

6AM TRIBUTE EDITION - THE QUEEN 1926~2022

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Irreplaceable

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**FULL
COVERAGE
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Lift-off at the pointy end

DAVID MILLS

FREQUENT flyer points have shot up in value as the cost of airfares surges, with a single point now worth up to eight times its normal value on some business class seats.

While the cash cost of domestic and international fares has shot up, the number of frequent flyer points needed for trips has stayed largely the same, meaning now is an excellent time to use them, says the man known as the "Points Whisperer", Steve Hui.

"The magic of frequent flyer points is that they can be worth more money or less money, depending on how you utilise those points," he said.

The base value of frequent flyer points was 0.7c but, for a Classic Reward seat in business class on a Qantas return flight from Sydney to Perth booked for June 2023, points were currently worth as much as 6c each, he said.

Points seats for other destinations around that time also represent good value: 2.9c a point for a return flight to London; 3.2c a point to Los Angeles, 4.4c a point to Singapore and 5c a point to Melbourne.

Getting enough points for a business class fare remained the ultimate objective for many seasoned travellers, but Mr Hui said using points for seats in economy was "becoming better value".

"In the past I would have said don't use points for economy, because you won't get much bang for your buck," he said.

But, with the cost of a return trip to Europe in economy drifting from \$2000 to more like \$5000, this was now changing.

"You get more bang for business class, but the bang for buck in economy is not bad. Better than it was," he said.

The number of points needed to claim rewards seats remained the same as pre-pandemic times on most international and domestic airlines.

"Singapore (Airlines) has made a slight change, but not large enough to be too bad," he said.

But will the good times last? If airlines have jacked up the cash price for seats, will they also look to

SMART SAVERS

Frequent flyer expert Steve Hui. Picture: Tim Hunter.

WHAT POINTS ARE WORTH RIGHT NOW

As an example of the increase in value of frequent flyer points, these flights are in Qantas business class, departing from Sydney next June.

MELBOURNE RETURN

Cash price: \$1850
Point price: 36,800
Value of each point: 5 cents



PERTH RETURN

Cash price: \$5000
Point price: 83,000
Value of each point: 6c

BRISBANE RETURN

Cash price: \$1800
Point price: 36,800
Value of each point: 4.9c

AUCKLAND RETURN

Cash price: \$1900
Point price: 83,000
Value of each point: 2.3c

LONDON RETURN

Cash price: \$8500
Point price: 289,200
Value of each point: 2.9c

LOS ANGELES RETURN

Cash price: \$7000
Point price: 216,800
Value of each point: 3.2c

SINGAPORE RETURN

Cash price: \$6000
Point price: 136,800
Value of each point: 4.4c

Source: Steve Hui, iflyflat.com.au

SPEND & SAVE WITH THESE OFFERS

TODAY
Sports and nutrition discounts
Excludes vitamins. limit of 10 items per customer

TOMORROW
20% off Haircare

SUNDAY
20% off Skincare
Excludes sun care and tanning

LOOK FOR THE BARCODE EACH DAY

increase the point cost? Mr Hui thinks not.

"I don't think they're going to muck around with changing the value of points, because that has a flow-on effect; it changes the value of the program to partners," he said. "But they can control how many seats they put into the program; they might go from 10 seats on a flight to five."

Research by Finder revealed some travellers have already struggled to convert their points to flights.

In a survey of 1010 Australian consumers, five per cent of respondents said they had tried to redeem points for a flight within the past six months without success. Eight per cent said they were able to use their points as expected, while 12 per cent said they were able to use their points but it was more expensive or difficult.

Finder's Stephanie Yip said this was disappointing for

Australians who had bulked up their points during the pandemic.

"Many aren't getting as much value from their points as they'd hoped," she said. "Award-flight availability has been unpredictable post-lockdown, which can be frustrating for travellers."

Ms Yip said getting an upgrade was the best way to use points, and being flexible with dates and destinations was the easiest way to redeem points.

"Typically upgrade requests are prioritised by membership status. If you're on a lower status, consider booking a reward business class seat instead.

"It might be more expensive but it'll guarantee you a spot at the pointy end of the plane," she said.