

# Travel Loyalty

*Spring/Summer Promotions*

Now more than ever, consumer loyalty pays. New and/or improved frequency programs have made it easier than ever to accrue points from travel — and points *for* travel.

# Programs

More and more retail partners are joining already lavish rewards plans, offering all sorts of travel rewards, merchandise, gift certificates and services in exchange for airline and hotel program points. Sharper Image, Williams Sonoma, Restoration Hardware and Bloomingdales are offering everything from plasma TVs to high-end furniture, wine to jewelry (Casio, Cartier and many brands in between), to stays at luxurious resorts in the most sought-after destinations.

And as competition among purveyors of loyalty programs heats up, consumers stand to benefit even more, as travel suppliers add interesting new enhancements that make rewards more, well, rewarding. Here are a few to note:

- British Airways' Executive Club members can collect BA Miles in a so-called household account. Travelers and up to six other members of their families, including children, can earn and redeem BA Miles together. (Each member has his or her own account, but BA Miles are pooled, making it easier to take reward flights sooner.)
- InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has teamed with Yahoo! to develop a co-branded Yahoo! Toolbar developed exclusively for Priority Club Rewards members. Once downloaded, the Yahoo! Toolbar allows Priority Club members to manage their account online. Shortcut access to hotels in the IHG system makes it easy to book online reservations. In addition, the Yahoo! Toolbar includes a specialized link to Priority Club Rewards member information, such as account activity, current reservations and special offers.
- In March, Amtrak introduced Select Plus<sup>SM</sup>, a third-tier level of the Amtrak Guest Rewards program. Select Plus benefits include a 50 percent bonus on rail point earnings, unlimited ClubAcela<sup>®</sup>, Metropolitan Lounge<sup>®</sup> and first-class lounge access where offered throughout the Amtrak system, three 48-hour advance booking one-class upgrades (excludes



sleeper accommodations), two free companion Coach vouchers and generous bonus offers and earnings throughout the program year.

- Malaysia Airlines' Enrich Frequent Flyer program provides members with special check-in facilities, as well as free access to deluxe lounges at all the world's major airports. Enrich Miles can be redeemed for a variety of rewards, including upgrades the next time you fly, free tickets for a companion, high priority on the waiting list for busy flights, guaranteed seating 24 hours before the departure of your flight, and telephone check-in at select airports.

## Hotels chains in the budget category are making interesting alliances that allow for rewards at upscale chains.

- Cendant's 18-month old Trip Rewards program has no blackout dates for reward redemptions. The program was also created for ease of use; free night stays will be automatically reflected in a room reservation, so there are no certificates to present at check-in.
- Hotels chains in the budget category are making interesting alliances that allow for rewards at upscale chains. Beginning in late 2004, Choice Hotels International (which includes Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality, Sleep Inn, Clarion, EconoLodge and MainStay Suites) has partnered with Preferred Hotels & Resorts, a collection of 128 desirable properties worldwide, including Vail, Acapulco and St. Moritz. Cendant, whose brands include Ramada, Days Inn, Super 8, Howard Johnson and Wingate Inns International, made a similar alliance with Sol Melia Hotels & Resorts,

with 330 hotels and resorts, mostly in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Outrigger Hotels and Resorts, which includes 51 properties in Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tahiti and Micronesia. The move, industry watchers say, was to compete with the popular rewards programs offered by Marriott, Hilton and Starwood, which allows points accrued at mid-priced hotels to be redeemed at high-end properties, often in exotic, international destinations.

- Marriott has recently repositioned Marriott Rewards, which at 21 is the

industry's oldest frequent-guest program, by making it easier than ever to redeem points faster.

- American Express has enhanced its Membership Rewards program by adding a number of partners and allowing customers to redeem their points for an even greater array of rewards. Besides adding new travel partners (Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts®, Enterprise Rent-A-Car® and JetBlue Airways, enrollees can now use points to offset the convenience fee charged when paying federal, state or local taxes on the American Express Card through Official Payments Corporation (<http://www.officialpayments.com>) or federal tax payments through Link2Gov (<http://www.pay1040.com>).

### MAXIMIZE PRODUCTIVITY — LEAVE THE TRAVEL PLANNING TO THE EXPERTS

Occasionally I'm asked why business travelers should work through their companies' travel departments, rather than booking their own travel. Here are a few reasons:

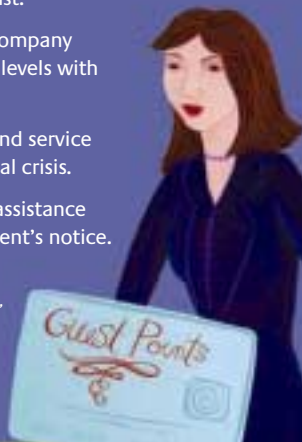
**Productivity.** By working with your travel department, you allow the corporate travel experts to do the travel purchasing and planning, so your expertise and time can be better spent tackling the challenges you'll be measured against.

**Purchasing power.** By aggregating travel purchasing, your company can strategically negotiate discounts, value-adds, and service levels with airlines, hotels, car rental companies, and more.

**Risk mitigation.** A centralized travel department can track and service every traveling employee in the event of an internal or external crisis.

**Service.** Your travel department pairs professional, efficient assistance with knowledge of your company's programs, even at a moment's notice.

— Carol A. Devine, CTE, President & CEO, National Business Travel Association  
The National Business Travel Association provides premier education, information, networking with travel service providers, and government representation to support corporate travel managers as they provide value to their companies.



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Visit [www.akdestinations.com](http://www.akdestinations.com) or call 800/230-9310 for more information.

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