

Revisiting the Benefits of Space-A Travel

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With inflation making everything more expensive, it might pay to take another look at the benefits of travelling Space-A.

Flying space-available — “Space-A” or “catching a hop” — on military aircraft is a fun adventure and can save you a lot of money on airfare. Here’s what you should know about flying Space-A.

Space-A flights are military missions with extra capacity after all space-required cargo and personnel have been accommodated. The mission is the priority, and Space-A passengers are along for the ride.

Most flights are from one U.S. military base to another, but if mission dictates, you could catch a hop just about anywhere. Flight schedules and the estimated number of seats are posted online 72 hours in advance.

Eligible users of the Space-A program include active duty service-members, members of the Guard and Reserve, military retirees, 100% disabled veterans, surviving spouses, and dependents. Passengers are divided into six categories — which determine your priority for seats — based on duty status and reason for travel. Find details at www.amc.af.mil/AMC-Travel-Site/. Note: Surviving spouses are eligible only for flights inside the continental U.S.

Missions on military aircraft are free. For a Patriot Express (“rotator”) mission, you pay a per passenger tax of less than \$40. However, if you must wait several days or more for a flight, you will incur costs for lodging, meals, and local transportation. Also, if you can’t get a seat right away and don’t have flexibility to keep waiting, you might need to purchase commercial airfare. **The best strategy to employ to save money: Know when and when not to use Space-A.**

Don’t fly Space-A when you need to be somewhere by a certain date or have a small window for travel.

Do fly Space-A when you have time and flexibility, and during the operational low season when there is less competition for seats (outside the summer PCS season and whenever schools are in session).

Your total potential savings depends on the number of passengers in your party and the cost of flying commercial to your destination. A family of five traveling to Japan will see a greater financial benefit from flying Space-A than a single traveler flying in the U.S.

Also, flying Space-A is more likely to save you money if you live within driving distance of a base with frequent missions.