POINT.ME REVIEW: WHY THIS TRAVEL HACKING TOOL IS WORTH IT

(Courtesy of Nomadicmatt.com)

I've been travel hacking for over a decade and usually rack up around <u>one million miles per year</u>. Travel hacking — the art of collecting points and miles that you can use for free travel or travel perks — is hands-down the best way to transform your everyday spending into free flights and hotel stays so that you can travel more, without spending more.

But, while maximizing earning points and miles is something I enjoy, for most travelers, it can come off as complicated and time-consuming. Managing different points and miles programs and finding the best redemptions can be overwhelming if you're new to travel hacking.

Enter point.me.

Point.me aims to streamline the process of finding the best redemptions so that you don't have to spend valuable time searching for them. It helps you get the most bang for your buck with the points and miles that you have.

But is it worth the price? And does it actually work?

What is point.me?

<u>point.me</u> is a search and booking engine that helps you find the best ways to use your points and miles. It searches 30+ loyalty and 100+ airline programs to find the best value possible.

Here are just some of those airlines and programs:

Airline	es Credit Card Rewards		Loyalty Programs
Aegean	Brussels Airlines	Garuda Indonesia	Ravn Alaska
Aer Lingus	Canadian North	Gol Transportes Aéreos	Royal Air Maroc
Aeroflot	Cape Air	Gulf Air	Royal Jordanian
Aerolineas Argentinas	Cathay Pacific	Hainan Airlines	S7 Airlines
Aeroméxico	China Airlines	Hawaiian Airlines	SAS
Air Canada	China Eastern	Horizon Air	Saudia
Air China	China Southern	Iberia	Seaborne Virgin Island
Air Dolomiti	CityJet	Icelandair	Shanghai Airlines
Air Europa	Comair (South Africa)	Japan Airlines	Shenzhen Airlines
Air France	Condor	JetBlue	Singapore Airlines
Air India	Copa Airlines	Jetstar	South African Airways
Air Mauritius	Croatia Airlines	Jetstar Asia	Southwest
Air New Zealand	Czech Airlines	Jetstar Japan	SriLankan Airlines
Air Serbia	Delta	Juneyao Airlines	Swiss
Air Tahiti Nui	Easyjet	Kenya Airways	TAP Air Portugal
Air Vanuatu	Edelweiss Air	KLM	TAROM
Aircalin	EgyptAir	Korean Air	Thai
Airnorth	El Al	LATAM	Turkish Airlines
ANA	Emirates	LOT Polish Airlines	United
Alaska Airlines	Ethiopian	Lufthansa	Vietnam Airlines

Point.me works like airline booking tools like <u>Skyscanner</u>: you put in your desired flight details (location, dates, etc.) and it brings up all the available award flights that you could book for that journey.

The interface is sleek and easy to use, and it walks you through every step of the booking process, making it great for <u>new travel hackers</u>.

How Does point.me Work?

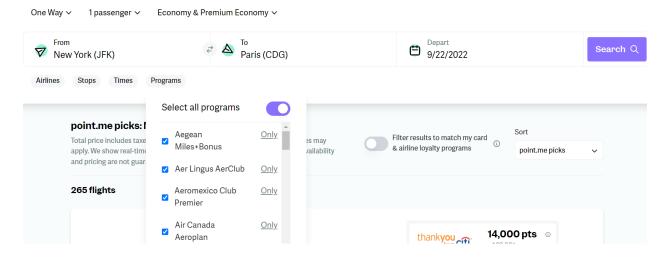
Say you want to book a flight from New York to Paris.

An optional first step is syncing your awards programs with point.me. You do this by connecting point.me with <u>AwardWallet</u>, a free points and miles tracking tool that syncs with almost 700 rewards programs, from airline to hotel to car rental programs.

If you already use AwardWallet, all you do is hit a button and you're all set.

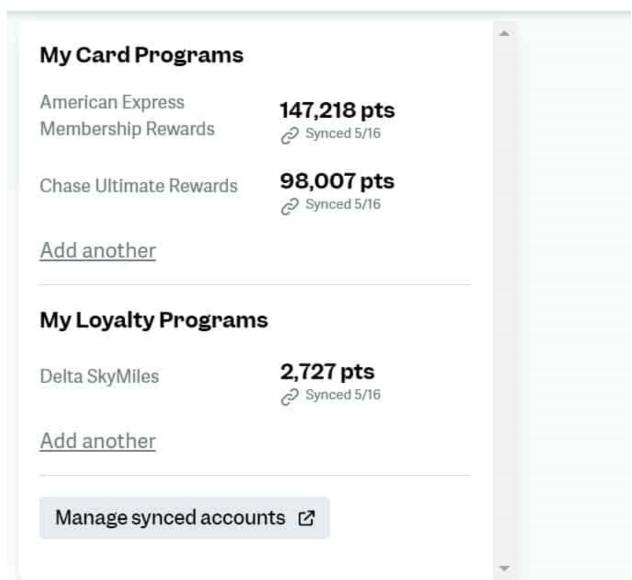
If you don't already use AwardWallet, you'll have to sign up (it's free) and connect all your award programs there first. To do this, you'll have to allow AwardWallet access to your accounts.

Note: If you don't feel comfortable doing that, you can always manually filter by your awards programs or preferred airlines. You can choose to manually filter by a few programs or only a specific program:



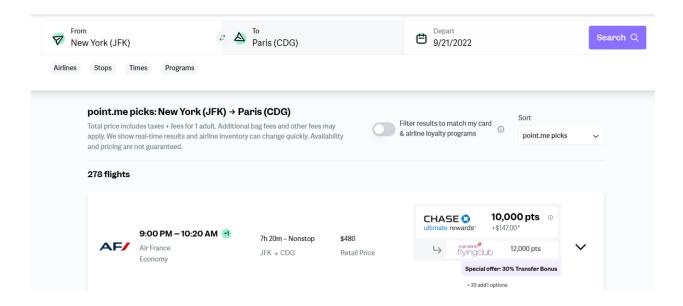
If you do choose to connect your award accounts to AwardWallet, you'll see them listed in the drop-down menu like this:





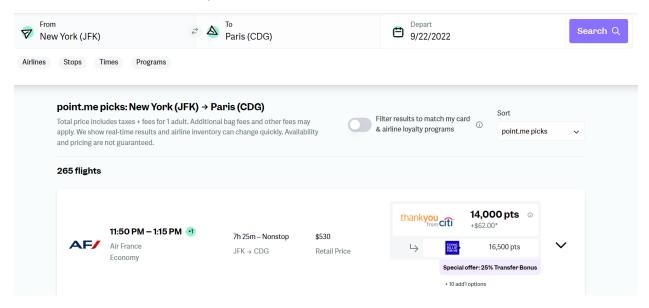
Next, it's time to search for flights.

Once your results are up, you might want to play around with filters and sorting, to get a good look at your options. Here is the finished search from above, sorted by "point.me picks" (again, which uses an algorithm to deliver the best overall flight):



However, you'll notice that while the number of points required is quite low (just 10,000 points), the fees are quite high (\$147 USD). This is where you probably will want to start playing around with dates. There might be better options on other days, as reward flights can vary drastically by day.

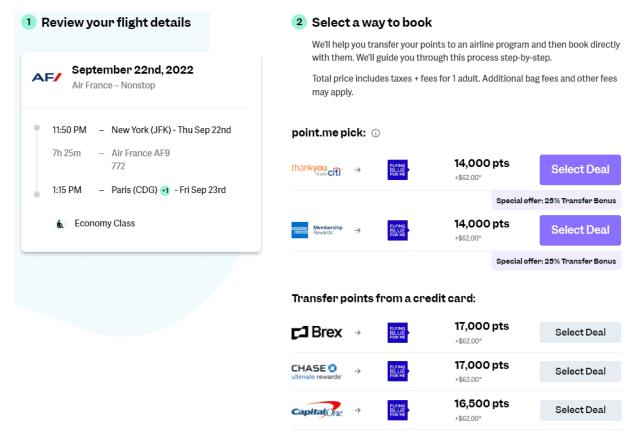
In this case, this was the next day's result:



You'll notice that while the points required are higher, the fee is lower. To see which is a better deal, you might want to use a points calculator such as the one offered by The Points Guy, which is constantly updated with current point valuations.

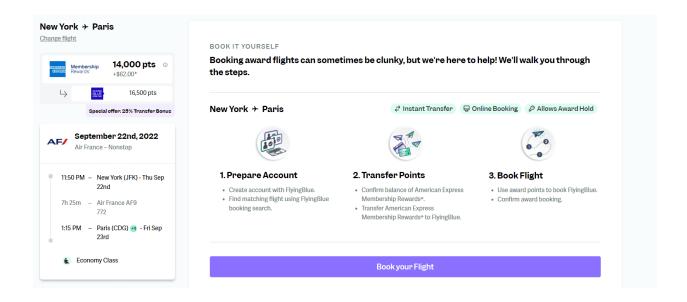
The right choice also depends on your personal situation. For example, you might have tons of Chase points but not many Citi points (or vice versa). For this example, let's assume you have a ton of miles and prefer to use less cash. That means the second option is clearly the better one for you.

Once you've picked your redemption option, hit "view booking options" and you'll see this:

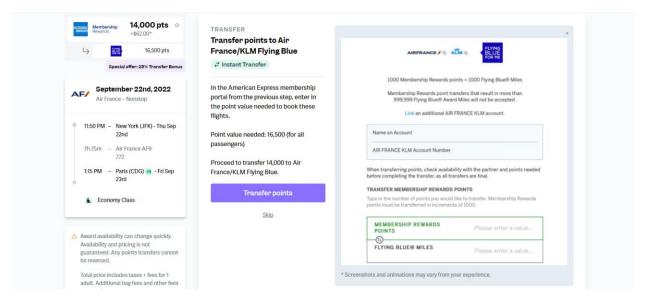


Load 8 more options

Choose your preferred option, and it'll bring you to a page that gives you an overview of the three main steps in the booking process and what you need to do:



Next, <u>point.me</u> walks you through each step of actually booking the flight, with screenshots and even videos on the right-hand side that show you exactly where you need to click. Here you can see the step for learning how to transfer from a credit card (American Express Membership points) to an airline rewards program (Flying Blue):



All you have to do is follow the steps and book your preferred flight. Experienced travel hackers that are already familiar with the process can simply click to skip through these steps.

Now that we've gone over the process, you may have already figured out some of the pros and cons of point.me. But this wouldn't be a comprehensive review without a full breakdown, so let's take a look!

Pros of Point.me

1. The ability to search across many programs at once

The most obvious pro of using point.me is pulling up all available award flights for your desired journey. Without this tool, you'd have to search across all the programs in which you have points and miles. That involves logging into each website, finding the award charts, factoring in any fees, and comparing across all programs. It's not that hard, but it does take time.

2. Enhanced search features

point.me also includes enhanced search features that aren't available elsewhere. These show mixed-cabin flights (meaning that you'll be in different classes on different legs of the route, such as economy on one leg and business on another). These can be great options if you're taking a long journey and want to pay for the longest leg in a more comfortable (and more expensive) class but still save money by traveling in economy class on shorter legs.

There is also a "point.me picks" filter, which ostensibly uses an algorithm to find the absolute best options across the board. It shows you the most comfortable flight available (i.e., the fewest transfers and shortest layovers) for the best point redemption. Sometimes this is the same as sorting by "points low to high" (that is, from the lowest to the highest number of points required), but not always. It's nice to see at a glance what you're working with.

Finally, it highlights programs that are currently offering transfer bonuses, which is when programs offer more points if you transfer between programs before a certain date.

3. You can connect your awards accounts

I love the ability to connect all your awards accounts to point.me by syncing with AwardWallet. For our purpose of tracking airline points, you only need to connect your airline and travel credit card programs, but if you want to use it to track everything, go wild!

4. The interface is easy to use

The website is very straightforward and easy to use, and for newer travel hackers, it walks you through every step of the process, with screenshots and tips.

Cons of Point.me

1. The subscription fee

point.me has a monthly fee: \$12 per month, or \$129 a year (there's a 10% discount when you pay yearly). You can also pay for a one-time day-pass for just \$5, so you can check it out and even book a flight.

However, if you're new to travel hacking and haven't quite memorized the ins and outs of each program, \$12 is a bargain when you consider the potential savings point.me offers.

And, as a Nomadic Matt reader, you can get your first month for just \$1 with the code NOMADICMATT.

2. The search options need some improvement

Another drawback is that, as of the time of writing, you can only search by specific airport, with no ability to search by city.

For cities with just one main airport, this isn't an issue, but if you're looking to fly between cities with more than one airport, like in our example search from <u>NYC</u> to <u>Paris</u>, for example, there are various airport combinations that you might be open to. Right now, you must search separately for JFK to CDG and JFK to ORY, and possibly even include EWR (Newark) to cover all your bases.

You also can't use flexible dates or a date range to search, something that's key when booking award flights, as they can vary drastically depending on the day (this is even a tip that point me highlights in the pointers offered while you wait). For now, you have to search by individual dates, which can get tedious.

Who is Point.me For?

<u>point.me</u> is especially geared toward travelers that are newer to redeeming points for award flights. If that's you, using it is a no-brainer, as it makes the entire process straightforward, saving you time (and money) in the process.

But even experienced travel hackers can get a lot of value out of the website, as it really does speed up the process of finding award flights. If you're a pro that already has a process down pat for booking award flights, then you might not see the benefit of using a website like this.

<u>point.me</u> is a powerful booking tool that streamlines the award-booking process. It helps you find the best award flights, including some that you might not have even considered. It's a great addition to any travel hacking arsenal, especially if you're a newer travel hacker looking to maximize your points and miles without spending tons of time going down the points rabbit hole.