7 ways to fly business class without paying full price

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A business-class seat to Europe often costs several thousand dollars. Yet ordinary travellers from Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and across Canada sit there for a fraction of that price. This guide covers their seven methods, from the fastest to the most patient.

None of them requires being rich or travelling for work. They require knowing where to look, and acting fast when the chance comes.

Prices, points charts and airline rules change often. This guide is up to date as of November 2026: always check the conditions before you pay.

1. Price errors

A price error is a ticket listed well below its value because of a typo, a wrong exchange rate or a bug. Business-class flights have been sold at economy prices before.

How to take advantage:

1. **Get warned fast.** These prices often last only a few hours. An email alert is the only realistic way to see them in time.
2. **Book first, think later.** Air Canada gives a full refund on any booking cancelled within 24 hours of purchase, even a non-refundable fare. Check the rule of the airline you book.
3. **Don’t call the airline.** Asking questions about an abnormal price can push the airline to fix it.
4. **Wait before booking the rest.** An airline can cancel a ticket sold by mistake. Wait a week or two before paying for a non-refundable hotel.

The catch: a price error is never guaranteed. Only book what you can cancel.

2. Aeroplan points

With Aeroplan, a one-way business-class ticket between Canada and Europe starts at 60,000 points, plus taxes. Montreal–Lisbon, Montreal–Paris or Toronto–London fall into this band of 4,000 miles or less.

One-way business class	Points from
North America ↔ Europe, 4,000 miles or less	60,000
North America ↔ Europe, 4,001 to 6,000 miles	75,000
Within Europe, 1,000 miles or less	12,500
Within Europe, 1,001 to 2,000 miles	22,500

Source: Aeroplan chart in effect since June 1, 2026.

Two things to know:

- **Fixed prices mostly apply to partner airlines** (Lufthansa, SWISS, TAP, Brussels Airlines and others). On Air Canada flights, the points price varies with demand and often goes above these amounts.
- **Look for partner seats.** On aircanada.com, spot the flights operated by a partner: they are often the ones at the starting price.

3. Credit card welcome bonuses

The fastest way to get 60,000 points is the welcome bonus on a travel credit card. In Canada, several cards offer tens of thousands of points once you reach a spending threshold in the first months.

Two families of cards lead to Aeroplan:

- **Aeroplan cards**, issued by TD, CIBC and American Express: the points land directly in your Aeroplan account.
- **American Express Membership Rewards cards**, such as the Cobalt: their points transfer to Aeroplan, and to other programs too.

Good practices:

1. Pick a card whose spending threshold you can reach with your normal purchases. Never spend more just for a bonus.

2. Pay your balance in full every month. Interest quickly wipes out the value of the points.
3. Compare the annual fee with the value of the bonus. Several cards waive it in the first year.
4. A couple can get two bonuses, one each, and travel together.

Bonuses change every month: check the current offer on the issuer’s website before applying for a card.

4. Upgrade bids

Already have an economy ticket? Air Canada often lets you bid to move up to business class: this is the upgrade bid.

- You get the invitation by email, or find it under “Manage my booking”.
- You offer an amount per person and per flight, in cash or Aeroplan points.
- You can change or cancel your offer up to 48 hours before departure.
- Your card is only charged if the offer is accepted. The answer comes about 48 hours before the flight.

Not eligible: Basic economy fares, group bookings and flights operated by other airlines.

The trick: bid near the bottom of the displayed range on quiet flights (Tuesday, Wednesday, outside holidays). More seats stay empty, so a low offer has a better chance.

5. Flying from the United States

Boston, New York, Burlington and Plattsburgh are a few hours’ drive from Montreal and Ottawa; Buffalo and Detroit are close to Toronto and Windsor; Seattle and Bellingham are close to Vancouver. These airports have more airlines and more competition, so prices are often lower, in economy and business alike.

Example spotted on November 19, 2026: Boston → Rio de Janeiro for US$467 round trip (Secret Flying).

Before booking, do the full math:

- gas or train, parking or a hotel the night before;

- driving time and the risk of a delay at the border;
- the exchange rate, if the price is in US dollars.

If you take a flight to reach the departure airport, buy it on a separate ticket and leave a margin of several hours, or sleep nearby. A delay on the first flight does not protect the second one.

6. Lesser-known airlines

The big airlines are not the only ones offering business class. Others sell it much cheaper to fill their planes, often on direct flights from Canada.

Example spotted in October 2026: Montreal → Tunis in business class, non-stop with Tunisair, for US$1,990 round trip (Premium-Flights).

Worth watching:

- **Tunisair** and **Royal Air Maroc** to North Africa.
- **TAP Air Portugal**, connecting in Lisbon to the rest of Europe and Africa.
- **Air Transat**, whose Club Class sometimes costs barely more than economy.
- **EgyptAir**, between Toronto and Cairo.

Before booking, check the seat type on sites such as AeroLOPA or SeatGuru: from one plane to another, business class ranges from a wide armchair to a real lie-flat bed.

7. Booking at the right time

The same flight can cost hundreds of dollars less depending on the month, the day of the week and when you book. Momondo data from November 2026 shows it:

Route	Cheapest	By comparison
Montreal → Asia, by departure day	Wednesday: $1,974 on average	Thursday: $2,332 on average
Montreal → South America, by day	Saturday: $927 on average	Friday: about $1,126
Toronto → Europe, by month	February: about $904	January: about $955

Sources: Momondo, Montreal–Asia, Montreal–South America and Toronto–Europe pages.

Three simple rules:

1. **Be flexible by a day or two.** It is often the biggest saving.
2. **Aim for the quiet months:** January and February for Europe, outside school holidays.
3. **Watch for sales.** Air Canada and other airlines regularly run sales lasting a few days, across all cabins. An alert keeps you from missing them.

Your next step

These seven methods work even better together: a card bonus gives you the points, Aeroplan turns them into a business-class seat, and an alert tells you when to act.

The **Aeroplan Business Method** shows you how to combine them, step by step, with five complete examples departing from Canada. *(English edition coming soon.)*

And keep an eye on your inbox: the next alert could arrive tomorrow morning.

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