

Fly Free In First Class: Interview With Scott Grimmer Of MileValue.Com

Scott Grimmer, who runs the travel blog milevalue.com, is an expert in “travel hacking.” Scott, who is only 28 years old, has traveled for free in first class to over 63 countries by systematically collecting and redeeming air miles.

What is travel hacking?

- The accumulation of miles, points, upgrades, or elite status through credit cards and travel miles to travel and find sleeping accommodations for free or as cheaply as possible
- It requires knowledge of which types of cards to sign up for, keeping track of purchases, planning point accumulation, and maintaining good credit.

How to Meet Card Spending Requirements and Maintain Good Credit

- Charge all your spending to credit cards. By spending \$1,000 a month on groceries, gas, and bills, you can easily meet a \$5,000 card minimum in 5 months.
- If Scott finds he is short of meeting a minimum requirement, he buys a gift card to a store he knows he will shop at.
- Apply for a number of credit cards at once. Banks often miss same-day applications, so you won't get denied.
- Understand how cards affect your credit score. Applying for new cards hurts your score, but keeping cards for long periods of time and paying them off responsibly raises your credit.
- Scott's credit score is in upper 700's and has increased or stayed the same despite maintaining several credit cards.

Types of Miles and Points

- **Credit card points disguised as miles:** are accumulated monetary fractions of the amounts you spend on a card (\$.01 for every \$1.00 you spend, for example) that can be used toward purchasing travel tickets.

- **Airline points:** are fixed rates airlines offer. Each airline offers different monetary amounts per point earned.
- **Region-based miles:** are based on which region you travel to. Whether you're flying from New York to London or Los Angeles to Paris, the flight awards are based on travel from America to Europe and whether you travel economy, business, or first class. These are a great option for international travel.
- **Distance-based miles:** are awards based on the exact distance you fly. These are best for short, expensive flights.
- **Transferable points:** are highly versatile points, and are easiest for beginner travel hackers to use. Transferable points can be redeemed and turned any of the 4 previously discussed types of miles.

Sleeping Accommodations

- Hotel credit cards generally offer signup bonuses and minimum spending requirement points.
- AirBnB has a referral program. If you refer a friend, you can get free AirBnB stays.
- House-sitting and couch surfing are always free options too!

Where do I start?

- For Americans, sign up for United American Airlines, Delta, British Airways, and other airlines you typically use.
- For Canadians, sign up for Aeriplan, British Airways, and other airlines you typically use.
- Sign up for one program from each of the 3 airline alliances; the Star Alliance, One World, and Sky Team.

Strategizing Mile Accumulation and Utilization

- Do not orphan any of your miles. Work towards building a balance you can actually redeem.
- Figure out your travel plans and work backwards. There is no single best credit card for every goal. You must have your goal in mind and then figure out the best credit card to reach that goal.

- Scott suggests beginners start with the Citi ThankYou Premier Card (which offers 50,000 bonus points after spending \$3,000 in the first 3 months) or the Chase Sapphire Preferred Card (which gives 40,000 bonus ultimate reward points after spending \$4,000 in the first 3 months.) “It’s great to be in both programs so then you have even more flexibility.”

References

- matrix.itasoftware.com
- kayak.com
- myfico.com