

When-to-Buy Airline Tickets *and more travel advice*

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Wouldn't it be great to walk down the aisle on your next plane ride with the sea of faces looking back wondering why you have a smile on your face?

The sly smirk of a person that knows they paid less than the rest for the same seat.

Shopping Tuesday at 3pm Eastern Time for domestic airline tickets is likely to put that smile on your face and here's why...

First a little background – there is a **big difference between shopping for and actually purchasing** the cheapest flight. Shopping is when you should start browsing for an airline ticket deal and buying is that last step you take by virtually swiping the credit card — without much recourse afterwards if you don't like your decision.

If you are shopping for a domestic airline ticket you should know that airlines tend to start releasing cheaper seats about 3 to 4 month before departure (this is when airlines begin to actively manage revenue for the cheapest of their 10 price points for seats on most flights) – and yes that is when you should start shopping, about 3 1/2 months before departure — any earlier and you're probably paying too much.

A good start is to sign up for FareCompare's "When-to-Fly real-time email airfare alerts" (www.farecompare.com/signup).

These will keep you up to date by notifying you first of price drops — knowing current trends in ticket pricing is one of the main keys in making great purchasing decision.

Airlines also begin to **up-charge for tickets when you get inside of 14 days of departure**, when they assume you are a last minute business traveler who can afford to pay significantly more, so don't procrastinate.

Between 3 months and 14 days before takeoff defines your shopping "window" (note that shopping for international airline tickets is a bit different – more tips shortly on buying cheap international flights).

You're probably saying to yourself, that this is pretty big window of time and doesn't help much — so let's tighten up this purchasing window to a specific weekday and time.

We recently did a comprehensive study of our database of current and historical airfares (the world's largest) and found an interesting and useful trend that has been happening for the past few years.

- Airlines typically **file their airfare sales late Monday** evening (at 8pm Eastern)
- Usually only **one or two airlines kick off a sale** on any given week
- During the morning hours of the next day (Tuesday) other airlines scramble to **match the new lower prices** on the routes of the initiating airline(s) (during domestic airfare feeds at 10am and 1pm Eastern)
- So at about **3pm Eastern time is when all the matching discounted seat prices hit reservation systems** for domestic travel — this is when the maximum number of cheap seats are available to consumers
- Even more interestingly these airline sales tend to last for only 3 days, so **late on Thursday the sale prices are yanked**, so if you are shopping on the weekend your likely paying too much for a domestic airline ticket.

Additionally not all departure dates are created equal — [Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday are the cheapest days to fly](#) (Monday, Friday, Sunday the most expensive) and you should try to avoid the days where airlines are charging "[peak travel surcharges](#)" (at least on half your trip) which can save you up to \$30 each way.

These are just a few simple things that will help find those elusive cheap seats – we have so much more to share, so join us in the FareCompare community and never overpay for an airline ticket again.