



Frequent Flyer news released on January 15, 2009

Two days ago, the new Alitalia took to the skies, together with its former competitor *Air One*. While this new start entails quite a few changes for customers - especially in form of a significantly reduced network, which has seen further cuts in Milan above all -, there are hardly any changes for frequent flyers. The new Alitalia remains in SkyTeam and Air One has now been integrated to the **MilleMiglia** program as well. However, the generous minimum mileage rules were already revised on January 01: Instead of 1,200 miles on international flights, one receives now only 1,000 miles on *Alitalia* (and *Air One*) flights as well as 750 miles on *Air France*, *KLM* and *Czech Airlines*. At the same time, *Air One* remains a partner in Lufthansa's **Miles & More** program and in the programs of some other Star Alliance companies. Whether this is to last remains to be seen.

Thai has increased the award levels in its **Royal Orchid Plus** program already for the second time in 15 months. While the increase was only moderate last time, it is real hefty this time. On *Thai* flights, all long-haul flights in Business and First Class as well as upgrades cost more whereas all long-haul upgrades as well as long-haul flights to Asia in Business and First Class were increased on *Star Alliance* partners. Even if there is little consolation in such cases, Thai seems at least to have a bad conscience. This can be recognised on one hand by the uneven award levels (e.g. 173,000 miles for a Business Class award flight between Japan and Europe), on the other hand by the fact that a promotion was introduced simultaneously to the increase, which discounts all international award flights on *Thai* by 20% until March 31. Although this measure has obviously been planned before, it is nevertheless questionable whether it makes good sense to really implement it at a time when Thailand fears to have 50% less international visitors...

Unlike to end on December 31 as planned, the 10% discount for online bookings of award flights with *Emirates* has been extended until March 31 in the **Skywards** program. As such, this is good news, but the relatively short prolongation suggests that this represents the last period of grace for a promotion that will have lasted for two and half years by the end of March.

Russian carrier S7 Airlines has introduced a Frequent Flyer Program, called **S7 Priority**. The program looks like a solid standard program, which compensates the lack of partnerships by a generous program structure. In the meantime, there are many Frequent Flyer Programs in Russia and the CIS, but most of them without any (airline) partners. S7, which is the largest domestic carrier in Russia and was already brought forward as potential **oneworld** candidate, has, however, already announced such partners for the near future. Elder people may recall that S7, when it was still called Siberia Airlines, once already operated a Frequent Flyer Program, **SKY7**. If you used to be a member of it, you will though only receive a double welcome bonus with S7 Priority, hence 3,000 instead of 1,500 miles - but any unused points are not honoured... And the consolation that the new program is indeed much more attractive. One should only refrain from the option of fully flexible award flights, Priority, since it requires three times the miles of standard awards (Optimum).

Various hotel programs currently offer a big number of interesting promotions - but the most interesting one is certainly the one of *Hyatt*, which runs until April 30. Already two nights during the promotional period qualify for 2,000 bonus points in Hyatt's **Gold Passport** program or 2,000 bonus miles in affiliated Frequent Flyer Programs. The bonus increases in

several steps up to 20,000 bonus points/miles for eight nights - certainly an achievable goal for many! A participation in the Gold Passport program, also for collecting Frequent Flyer miles, as well as an enrolment to this promotion are required.

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