

# The 12 Best Flight Search Sites for Booking

## Cheap Airfare

(COURTESY OF CARL UNGER)

Wondering which website you should be booking your airfare with to get the best deal? You're not alone. There are seemingly endless options when it comes to choosing the best flight booking site these days.

In addition to the option of booking directly with your airline, there are dozens of flight booking websites, also known as online travel agencies (OTAs), to choose from. The uncomfortable truth is that no one flight search engine can guarantee the best price 100 percent of the time, but using a mix of the right resources can help ensure you're not overpaying.

## The Best Flight Booking Sites

Here's a quick rundown of the best flight search sites for booking cheap airfare.

- [Travelocity](#)
- [BookingBuddy](#)
- [Expedia](#)
- [CheapOair](#)
- [TripAdvisor Flights](#)
- [Skyscanner](#)
- [OneTravel](#)
- [Travelzoo](#)
- [Google Flights](#)
- [Kayak](#)
- [Momondo](#)
- [Nomad from Kiwi.com](#)

One important thing to remember about booking sites/OTAs is that Southwest fares are not sold on them. Some other airlines have also [pulled their fares from some booking sites](#), but most airlines do make their fares available.

Here's why these 12 are the best flight booking sites and metasearch options out there, and the best defining feature of each. Since it's impossible to know which site will provide the best price for your particular trip, you should always compare fares from a few sources before you book.

## Travelocity

It should be noted that Expedia owns [Travelocity](#), so this flight booking site basically gives you Expedia price results with a different color scheme and organizational preferences. Travelocity's homepage is streamlined but doesn't offer a flexible-dates search. On the results page, bag fees are revealed by clicking a drop-down for each fare, which makes it a little difficult to compare fees (you will likely have to scroll a bit). Travelocity rates each flight itinerary with a score on a scale of 10, which takes into account the duration, type of aircraft, and "quality of amenities" available onboard from "Very Good" to "Satisfactory" to "Fair." Travelocity charges booking fees for some but not all flights.

**Best Feature:** The out-of-10 flight rating assigns each itinerary a clear score, so you're a lot less likely to mistakenly book a long layover or miss out on a better itinerary with Travelocity.

## BookingBuddy

*Note: BookingBuddy is owned by SmarterTravel.*

Compare multiple airfare sites with one click to find the best flight deals on [BookingBuddy](#). This metasearch site lets you easily compare prices from other sites (like Priceline) without having to do a bunch of different searches. You can choose which flight search sites you want to compare, and BookingBuddy opens up a new tab with your selected flight dates and destinations already filled in. Looking for a flight and hotel? BookingBuddy offers a combination flight and hotel search that can save you some decent money by bundling.

**Best Feature:** Sign up for a price drop alert, and BookingBuddy will email you when costs drop on your route.

## Expedia

As previously mentioned, [Expedia](#) is nearly identical to Travelocity, but fares did vary between the two sites on some of my searches. As with Travelocity (and to be fair, a number of other OTAs), Expedia will try to up-sell you on adding a hotel to your itinerary. This can save you money, but be sure to compare prices before you book. On the results page is a “Show flexible dates” option so you can see whether cheaper flights are available if you shift your trip a day or two. Expedia charges variable booking fees (and they are not always the same fees that Travelocity charges). When you select your fare from the list of options, there’s an interstitial step that displays what is and isn’t covered in the fare, including seat selection, cancellations, changes, and baggage rules.

**Best Feature:** Like its subsidiary Travelocity, Expedia basically double-checks that you understand what sort of fare you’re choosing before you click “select” again. It’s a helpful bit of transparency in today’s cluttered airfare landscape.

## CheapOair

Much like Travelocity and Expedia, flight search sites [CheapOair](#) and OneTravel are versions of the same product, owned by Fareportal Inc. CheapOair charges the same booking fee as OneTravel: from \$0 to \$35 per ticket. Though the sites are owned by the same company, the fare results are not always identical, so it’s worth checking both. CheapOair shows some “Super Saver Fares” for which you don’t find out the airline you’ll be flying until after you book—which means you also don’t find out what baggage fees apply until after you book. However, the savings might be worth it.

**Best Feature:** CheapOair prioritizes nonstop prices over itineraries with stops, organized in an easy-to-read chart that’s organized by airline.

## TripAdvisor Flights

TripAdvisor is known for its hotel reviews, and now travelers can apply their ratings to airlines, plus search for airfare on [TripAdvisor Flights](#). On testing this flight booking site it’s clear that TripAdvisor doesn’t always serve up the cheapest fares, but sometimes it did. It always, however, gives you the option to surface Expedia, Travelocity, and other flight booking sites’ results, so you

can compare right away with one click. TripAdvisor Flights also has some helpful search options up front, like a checkbox for prioritizing nonstop flights.

**Best Feature:** TripAdvisor's flight search tool is unique from others in that it offers review-based FlyScores of airlines alongside their fares, so you're less likely to book with an obscure, poorly rated airline without realizing.

## Skyscanner

**Skyscanner** is a popular metasearch site that works with hundreds of other travel providers to find the best fares. You can specify nonstop-flights-only right from the homepage, and there's also a handy "everywhere" option if you don't have a particular destination in mind and want to see what's available. Search results show the "best" option (based on a combination of price and speed) as well as the fastest and cheapest, and you can filter by airline, alliance, number of stops, and flight times. When you select a result, you'll see a variety of places to book that particular flight. Skyscanner casts a wide net, so you'll often see very cheap fares from booking sites you've never heard of; to help you figure out how trustworthy they are, Skyscanner shows user star ratings for each.

**Best Feature:** For flyers concerned about the environmental impact of their travel, Skyscanner has a unique "Greener flights" filter, which shows only itineraries with lower-than-average CO2 emissions based on your search. The site also highlights certain itineraries in your results as a "greener choice."

## OneTravel

**OneTravel** borrows its interface from Google Flights' calendar search feature. When you enter your departure and destination airports, the dates field brings up a calendar with prices pre-populated. This is a helpful feature for immediately honing in on the travel dates with the best prices if and when your dates are flexible.

One major drawback: OneTravel charges a steep service fee of up to \$35 per ticket. OneTravel also offers different (and in my opinion, sometimes worse) itineraries than most at the top of its results page. Many highlighted itineraries, upon closer inspection, include an extra stop. It's important to make sure you're comparing the same exact flights by looking at the flight number, or at least by keeping track of the different options.

**Best Feature:** The calendar organization that's hard to find on other flight booking sites is the most ideal format if you're flexible on travel dates.

## Travelzoo

**Travelzoo** is quite different from the other sites listed here. Instead of booking specific itineraries, you can search broad timelines (this week, next month, this summer, etc.) for deals in your desired destination by either month or season. This makes Travelzoo a good fit for people with a budget and time frame, but no firm idea of when or even where they want to go. The downside is that if you do have specific plans in mind—for example, you need a flight to Omaha in March—Travelzoo is not likely to be helpful.

**Best Feature:** Travelzoo's flexibility requirement can afford some great deals you won't find elsewhere, like cheap business-class flights and multi-city itineraries that will make a dream trip a lot more affordable than you'd think.

## Google Flights

**Google Flights** is a powerful, simple metasearch site that comes free of ads and distractions. After you enter your departure and arrival airports, the calendar pre-populates with prices so you can target dates with lower fares (OneTravel uses this tool). Once you have your results, you can track fares on your selected dates and receive updates by email. You can also view fares over various dates using the "Price Graph," which shows you a bar graph that makes it easy to see when the lowest fares are available.

**Best Feature:** Instead of putting in a certain city as a destination, you can put in a larger region such as Europe or South Africa. You'll then see fares to various cities within that region displayed all at once on a map. This can be helpful if you want to go to Europe in April, for example, but don't have a particular destination in mind.

## Kayak

Often imitated and frequently duplicated, **Kayak** was a game-changer when it launched back in the mid-2000s. And it's still one of the most powerful metasearch tools available. You can also set up fares alerts to track prices over time. The interface is noisier than Google Flights thanks to a

preponderance of ads, but still easy to use. Like Google, it has a flexible search feature that lets you search for good deals to a region like Europe or even simply put in “anywhere.” Another handy feature available on many itineraries: an “Our Advice” box that lets you know whether you should buy now or wait, depending on whether Kayak thinks fares will go up or down over the next seven days.

**Best Feature:** Its Hacker Fares claim to piece together separate one-way tickets, potentially saving you money compared to similar itineraries, and its wide range of filters, sorting options, and predictive technologies put a lot of tools at travelers’ disposal.

## Momondo

Like Kayak, **Momondo** is a metasearch site that takes you to other sites to make your purchase. One plus: Momondo surfaces results from Southwest, including flight times and other details from the carrier ... but no prices. Only by clicking through to Southwest could I see the fare. Still, it’s nice to have a reminder that Southwest is an unlisted option. Another plus: Momondo searches for fares from a ton of smaller OTAs, which could lead to a deal that other metasearch tools miss.

**Best Feature:** The mention of Southwest is unique to Momondo. It gets kudos for flagging a reminder to check a competitor for something it doesn’t offer.

## Nomad from Kiwi.com

**Kiwi.com** is an OTA like many others; you book directly on the site (as you would on Expedia) rather than being linked off to a different site (as you would on Kayak or Momondo). But what sets it apart is its **Nomad** search engine, which lets you find cheap itineraries for multi-destination trips. You enter the starting and ending place of your journey as well as the cities where you want to stop along the way, including how many nights you want to spend in each place. Hit “find routes,” and the site will put together an itinerary that mixes and matches airlines and routes for the lowest possible price. (For example, I was quoted a route involving four flights—New York City to Rome to Moscow to Tokyo and back to New York—for a measly \$1,031 round-trip.) You can filter your results to weed out routes with multiple layovers or flights that don’t include checked baggage.

**Best Feature:** This is by far the easiest tool I've used to research around-the-world and multi-stop itineraries.

### **The Takeaway?**

In determining which of these sites are the best ones for you to compare prices with, it's helpful to determine which sites meet your trip-booking needs. Do you want to clearly see bag fees up front? Do you want an easy "flexible dates" function, or are your dates firm? If your travel plans are loose, do you want to see prices for multiple destinations? Different flight booking sites have different capabilities.

Once you determine which site is worth your time depending on the trip, compare prices with a few to make sure you're getting the best deal. And always check the airline's own site: OTAs are good at displaying fees associated with an individual flight, but it's trickier to compare fare options (classes like basic economy vs. economy) on that flight.

Lastly, it's important to remember that this list can be separated into two main types: **booking sites (also called OTAs)** that you book directly with as a third party, **and aggregators otherwise known as metasearch sites** that'll send you to a booking site to make your transaction. The latter are better if you want to use any frequent flyer programs you might belong to and acquire points.

**Comment from Sharon, Did I miss any booking sites that you would like to share? Please let me know, I will be happy to share with our membership. Safe Travels!**