



Frequent Flyer news released on August 14, 2009

Delta has presented its new **SkyMiles** elite program for 2010, which will become effective in spring and for which you qualify based on the activity in this year. The most important enhancements are the following ones: A fourth elite level will be introduced, for which one qualifies with 125,000 status miles and at which a mileage bonus of 125% is granted among other benefits. At the two superior levels, you will have the new possibility to choose individual benefits from a menu, in addition to standard benefits. The complimentary upgrades for elite members will be applicable to award tickets as well as of spring 2010, for Gold members upwards. And finally, a rollover of exceeding status miles about one's elite level, which count towards the following qualification, will be introduced. At the same time, Delta promises that there will be no cutbacks for base members compared to today in the new combined program of Delta and Northwest.

United has recently eliminated entirely the fee for award bookings within 21 days of departure in its **Mileage Plan**. This is obviously a welcome move. And while United is also correct to state that it becomes the first airline to "eliminate" this fee, one should nevertheless stress that some 150 other airlines around the world never had the idea to ever introduce such a fee in first place and can't eliminate it either as a result. It should be noted, however, that United continues to offer fees in other areas, which belong to the highest in the industry, such as a fee of 25 USD for the booking of award flights through the call center or of 150 USD for the cancellation of an award flight.

JetBlue will introduce a completely new version of its **TrueBlue** program on September 28, what will represent an overall enhancement of the program. It will be changed to a revenue basis: Points are accrued in function of the air fare paid (double points for online bookings) and the prices for awards vary in function of the current air fare. Bonus points are granted upon reaching specific point thresholds per year - what can represent not less than a doubling of points for frequent flyers - as well as for ten medium-haul flights per year. Points will no longer expire, provided at least one JetBlue flight is taken or the *American Express* card of the program is used every twelve months. However, there is no talk of a Frequent Flyer partnership with code share partner *Aer Lingus* and even less with the partial owner *Lufthansa*... Points from the current program will expire at the end of their current validity, but can still be used according to the current rules. Newly collected points can also be converted into old points once at a ratio of 200-to-1 in order to reach the required number of points for an award according to the old program, what allows using all old points like that. A conversion of old into new points, however, will not be possible.

Air India is set to join the Star Alliance, probably in early 2010 (already pushed back from an initial schedule for mid 2009). But surprisingly, it is another Indian carrier that keeps on forming Frequent Flyer partnerships with Star Alliance members: Jet Airways. The most recent addition to its **Jet Privilege** program is *Turkish Airlines*, bringing the number of Star members in the program to seven, including heavy weights such as *Lufthansa*, *United* and *ANA*. The question will be what will happen to all these partnerships once Air India teams up with them... But there is good news for Jet Airways and many others: Star Alliance's CEO has recently announced that he could imagine growing Star Alliance to 50 members, up from the current 24. PR agencies around the world, get ready to praise the "value" all these carriers most of the travelling public would never have heard about before will add to the

alliance! And then we will suggest - completely free of charge! - a rebranding from Star Alliance into IATA (International Air Transport Alliance).

There are already some Frequent Flyer Programs, in which pet owners can earn miles for their loved ones, e.g. Virgin Atlantic's **Flying Club** or Continental's **OnePass**. But of course, it could only have been the Americans to introduce the first airline exclusively for the transportation of domestic animals, [Pet Airways](#), which also offers a Frequent Flyer Program in full style, **Pet Points**. "Customers" collect sufficient points for a one-way award flight after ten one-way flights. As such, this would not be that incredible - if there were not still many easyJets and Ryanairs out there, on which one is treated worse as human being and is not offered any Frequent Flyer Program.

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