

Using miles and points to book airline tickets and hotels for others

(Courtesy of Kyle Olsen, The Points Guy)

The holidays are a time to spend with loved ones and, for many people, a season of giving. Points and miles can play a key role by making family travel cheaper and more attainable, whether for yourself or as a gift for someone else.

As you might expect, some travel companies make it much easier than others to book travel for someone else. Luckily, there are a few tips to make things go smoother. Let's look at how to use your points and miles to book tickets for a loved one.

Booking an award ticket for someone else

United Premier Platinum and 1K members can reserve complimentary Economy Plus seats for themselves and up to eight companions when traveling together.

Many airlines make it very easy to use your miles to book a ticket for someone else. The most important detail to be aware of is that you don't need to transfer your miles to someone else to book a ticket in their name.

While many airlines offer mileage transfers, it's often at a steep price. For example, [United Airlines](#) charges \$7.50 per 500 miles transferred plus a \$30 transaction fee. That means if you found a 25,000-mile award flight for someone, you'd spend \$405 total just transferring them the miles.

Instead, you can book the ticket directly from your account. You'll need personal details like their date of birth and legal name as it appears on their ID, but you can book a ticket for another passenger almost as easily as if you were booking for yourself. Most airlines make it pretty straightforward to book an award ticket online. Sometimes, your elite status or credit cards may help a family member secure a better price on an award flight.

United, for example, provides extra award inventory to [MileagePlus](#) elite members. And if you hold certain [United cobranded credit cards](#), you also [get access to more award inventory](#) even when booking for others.

This can be crucial for saving miles on award tickets. Unfortunately, your elite status won't help you extend benefits such as free extra-legroom seats (Economy Plus on United, for example) or free checked bags, as you'd have to also be on the reservation flying with your loved one for those perks to extend to others.

When you can't always share your perks and memberships

Though rare, some airlines restrict booking to immediate family members. One example that comes to mind is [ANA Mileage Club](#), which only allows you to book tickets for yourself and family members with up to two degrees of kinship. In other words, you can book tickets from your account for spouses, children, parents, grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles. Unfortunately, that means you can't book award tickets for your best friend or third cousin.

Some low-cost airlines, such as [Frontier](#) and [Spirit](#), offer discount memberships. [Frontier Airlines' Discount Den program](#) can be a great deal for families thanks to its "Kids Fly Free" program only available to Discount Den members. [Spirit's Saver\\$ Club](#) can also save you money on select flights. Both programs work great for booking cheaper flights for a group of people.

Unfortunately, both programs require you to be one of the passengers on a reservation to take advantage of their discounts.

Booking a hotel room for others using your hotel points

Hyatt is one of the most generous programs for letting you book a room on points for someone else.
HYATT

The major hotel loyalty programs generally allow you to use your points to book a hotel room for someone else.

In some instances, they even allow you to use a [free night certificate](#), such as the ones earned on an annual basis with a [cobranded credit card](#), to book a room for a family member or friend.

[Marriott](#) allows you to use your points to book a room for someone else up to five times per calendar year. To make this reservation, you'll need to work with a phone agent to establish the booking. Once you've made the booking with a phone agent, it will appear in your [Marriott Bonvoy](#) account like any other reservation, but you won't be able to modify it in the app. The phone agent will require a credit card to guarantee the reservation, though it generally won't be charged unless you cancel past the cutoff time. You won't earn any points or elite nights for your friend's stay.

[Hilton](#) makes booking rooms for friends a bit easier. Before confirming your reservation, you can add your friend's name to your Hilton reservation. To do this, you'll want to make sure you search for rooms for two adults on the Hilton website. Once you select your property, the confirmation screen will have an area where you can designate a second guest. This method works well if your friend arrives at the hotel before you.

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If you'd like your friend to use your [Hilton Honors](#) points for a stay without you, we recommend [pooling your Hilton points](#) so your friend can redeem points directly from their account.

[Hyatt](#) has arguably the best benefit when booking award rooms for someone else, though the goodies are only for folks who hold [top-tier Globalist status in the World of Hyatt program](#). Hyatt allows you to make award bookings online, but you'll need to get a phone agent involved to add someone else to the reservation. For Globalist members, your [Guest of Honor](#) benefit can turn a gift into a great experience for a family member or friend.

When you make a Guest of Honor booking for someone, they enjoy virtually all the same benefits you would receive if you were staying. This includes free breakfast, guaranteed late checkout and even complimentary standard suite upgrades when available.

One of the few restrictions of a Guest of Honor booking is that you can't apply Globalist suite upgrade awards to the bookings. However, you can use free night certificates for someone else in conjunction with a Guest of Honor booking. Best of all, your "Guest of Honor" will earn elite credit for the stay.

Hyatt Globalist breakfast at the Park Hyatt Vienna.

It's hard to disagree that Hyatt Globalist members enjoy one of the most rewarding benefits when using your points for friends and family.

Transferring hotel points to someone else

Similar to airlines, some hotel chains charge a fee to transfer your points. For example, [IHG One Rewards](#) charges \$5 per 1,000 points. Other chains, such as Marriott and Hyatt, readily allow transfers with some caveats.

[Marriott will allow you to transfer](#) up to 100,000 points per calendar year to another member. You can receive up to 500,000 points per year. Unfortunately, [Marriott did away with its award charts](#) earlier this year, and now, it's [not uncommon to find hotels for north of 100,000 points](#) in popular American and European cities.

[Hyatt allows point transfers](#) without a fee. You can transfer or receive points once every 30 days, and you'll be required to fill out [this form](#) (PDF file) and email or mail it in, so allow some time for the transfer to happen since the process is manual.

Even though transferring points to someone else may be easier, consider the outcome if you have to change or cancel the reservation. Modifications mean getting the points in your account would be more difficult. The best reason to transfer points would be to top off a friend's or relative's account so they can afford to book the room themselves.

Redeem points for an experience for someone else

Often overlooked, experiences can occasionally provide value for your points and miles.

You can attend concerts, races, private culinary events and even sporting events such as the Super Bowl. Or, in keeping with the theme of this story, you can often book those activities for someone else with points.

[Marriott Bonvoy Moments](#) started as SPG Moments before Marriott acquired Starwood. Many moons ago, when it was operating under that name, I redeemed my SPG points for my wife to take a tennis lesson with Andre Agassi at the U.S. Open. Almost 10 years later, my wife hasn't forgotten that moment. It may very well be my finest points redemption ever.

Earlier this year, TPG's Katie Genter redeemed 20,000 Hilton points for a [Hilton Honors Experience in India](#). It consisted of a couples massage and a four-course dinner for two.

When to use points and miles for someone else

The gift of a travel experience can be special.

First, think about ways that you can use them to bring your loved ones closer together. If you're hosting a big family gathering, consider using your miles to fly some faraway family members in to spend time with extended family. After all, airline tickets around the holidays tend to be very expensive. If you can eliminate the financial burden of getting together with some miles, that may be of tremendous use to them.

While the shift away from a standard award chart and toward dynamic award pricing has also caused the number of miles necessary to book around the holidays to increase, there are still gems out there. TPG readers have been able to score some excellent redemptions to have more time with family, even with the volatility of dynamic pricing.

The other great way to use points and miles is as a gift for someone else. For travelers craving relaxation and sunshine, a [Hawaii](#) vacation could be the perfect gift for someone you love. Or, keep it simple and give them a note that says, “redeem for two tickets anywhere in the world.” That may be one of the best holiday gift reactions you’ve ever seen.

Bottom line

You don’t have to break the bank to give great gifts this holiday season. Instead, you can use some of your points and miles stash to book hotels and airfare for your loved ones. Remember, some programs let you transfer points to other members, but your best bet is generally booking a stay or flight outright.

Whether you have the points budget to offer a trip to any destination or for loved ones to come to visit you, traveling can be a special gift.