advance purchase requirement to be eligible for a [full refund within 24-hours](#) of booking directly with Delta.

Check-In for a Delta Flight

- Online Check-in 24 hours prior to departure
- Option for paperless boarding pass with eBoarding Pass at certain Airports.
- Domestic check-in at least 30min w/o bags/45min w/ck bags
- International check-in at least 60 min prior to departure.
- NO Online Check-in for Basic Economy passengers not checking in bags. Basic Economy Passengers board last.

You can check-in for your Delta flight online within 24 hours of departure. Print your boarding pass or go paperless with an eBoarding Pass at certain airports. Delta also has automatic check-in available via the Fly Delta App, where you'll get an alert 24-hours prior to departure and just have to acknowledge the federal mandate for restricted items. You'll then get a mobile boarding pass on your device.

You may also check-in at an airport kiosk. Most check-in desks at the airport will be for bag drop only for those who have checked-in online or at the kiosk prior to getting in line. Make sure to check-in first before entering these lines to check your bags. You'll pay any necessary bag fees upon check-in. If you require special assistance, you'll have to wait in the *Special Services* line.

You may sometimes notice your boarding pass will say "Seat assigned at Gate" after checking-in. Don't worry. If you have a confirmed ticket, you will most likely get a seat on the plane. Delta like most major carriers has a process to identify passengers willing to give up their seat which almost always opens up the seats they need. This will occur for Basic Economy passengers primarily and the reason is the flight may be overbooked or a final weight and balance must be calculated before a total number of passengers allowed can be determined.

Delta's flights are often full and the last open seats are often assigned at the gate. There are often plenty of no-shows, missed connections, and/or re-bookings from passengers on refundable tickets so you'll most likely get a seat assignment even if the flight is overbooked.

Boarding and the Delta Inflight Experience

As with all major airlines, Delta will board elite customers first followed by families with small children and anyone needing special assistance. Planes are often full so if you're on a Basic Economy ticket and last to board, there is a chance you'll have to gate check your bag.

If you're flying on a mainline Delta flight (*larger aircraft*), your bag will be checked to your final destination. If you're on a Delta Connection flight (*small regional aircraft*), your bag will be "pink tagged" and claimed at the gate upon arrival at the next airport. Gate checking bags like this is pretty standard for most if not all smaller regional jet flights which can't accommodate normal carry-on bags in the overhead bins.

Inflight services vary widely depending on what route you're flying. Short flights under 45 min. may not have any beverage service except on request, but most domestic flights will offer free snacks and soft drinks. Light meals and adult beverages are available for purchase depending on the length of the flight. On long-haul international flights and certain transcontinental domestic flights, you'll receive an in-flight meal as well.

For your entertainment, some aircraft are equipped with seatback entertainment screens with live TV and many pre-recorded movies and shows to keep you busy. You can also connect to the Delta Studio on your personal device to access many of the same entertainment options. It's always a good idea to upload and/or connect to Delta Studio before you take and board your flight.

Delta also has Wi-Fi available for purchase on nearly every flight. If you have a Wi-Fi equipped mobile device, Delta offers free inflight texting via Apple iMessage, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp.

The seat pitch will vary depending on the aircraft assigned to your flight, but is usually around 30-32" in Economy seating. I actually prefer the smaller regional aircraft over the older Boeing 757s and some of the bigger mainline aircraft. It feels more like a private flying experience and seating is often only two per side with a decent seat pitch. Unlike the mainline aircraft none of the seat pitch is below 31 inches on the regional jets. Of course, you'll need to be on a larger plane for any long-haul flights and the more comfortable ones are the wide body (two aisle) aircraft. Check out [SeatGuru](#) for a look at the best seating options on Delta's aircraft.

For a little more legroom and dedicated overhead bin space, you can purchase a Comfort+ seat or on some long-haul and international flights [Premium Select](#). You'll get up to 3 more inches of legroom on domestic flights and up to 4 more inches on international in Comfort +. On [Premium Select](#) you can see up to 8 more inches of legroom. You'll also get priority boarding, free adult beverages, and a complimentary pillow/blanket. On long-haul international flights, you'll also receive an amenity kit. The

Comfort+ and [Premium Select](#) seats can be purchased during booking or as an add-on after booking.

Premium Service on Delta Air Lines

As noted above Delta has varying options for premium economy depending on the route you're flying. These seats are usually exponentially higher in price than basic or main cabin economy so most leisure travelers will only consider these seats when using frequent flyer miles, credit card points, or an upgrade due to frequent flyer status. On occasion, Delta offers discounted upgrades, particularly at check-in.

[First Class on domestic flights](#), which is the same as Business Class on short-haul international flights, gives you up to 8 inches more legroom and a wider seat. You'll also get up to a 5.4 inch recline and a wider seatback screen on many routes. The service is more personal and includes premium snacks, meals, and alcoholic beverages.

Delta's Premium Select service is only available on few international flights. These seats are similar to premium economy on international carriers and similar to [Delta's domestic First Class](#) product. So far, only Delta's A350 and a few 757s are outfitted with these seats. More planes may be reconfigured in the future.

[Delta One](#) is Delta's premier product for long-haul international flights and select transcontinental domestic markets. The best feature is the lie flat seat allowing you to get the rest you need on a long flight. You'll get the best chef-curated meals, which are far better than what is served in economy.

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