



Trip Resources: Flights and Airfare

Booking your flight for one of Embarck's adventures in Africa, Asia or South America can seem like a daunting task. These flights are long and (often) expensive, and finding the best fare can be a complex undertaking. While it's impossible to give you all the available tips in a small space, we are giving it a shot here. As always, arming yourself with a little knowledge and preparation helps make the whole process go more smoothly.

How to Search

You should start with general search engines such as [Kayak.com](https://www.kayak.com) or [Google Flights](https://www.google.com/flights), so you can compare fares on different carriers. Here are some more suggestions:

- [Skyscanner](https://www.skyscanner.com)
- [AirFare Watchdog](https://www.airfarewatchdog.com) (good at finding sale and error fares)
- [Cheapoair](https://www.cheapoair.com)
- [TripAdvisor](https://www.tripadvisor.com)

Once you find the carrier and routing you like, head for that airline's website, as you can skip the search engine's cut and airlines often guarantee the lowest price on their own websites. Follow them on social media, as well, to keep up with fare deals. [Theflightdeal.com](https://www.theflightdeal.com) has an excellent email you can subscribe to for a daily list of deals from the US.

Search with your dates flexible, as changing departure or arrival by even a day or two can save you money (though be aware that you will need to pay for additional nights in hotels and possibly a ride from the airport if you are the only one being picked up). It seems, for example, that flights are sometimes cheaper simply by leaving on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Saturday.

If you want to add a layover to extend your trip, it might be cheaper to book the two legs separately on your own. For example, if you are flying from Portland to Asia, you may have a layover in Los Angeles; in that case, search local discount airlines such as Alaska for a cheaper fare to LA, then look around for the LA-Asia ticket, leaving yourself some time to hit the beach on the way back.

A few more tips to consider:

- You might save money by traveling on a major holiday.
- Search for one-way tickets, even on different airlines; sometimes you can buy these to save money, but other times it just helps in finding the best day to travel.
- If you are traveling as a pair or in a group, search for individual tickets one at a time; if, for example, there are three seats left on a flight and you're searching for three tickets,



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the airline will only show you the price for the most expensive seat.

- Look for airfare-hotel-car packages; some rental companies and hotels essentially hide amazing deals in these packages, so customers won't know the discounts they are offering.
- If you live close to more than one airport, check out the fares from all of the airports near you. A short drive or discount airline flight might be worth it.

When to Buy

Since you will have a fairly fixed itinerary, last-minute deals won't be an option for you. So you will want to book ahead. The best general advice here is to book three to six months ahead. More specifically, studies have shown that when traveling from the US, the best fares to Europe are at about 120 days out, Asia around 160 days, Africa about seven months, and South America around 4 months.

Kayak.com has a nice feature that shows the history of a particular fare and also predicts if the fare is likely to up or down.

Remember, if fares go down after you make your purchase, you might be able to get a refund of the difference. It certainly isn't always the case, but it also certainly doesn't hurt to ask. So keep tracking that fare even after you buy.

What and How to Pay

One great option here can be using frequent flier miles, and a simple way to attain these is through credit card signup bonuses. Many cards offer up to 50,000 or more miles after you hit a minimum spend on the card. If you're traveling as a pair, each of you can get a card and pay for at least one of your tickets this way. Thepointsguy.com is a great resource for this kind of "travel hacking."

Some banks or card issuers, most notably Chase and American Express, offer cards that reward you with points that can be exchanged for hotels, airfare, or car rentals. If you get an airline's card, you will also earn a bonus for using it on their airline; these can be extra miles, priority boarding, free checked bags, lounge access, and so on. In this way, loyalty to an airline can pay off – if you're not paying too much on their fares compared to other airlines. As always, do your homework.



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Use a Travel Agent

Yes, they still exist! And they often have access to cheaper fares than the public does. Our tip is to do the homework above, find the best fare you can, then take that to an agent to see if they can do better. Sometimes they can get you a better seat or more comfortable layover for the same fare, and sometimes they can just save you money.

Some Region-Specific Tips

We at Embark have been booking tickets around the world for a long time. So we have some specific tips to share with you from our favorite regions.

For Nepal, check China Air. For Asia in general, Cathay Pacific is a wonderful airline. If going to Africa, check KLM through Amsterdam (a great layover spot) and Nairobi.

For all the above, if you're traveling with Embark we'd be more than happy to help as we can. After all, each trip is unique, and as you can see here, the adventure starts long before you leave the house!