

# What is Delta Air Lines elite status worth in 2023?

(Courtesy of Andrew Kunesh, The Points Guy)

**Editor's note:** *This is a recurring post, regularly updated with new information.*

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The first half of the year is a great time to reconsider your airline loyalty. However, deciding which program makes the most sense for you can be difficult, given the variations between the programs regarding complimentary upgrades, bonus points or miles and other valuable perks. Also, is it even worth pursuing elite status at all?

This guide will dive into one of the major legacy programs and consider just how valuable its elite status benefits are. We'll evaluate the major perks provided at each tier of the Delta SkyMiles program and try to peg a specific value to each.

The goal is to help you decide if it's worth going after Delta Medallion status in 2023. This is especially important to consider this year as the airline made a number of changes to its program over the past few years.

In 2021, [it devalued Global Upgrade Certificates](#). Additionally, just weeks ago, it tightened its [Sky Club access policies](#) and changed Choice Benefits for Platinum and Diamond Medallions.

**Let's get started.**

## Methodology

A couple of disclaimers before we get to the SkyMiles program's elite status tiers.

First, it's important to note that these mathematical analyses represent just one way of calculating the value you'd get from a given elite status level.

Everyone has their way of valuing the various benefits of loyalty programs. Some may always pay for first or business class and thus do not need complimentary upgrades. Others may travel exclusively in the U.S. and don't care about free lounge access on international itineraries. As a result, feel free to adjust the numbers I use to make them more relevant to your valuation.

Second, these numbers are all based on the benefits you'd enjoy after achieving the given status level and continuing to qualify each year thereafter. If you're starting from scratch, these values are a bit skewed since the first 25,000 miles you fly will provide no benefits. I've provided some analysis for those in that position toward the end of the post.

This brings me to the third and final critical part of this analysis: the underlying assumptions I'm making. To hit a value for benefits, I have to assume a certain amount of flying and a corresponding amount of spending. I'm making the following assumptions:

- You earn 20% more Medallion Qualification Miles than the minimum required for the given status level.
- You spend an average of 15 cents per MQM.

Be sure to adjust these numbers based on your given travel patterns. Those who travel exclusively in the U.S. may spend less than 12.5 cents per mile, while those who travel in paid first or business class internationally likely spend significantly more.

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You also may qualify on segments rather than miles, and you may have heavier travel in certain parts of the year.

It’s also worth mentioning that, unlike other U.S. carriers, [Delta award tickets earn elite status metrics](#). I have not factored this into elite status valuations, but it’s worth remembering that it might change your cost of earning elite status.

Also, note that Delta increased the MQD requirement for Gold, Platinum and Diamond Medallion status for the 2024 Medallion year. Members have to earn \$8,000, \$12,000 and \$20,000 MQD, respectively, for their desired status tier. Silver Medallion is the only status tier that did not go up this year, as it still requires \$3,000 MQD to earn.

I value any bonus miles earned based on [TPG valuations](#), which currently peg Delta SkyMiles at 1.41 cents apiece for this analysis. And to make the math more straightforward, I’m rounding all of the individual benefit valuations to the nearest \$5.

**Delta Air Lines elite status tiers**

**Delta offers four elite tiers.** Here’s a quick overview of each tier’s benefits:

	Silver Medallion	Gold Medallion	Platinum Medallion	Diamond Medallion
Qualification.	25,000 Medallion Qualification Miles or 30 Medallion Qualification Segments and \$3,000 Medallion Qualification Dollars, or spend \$25,000	50,000 Medallion Qualification Miles or 60 Medallion Qualification Segments and \$8,000 Medallion Qualification Dollars, or spend \$25,000	75,000 Medallion Qualification Miles or 100 Medallion Qualification Segments and \$12,000 Medallion Qualification Dollars or spend \$25,000	125,000 Medallion Qualification Miles or 140 Medallion Qualification Segments and \$20,000 Medallion Qualification Dollars or spend \$250,000

	<b>Silver Medallion</b>	<b>Gold Medallion</b>	<b>Platinum Medallion</b>	<b>Diamond Medallion</b>
	on select Delta cobranded credit cards.	on select Delta cobranded credit cards.	on select Delta cobranded credit cards.	on select Delta cobranded credit cards.
<b>SkyTeam status.</b>	Elite.	Elite Plus.	Elite Plus.	Elite Plus.
<b>Mileage earning on Delta- ticketed flights.</b>	7 miles per dollar.	8 miles per dollar.	9 miles per dollar.	11 miles per dollar.
<b>Free checked bags.</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Priority check- in.</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Priority boarding.</b>	✓	Sky Priority.	Sky Priority.	Sky Priority.
<b>Expedited baggage.</b>	—	✓	✓	✓
<b>Preferred seating.</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Complimentary confirmed same-day flight changes.</b>	—	✓	✓	✓

	<b>Silver Medallion</b>	<b>Gold Medallion</b>	<b>Platinum Medallion</b>	<b>Diamond Medallion</b>
<b>Comfort+ upgrades.</b>	24 hours prior to departure.	72 hours prior to departure.	Shortly after ticketing.	Shortly after ticketing.
<b>First-class upgrades on domestic and short-haul international flights.</b>	24 hours prior to departure.	72 hours prior to departure.	120 hours prior to departure.	120 hours prior to departure, higher priority.
<b>Delta One upgrades on domestic flights.</b>	Day of departure.	Day of departure.	Day of departure.	Day of departure.
<b>Premier class upgrades on select Aeromexico flights.</b>	24 hours before departure.	72 hours before departure.	120 hours before departure.	120 hours prior to departure, higher priority.
<b>Companion upgrades.</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Choice Benefits.</b>	–	–	One; limited selection.	Three; larger selection.
<b>Hertz elite status.</b>	Five Star.	Five Star.	President's Circle.	President's Circle.

Delta Silver Medallion: \$615

Silver Medallion travelers can enjoy Comfort+ seats, but only within 24 hours of departure.

The lowest tier in Delta's program is Silver Medallion status, which normally requires 25,000 Medallion Qualification Miles or 30 Medallion Qualification Segments plus \$3,000 Medallion Qualification Dollars. For this analysis, my numbers are based on earning 30,000 MQMs at a cost of 15 cents per mile (a total spending of \$4,500).

	Benefit details	Value
<b>Mileage bonus.</b>	Silver Medallions earn 7 SkyMiles per dollar spent, equaling 9,000 bonus SkyMiles on \$4,500 in spending.	\$125.
<b>Priority airport services.</b>	Enjoy priority check-in, security and boarding when you fly Delta.	\$50.
<b>Checked bag fee waiver.</b>	You and eight travel companions can check one bag for free when flying Delta.	\$50.
<b>Preferred seats.</b>	Preferred seats may include seats at the front of the plane or in exit rows.	\$50.
<b>Upgrades to Comfort+.</b>	These seats provide up to 3 inches of additional legroom and complimentary alcoholic beverages. Upgrades start clearing 24 hours before departure and exclude basic economy tickets.	\$100.
<b>Upgrades to first class.</b>	Space-available, complimentary upgrades to first class start clearing 24 hours before departure. Likewise, Silver Medallions are eligible for domestic Delta One upgrades on the day of departure.  Upgrades fall behind higher-tier Delta elite members, so we're giving them a modest valuation of 0.5 cents per mile flown for Silver status.	\$150.
<b>Aeromexico Clase Premier upgrades.</b>	Space-available, complimentary upgrades to Clase Premier on intra-Mexico Aeromexico flights and on Aeromexico flights between Mexico and the U.S., Central America, Caribbean, Colombia and Ecuador. Upgrades start clearing 24 hours before departure.	\$25.

	Benefit details	Value
	Unless you fly Aeromexico regularly, you're unlikely to use this benefit often, so we're valuing it at \$25.	
<b>Priority phone line.</b>	This can pay off when you run into weather issues or other problems.	\$25.
<b>SkyTeam Elite.</b>	This provides priority check-in and standby, preferred seats and priority boarding on SkyTeam partners.	\$25.
<b>Hertz benefits.</b>	Match to Hertz Five Star elite status and earn 5 SkyMiles per dollar on all Hertz rentals.	\$15.
<b>Total value.</b>		<b>\$615.</b>

#### **Delta Gold Medallion: \$1,820**

Gold Medallion is where the power of Delta elite status starts to shine.

The second tier in Delta's program is Gold Medallion status, which normally requires 50,000 MQMs or 60 MQSs plus \$8,000 MQDs.

For this analysis, my numbers are based on earning 60,000 MQMs at the cost of 15 cents per mile (a total spending of \$9,000).

	Benefit details	Value
<b>Mileage bonus.</b>	Gold Medallions earn 8 SkyMiles per dollar spent, equaling 27,000 bonus SkyMiles on \$9,000 in spending.	\$380.
<b>Priority airport services.</b>	Access to dedicated check-in counters, priority security lines, expedited baggage handling and Sky Priority boarding.	\$100.
<b>Checked bag fee waiver.</b>	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$100.
<b>Preferred seats.</b>	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$100.
<b>Same-day confirmed flight change waiver.</b>	Silver Medallions and non-status flyers pay \$75 to stand by for or switch to an earlier flight on the day of departure; these fees are waived for Gold Medallions. I'll assume a utilization of twice per year for this benefit.	\$150.
<b>Upgrades to Comfort+.</b>	Upgrades start clearing 72 hours before departure, more frequent utilization.	\$275.
<b>Upgrades to first class.</b>	Space-available, complimentary upgrades to first class start clearing 72 hours before departure. Delta One upgrades process on the day of departure.  Upgrades fall behind higher-tier Delta elite members, so we're giving them a modest valuation of 0.83 cents per mile flown for Gold status.	\$500.
<b>Aeromexico Clase Premier upgrades.</b>	Space-available, complimentary upgrades to Clase Premier start clearing 72 hours before departure, more frequent utilization.	\$50.

	Benefit details	Value
<b>Priority phone line.</b>	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$50.
<b>SkyTeam Elite Plus.</b>	<p>This includes all SkyTeam Elite benefits plus lounge access on international flights and Sky Priority benefits when flying any SkyTeam airline.</p> <p>However, Delta elites no longer receive Sky Club access on international flights booked in Main Cabin or Comfort+. As a result, I've lowered the value of this benefit from \$175 to \$75.</p>	\$75.
<b>Four drink vouchers.</b>	Earned when you qualify for status and are good for an alcoholic beverage on board. Assuming a value of \$5 per beverage.	\$20.
<b>Hertz benefits.</b>	Match to Hertz Five Star elite status and earn 6 SkyMiles per dollar on all Hertz rentals.	\$20.
<b>Total value.</b>		<b>\$1,820.</b>

#### **Delta Platinum Medallion: \$3,420**

Delta Platinum Medallions get Comfort+ seats at the time of booking. ZACH HONIG/THE POINTS GUY

The third tier in the SkyMiles program is Platinum Medallion status, which normally requires 75,000 MQMs or 100 MQSs plus \$12,000 MQDs.

For this analysis, my numbers are based on earning 90,000 MQMs at a cost of 15 cents per mile (so a total spending of \$13,500).

	Benefit details	Value
<b>Mileage bonus.</b>	Platinum Medallions earn 9 SkyMiles per dollar spent, equaling 54,000 bonus SkyMiles on \$13,500 in spending.	\$760.



	Benefit details	Value
<b>Priority airport services.</b>	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$150.
<b>Checked bag fee waiver.</b>	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$150.
<b>Preferred seats.</b>	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$150.
<b>Same-day confirmed flight change waiver.</b>	Same benefit as Gold Medallion, but we assume a utilization of three times per year for this benefit.	\$225.
<b>Upgrades to Comfort+.</b>	Upgrades clear at the time of booking if space is available.	\$450.
<b>Upgrades to first class.</b>	<p>Space-available, complimentary upgrades to first class start clearing 120 hours before departure. Delta One upgrades are still processed on the day of departure.</p> <p>Platinum Medallions are second in line to Diamond Medallions, so we'll boost the valuation to 0.95 cents per mile flown for Platinum status.</p>	\$855.
<b>One Choice Benefit.</b>	You get to select a <a href="#">Choice Benefit</a> when you qualify for Platinum Medallion. Delta recently changed these benefits, but Regional Upgrade Certificates are usually the best deal. We'll value this at \$350.	\$350.
<b>Aeromexico Clase Premier upgrades.</b>	Space-available, complimentary upgrades to Clase Premier start clearing 120 hours before departure, more frequent utilization.	\$75.

	Benefit details	Value
Priority phone line.	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$75.
SkyTeam Elite Plus.	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$100.
Four drink vouchers.	Earn a second set of vouchers upon qualification (one for qualifying for Gold, one for Platinum).	\$40.
Hertz benefits.	Match to Hertz Five President's Circle elite status and earn 7 SkyMiles per dollar on all Hertz rentals.	\$40.
Total value.		\$3,420.

**Delta Diamond Medallion: \$8,380.**

The final tier in the SkyMiles program is [Diamond Medallion status](#), which normally requires 125,000 MQMs or 140 MQSs plus \$20,000 MQDs.

For this analysis, my numbers are based on earning 150,000 MQMs at a cost of 15 cents per mile (a total spending of \$22,500). Like Platinum status, Diamond status lost value in 2021.

	Benefit details	Value
Mileage bonus.	Diamond Medallions earn 11 SkyMiles per dollar spent, equaling 135,000 bonus SkyMiles on \$22,500 in spending.	\$1,905.
Priority airport services.	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$250.
Checked bag fee waiver.	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$250.
Preferred seats.	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$250.

	Benefit details	Value
Same-day confirmed flight change waiver.	Same benefit, but we assume a utilization of five times per year for this benefit.	\$375.
Upgrades to Comfort+.	Upgrades clear at the time of booking if space is available.	\$750.
Upgrades to first class.	<p>Space-available, complimentary upgrades to first class start clearing 120 hours before departure with higher upgrade priority. Delta One upgrades are still processed on the day of departure.</p> <p>Diamonds clear only behind invite-only Delta 360 elites, so we'll boost the valuation to 1.1 cents per mile flown for Diamond status.</p>	\$1,650.
Three additional Choice Benefits.	<p>When you qualify for Diamond Medallion, you receive three additional Choice Benefits (on top of the one you earned when reaching the Platinum Medallion requirements, which I valued at \$300).</p> <p>This list is longer and more rewarding, additional upgrades (including Global Upgrade Certificates), 25,000 bonus miles or a gift of Gold Medallion status to two friend/family members.</p> <p>For this valuation, we will assume you picked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$500 statement credit to a participating cobranded American Express credit card. I'm valuing this at \$250, given you'd need to have at least the <a href="#">Delta SkyMiles® Platinum American Express Card</a> to qualify for the card, which has a \$250 annual fee.</li> <li>• Four Global Upgrade Certificates, which I'll value at \$300 apiece.</li> <li>• Gifted Gold status for two other SkyMiles members, which I'll value at \$400 per member, given the perks above.</li> </ul>	\$2,250.

	<b>Benefit details</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>Aeromexico Clase Premier upgrades.</b>	Space-available, complimentary upgrades to Clase Premier start clearing 120 hours before departure, more frequent utilization and higher upgrade priority.	\$125.
<b>Priority phone line.</b>	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$125.
<b>SkyTeam Elite Plus.</b>	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$200.
<b>Four drink vouchers.</b>	Earn a third set of vouchers upon qualification (one for qualifying for Gold, one for Platinum, one for Diamond).	\$60.
<b>Complimentary Clear membership.</b>	Free membership to Clear, which provides expedited airport security. All Delta members get a discounted yearly membership rate of \$179, so I will value it at \$140.	\$140.
<b>Hertz benefits.</b>	Match to Hertz Five President's Circle elite status and earn 8 SkyMiles per dollar on all Hertz rentals.	\$50.
<b>Total value.</b>		<b>\$8,380.</b>

What if I'm starting from scratch?

If you don't currently have status, expect quite a bit of travel in economy before the perks start to kick in.

As mentioned in the introduction, these numbers are based on the benefits you would enjoy by spending a full year with the given status.

If you're starting from scratch, the calculations become a bit more complicated since you won't start to enjoy any benefits until you hit the 25,000-MQM mark and earn Silver status. To help modify the analysis for those individuals, I've taken the above valuations and converted them to a value per MQM as follows:

- Delta Silver Medallion:  $\$615 / 30,000 \text{ MQMs} = 2.05 \text{ cents per MQM}$ .

- Delta Gold Medallion: \$1,820 / 60,000 MQMs = 3.03 cents per MQM.
- Delta Platinum Medallion: \$3,420 / 90,000 MQMs = 3.80 cents per MQM.
- Delta Diamond Medallion: \$8,380 / 150,000 MQMs = 5.58 cents per MQM.

You can then use these numbers to calculate the value you'd get from the different status levels, given a certain amount of flying.

For example, let's say you expect to earn 95,000 MQMs through flying this year and meet the MQD requirements for Platinum Medallion. At this rate, you'd get no benefits from the first 25,000 miles, then enjoy Silver Medallion benefits for the next 25,000 miles (worth \$512 based on a rate of 2.05 cents per mile) and Gold Medallion benefits for the next 25,000 miles (worth \$757 based on a rate of 3.03 cents per mile). Finally, you'd enjoy Platinum Medallion for the remaining 45,000 miles (worth \$1,710 based on a rate of 3.80 cents per mile).

This means that if you're starting from scratch and estimate that you'll earn 90,000 MQMs in 2023, you'd be able to get roughly \$2,979 worth of perks from the SkyMiles program.

Also, if you currently hold elite status with another airline, you may be eligible for a [status challenge](#).

### **Is it worth pursuing Delta elite status?**

*Only you can decide if Delta elite status is right for you.*

Given these values, is it worth pursuing elite status (or the next tier of elite status) with Delta? Like any analysis we undertake here at TPG, there isn't an easy answer to this, as it depends entirely on your situation. However, here are a few overarching questions that can help you arrive at a decision.

How much will you travel in the future?

If you earned Delta elite status in 2022, it's valid through Jan. 31, 2024, and if you qualify in 2023, your status will last until Jan. 31, 2025. As discussed, it's critical to think about how much you'll be traveling in the future. If you push hard to earn Diamond Medallion, the valuable perks outlined above only apply when you travel.

What's the incremental value of one tier over another?

Many of you may wind up within striking distance of the next tier, so consider whether the benefits are worth pushing for it. There's no sense in going out of your way for perks that don't matter to you.

How well does Delta's route map match your typical travel patterns?

Remember, pursuing elite status with an airline you can't feasibly fly regularly is a fool's errand. Consider Delta's service from your home airport(s) and how easy it is to get to your desired destination.

How sensitive are you to price and convenience?

There are many trade-offs in this hobby, and one of the most common is deciding whether to use your preferred airline or hotel chain when it's not the most convenient or cheapest. Would you book a one-

stop Delta flight if Southwest had a cheaper nonstop option? If the answer is no, it may not be worth going out of your way to earn Delta elite status (or any elite status, for that matter).

Could you enjoy elite-like perks with a credit card?

The final consideration involves travel rewards credit cards. Many [airline cobranded cards](#) offer perks that mirror what you'd enjoy as an elite member. For example, the [Delta SkyMiles® Gold American Express Card](#) includes a free checked bag, priority boarding and a 20% inflight discount. The card has an introductory annual fee of \$0 for the first year, then \$99 (see [rates and fees](#)).

Meanwhile, the [Delta SkyMiles® Reserve American Express Card](#) provides complimentary Sky Club access when flying Delta in addition to waived checked bag fees, preferred boarding and the same inflight discount. If you can pay a flat annual fee for one of these cards and gain access to perks that matter to you without going out of your way to earn elite status, that may be a good plan.

These questions are also not easy to answer, as many different factors come into play. Nevertheless, it's a worthwhile exercise to evaluate your own situation as you determine if Delta elite status is for you.

### **Bottom line**

Earning airline elite status carries an array of perks that can make your entire travel experience more comfortable.

However, not all levels with all carriers are created equally, so it's critical to analyze which elite status program best aligns with your typical travel patterns and what you value most as a traveler.

If you're considering switching your loyalty in 2023, we hope this detailed look at Delta's elite status program has helped your decision.