

What is Frontier elite status worth in 2023?

(Courtesy of Sarah Hostetler, The Points Guy)

[Frontier Airlines](#) is a low-cost carrier that serves the U.S., Mexico, Central America and the [Caribbean](#). You might be surprised at the high value we've put on Frontier elite status, but that's because it's been sort of falsely inflated. Here's why.

Frontier is one of those airlines that charges for just about everything — and it charges a lot. For example, you could pay \$60 each way for a carry-on bag. In some circumstances, you'll even have to pay a fee of up to \$75 just for the privilege of redeeming your miles for an award flight.

Even Frontier's entry-level elite status waives these types of fees and can therefore save you tons of money if you fly regularly. Many other airlines don't charge for things like carry-on bags in the first place, so their entry-level elite statuses won't save you as much money.

Still, if you're a Frontier fan, or if you would be if it weren't so wild about fees, Frontier elite status is for you.

Methodology

Remember that our valuations in these elite status guides represent just one way to identify what elite status is worth. It may be completely different from how you value the benefits each airline offers.

All this to say: The dollar amounts at which we've arrived are not divinely chiseled into a stone tablet. Adjust our assumptions according to your unique travel habits. For example, if you never bring a carry-on bag, your personal valuation of Frontier elite status may be several hundred dollars below our number.

Frontier awards elite qualifying miles based on the distance you fly. For example, if you were to book a round-trip flight from Cincinnati to Las Vegas, you would fly 3,365 miles — and therefore earn:

- 3,365 redeemable miles.
- 3,365 elite qualifying miles.

With this earning structure in mind, here are our assumptions for this post:

- The average distance of your flights is 750 miles.
- You will earn 20% more qualifying miles than the minimum requirement for each tier.

Here's another assumption: We'll estimate the value of Frontier miles to be 1.2 cents each when calculating the value of some benefits below. This is slightly higher than [TPG's valuation](#) of Frontier miles, but that's because elite status offers waived award redemption fees — which, as you'll see, can instantly increase the value of your miles.

Finally, we will round the values of all benefits to the nearest \$5.

Maximize your spending, earn rewards faster, and easily track all of your points and all of your miles all in one place.

Frontier elite status tiers

Frontier has three elite status tiers with varying (and surprisingly valuable) benefits. Here's what you can expect.

Benefits	Elite 20k	Elite 50k	Elite 100k
Qualification	20,000 qualifying miles or 25 flight segments annually.	50,000 qualifying miles or 50 flight segments annually.	100,000 qualifying miles or 100 flight segments annually.
Redeemable mileage earning on Frontier flights	1 mile per mile flown.	1.25 miles per mile flown.	1.5 miles per mile flown.
Carry-on	✓	✓	✓
Seat assignment	✓	✓	✓
Family pooling	✓	✓	✓
Priority boarding	✓	✓	✓
Waived redemption fees	✓	✓	✓
Waived travel fees	✓	✓	✓
Last Seat availability	✓	✓	✓
Stretch seating	At check-in.	✓	✓

Benefits	Elite 20k	Elite 50k	Elite 100k
Family seating		✓	✓
Discount Den membership		50% off.	✓
Checked bag			✓
Family status (the Works bundle)			✓

So, what are these benefits worth to the frequent Frontier flyer?

Elite 20k: \$2,095

Elite 20k is Frontier's easiest-to-earn elite status. You'll have to fly 20,000 miles (or 25 segments) with Frontier to earn it.

That might sound like a lot, but Frontier gives you elite qualifying miles based on the distance you fly. You could theoretically earn this status with as little as four transcontinental round-trip flights. If you travel even a marginal amount on Frontier each year, this status is within reach.

We're assuming you fly 24,000 miles for this valuation, with an average flight distance of 750 miles. That's an average of 32 one-way flights.

	Benefit details	Value
Carry-on	Carry-on luggage tends to cost at least \$60 each way , even when purchased in advance. We'll assume you bring a carry-on for 75% of your flights, and your average carry-on cost is \$60.	\$1,440.
Seat assignment	Seat assignment prices start at \$11 per passenger (and can cost \$30-plus). If you're traveling with friends or family, you won't be able to choose their seats for free — only your own. Because of this, not all travelers will opt to pay the fee. We'll assume this benefit provides an average value of \$5 per flight.	\$160.

	Benefit details	Value
Family pooling	You can combine miles with up to eight other Frontier members for free, with no minimum or maximum limits. This is especially helpful if a member has “stranded” miles that they can’t use themselves.	\$15.
Priority boarding	Frontier charges between \$6 and \$12 one-way for this privilege. It’s actually a rather important benefit if you want to ensure you’ve got overhead bin space for your carry-on bag. We’ll value this at \$5 per flight, as you may not otherwise pay for this benefit.	\$160.
Waived award redemption fees	<p>Depending on when you book your award flight, you could be hit with a steep fee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 180-plus days before travel: \$0. • 21-179 days before travel: \$15. • 7-20 days before travel: \$50. • Less than six days before travel: \$75. <p>We’ll assume you use this benefit three times per year: once 21-179 days out from departure, once 7-20 days out and once within six days of departure.</p>	\$140.
Waived travel fees	Various travel fees no longer apply to elite status members, such as the call center reservation fee, same-day confirmed fee and same-day standby fee.	\$100.
Last Seat availability	Last Seat is a redemption tier that’s 2,500 miles more expensive (one-way) than a Standard award seat, and 12,500 miles more expensive than a Value award seat. We don’t recommend using your miles this way, but it can be helpful in a pinch.	\$15.
Stretch seating	Stretch seating is preferred seats with more legroom. You’ll receive a free upgrade to Stretch seating at check-in if there’s one	\$65.

	Benefit details	Value
	available. We'll assume a low success rate, and give a value of \$2 per flight.	
Total:		\$2,095.

Elite 50k: \$5,825

Elite 50k is Frontier's mid-tier status. You must fly 50,000 miles (or 50 segments) with Frontier to achieve it.

We're assuming you'll fly 60,000 miles, with an average flight distance of 750 miles. That's an average of 80 one-way flights.

	Benefit details	Value
Redeemable mileage earning on Frontier flights	You'll receive a 25% bonus on the redeemable miles you earn (1.25 miles per mile flown). This benefit does not increase the number of elite qualifying miles you'll earn.	\$180.
Carry-on	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$3,600.
Seat assignment	Same benefit, more frequent utilization. You can even book Stretch seating at checkout — you don't have to wait until check-in. This drastically improves your success rate; we'll raise the value to \$12 per flight.	\$960.
Family pooling	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$20.
Priority boarding	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$400.
Waived award redemption fees	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$175.

	Benefit details	Value
Waived travel fees	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$140.
Last Seat availability	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$20.
Family seating	You and up to eight companions on your reservation can all receive advance seat assignments for free — including Stretch seating. This benefit is huge, but we'll temper its value because we've already listed advance seat assignments for you.	\$300.
Discount Den membership	You'll receive 50% off a Discount Den membership, which costs \$59.99 per year (and an initial \$40 enrollment fee if you're not currently a member). Discount Den unlocks lower fares.	\$30.
Total value		\$5,825.

Elite 100k: \$12,270

Elite 100k is Frontier's highest elite status. You must fly a whopping 100,000 miles (or 100 segments) to attain Elite 100k.

We're assuming you'll fly 120,000 miles, with an average flight distance of 750 miles. That's an average of 160 one-way flights.

	Benefit details	Value
Redeemable mileage earning on Frontier flights	You'll receive a 50% bonus on the redeemable miles you earn (1.5 miles per mile flown). Again, this benefit doesn't increase the number of elite qualifying miles you'll earn.	\$600.

	Benefit details	Value
Checked bag	You'll receive a free checked bag weighing up to 40 pounds. Most bags cost at least \$55 . We'll assume you check a bag for 30% of your flights at a rate of \$55 per bag.	\$2,640.
Carry-on	Same benefit, more frequent utilization. However, because you now receive a free checked bag, we'll assume you carry a bag less often — for 45% of your flights.	\$4,320.
Seat assignment	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$1,920.
Family pooling	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$25.
Priority boarding	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$800.
Waived award redemption fees	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$350.
Waived travel fees	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$280.
Last Seat availability	Same benefit, more frequent utilization.	\$25.
Discount Den membership	Discount Den membership is completely free with Elite 100k.	\$60.
Family status (the Works bundle)	<p>The Works bundle offers the following benefits for up to eight travelers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One carry-on bag. • One checked bag. • Seat assignments (including Stretch). 	\$1,250.

	Benefit details	Value
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority boarding. • Flight flexibility and refundability. <p>We'll temper this benefit's value as we've already accounted for similar benefits for you.</p>	
Total value		\$12,270.

What if I'm starting from scratch?

The value at which we've arrived assumes you'll use Frontier elite status for an entire year. If you're starting from scratch, you won't get this value during your first year, as you won't get these benefits until after you've achieved elite status. That will almost certainly be months and months into the year.

To help, we've taken the above valuations and converted them to a value per elite qualifying mile, as follows:

- Elite 20k: \$2,095 / 24,000 = 8.7 cents per qualifying mile.
- Elite 50k: \$5,825 / 60,000 = 9.7 cents per qualifying mile.
- Elite 100k: \$12,270 / 120,000 = 10 cents per qualifying mile.

For example, if you can achieve 105,000 qualifying miles, you'd get no benefits from the first 19,999 miles you fly. You'd then enjoy Elite 20k benefits for the next 30,000 miles flown (at a rate of 8.7 cents per mile). At this point you'll have earned Elite 50k status, and reap those benefits for the next 50,000 miles (at a rate of 9.7 cents per mile). Finally, you'll have achieved Elite 100k status and enjoy those benefits for the remaining 5,000 miles (at a rate of 10 cents per mile).

In other words, if you're starting from scratch and you figure that you'll earn 105,00 elite qualifying miles in 2023, you'd get \$7,960 worth of benefits from Frontier elite status.

Be sure to adjust the numbers above for each tier based on your own personal valuation. For example, if you never travel with friends or family, your valuation could be hundreds of dollars less. Likewise, if you only travel with a backpack, you will likely not benefit from the carry-on or checked bag benefits.

Is it worth pursuing Frontier elite status?

This answer depends entirely on your travel habits. These (admittedly astronomical) projected savings are based on frequently using all the benefits afforded to you. In short, if you fly Frontier regularly, this elite status effectively turns the airline into a regular non-low-cost carrier with all the fees that are waived.

Here are some overarching questions to ponder before you commit to Frontier elite status.

Will you actually use these benefits?

As mentioned earlier, these perks only have value if you actually use them. Hence, a frequent Frontier flyer that always checks a bag or brings a carry-on is far more likely to get thousands of dollars in value from Frontier versus a traveler who only travels with a [backpack](#). Run the numbers and see if loyalty to Frontier is actually worth your time based on how often you'll actually use the included benefits.

Does Frontier serve the locations you travel to?

Frontier doesn't offer the ubiquity of other airlines like United Airlines, American Airlines and Delta Air Lines. It doesn't fly to places like Europe, Asia and Africa. It often serves secondary airports that cater to low-cost airlines instead of major hubs.

If Frontier gets you to where you want to go, elite status is worth achieving. If the airline only takes you to 50% of the places you intend to go, it could be worth earning elite status with a more prominent airline instead.

What's the incremental value of 1 tier over the next?

It's possible that you could wind up within striking distance of the next status tier. Be sure to 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 sensitive are you to price and convenience?

This hobby is full of trade-offs, one of the most common being the decision to use your preferred airline when it's not the most convenient or cheapest. Would you book a one-stop Frontier flight if Southwest had a more convenient nonstop option? If the answer is no, it may not be worth going out of your way to earn Frontier status — or any elite status, for that matter.

Can you enjoy elite like perks with a credit card?

The [Frontier Airlines World Mastercard®](#) comes with a few benefits that you'll otherwise need to reach Elite 20k status for:

- You can [pool your points](#) with up to eight friends and family members.
- You won't be charged for award redemptions for booking travel within 180 days (which again costs between \$15 and \$75).
- Zone 2 priority boarding.

In addition, the card earns 1 elite qualifying mile per dollar you spend — even if it's not on Frontier purchases. This means the card is an absolute gem to help you achieve elite status faster. If you spend on the card, you may be able to reduce your cost and effort required to earn Frontier elite status significantly.

The Frontier Airlines World Mastercard incurs an \$89 annual fee. However, it also comes with an annual \$100 flight voucher after you spend \$2,500 on purchases each account anniversary year.

The information for the Frontier card has been collected independently by The Points Guy. The card details on this page have not been reviewed or provided by the card issuer.

Bottom line

Frontier is known for adding fees for everything from seat assignments to bags. However, if you can achieve even the lowest Frontier status, Elite 20k, flying Frontier immediately becomes more cost-effective. You'll get things like free seat selection, a free carry-on bag, priority boarding and several other perks that may otherwise cost you over \$100 on a one-way ticket.