



Frequent Flyer news released on December 15, 2008

Admitting mistakes is not an easy exercise and unfortunately one that happens too rarely with Frequent Flyer Programs as well. We also had clearly disapproved when US Airways scrapped the elite bonus in its **Dividend Miles** program in August. As this hasn't found any imitators and given the pressure from the market side, US Airways withdrew this decision only three and a half months later. The elite bonus is now reinstated and was also credited retroactively to concerned members for the period in question. The new bonus applies, however, only to *US Airways* and *United* flights, hence no longer to *ANA* as before. Only elite members get also again a minimum credit of 500 miles on short-haul flights on all partners.

And it works nevertheless: Star Alliance has given the impression over the last few years that upgrade awards within an alliance are impossible. While the whole project at Star is still a patchwork and many members don't make the slightest effort to ever participate in the programme, SkyTeam has now, albeit with a time gap, demonstrated how it works: Members of all Frequent Flyer Programs can now use miles for upgrade awards on all flights operated by a SkyTeam partner - for the moment being just except for associated alliance members. But also SkyTeam can't do entirely without exceptions: *Alitalia* is completely left out and members of Continental's **OnePass** program, which prepares to switch to Star Alliance, can use upgrades on selected partners only. Upgrade awards are only available on the basis of Economy Class Full Fares and on itineraries involving at least one international flight. Although there are huge differences between the individual programs in both alliances, one can state the tendency that SkyTeam award levels are in average at only half of the levels at Star Alliance. **oneworld**, up to now you were right to say that it was better not to have any offer at all than one like Star, but what now?

It is not yet clear what 2009 will bring for airlines, but for sure some take-overs. That is always a pain for Frequent Flyer Programs if this puts at stake long-lasting partnerships. But one program got prepared for all possible scenarios in a simple manner: Almost all merger candidates are already now unified in Jet Airways' **Jet Privilege**. Will *Brussels Airlines* and *Austrian* be taken over by *Lufthansa* as planned? No problem, all three are already partners in the program. The program would even be ready for the scenario of a tie-up between *Virgin Atlantic* and *Lufthansa* thanks to its partnership with *Virgin*. Is there anything behind the most recent rumour that *Etihad* is to take over *Emirates*? Since today, also *Emirates*, as already *Etihad* and *Gulf Air*, has been a partner in the program! If *British Airways* merges with *Qantas*, the recently suspended partnership with *British Airways* would, however, need to be reactivated again. There is only one remaining problematic area to be resolved for Jet Airways as well: Its two US partners *United* and *Northwest* will definitely not merge... But, on the other hand, what is definite in aviation?

All stays of at least two nights at hotels of the *Hilton* family qualify for sextuple miles in the Delta program **SkyMiles** until February 28, as well for the option of a flexible as for a variable mileage credit according to the **HHonors** program. The promotion is applicable at about half of all 3,000 global properties and an enrolment is required.

The simplest ideas are sometimes the best ones: Mileage credits for *Sixt* rentals at **Miles & More** are now determined in function of the annual rental frequency, what is hence a kind of elite program for *Sixt* customers. If you rented a car at least five times over the past 12 months, you receive 1,000 instead of 500 miles per rental. Starting at 10 rentals, the credit is

even increased to 1,500 miles and after 30 rentals even to 2,000 miles - always per rental. 30 rentals a year equal thus 60,000 miles or enough for a free flight between Europe and North America. This is a permanent program change.

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