

## Looking into the Future

The latest trend in frequent flyer programs is revenue-based awards where the number of miles required for award tickets fluctuate along with fare prices. While an increase in revenue-based programs would change the way awards are priced and their availability, Schlappig doesn't think it will fundamentally change the value provided by award booking services. He says he doesn't currently book awards for revenue-based programs very often right now because "there honestly isn't much value we can add to a booking on Southwest, for example. However, if all the airlines and credit card programs were to move to a fixed-value system we would certainly stay in business, in my

opinion. I think our knowledge of routes and products would be beneficial regardless, and that expertise could be even more valuable if there were to be a dramatic shift in the landscape." Leff similarly isn't concerned by a shift to revenue-based programs "... because there are many many programs around the world. I may focus more on high-value programs like Avianca's LifeMiles. I get great results from Singapore Airlines KrisFlyer, and though they're frustrating to work with, Korean Air SKYPASS. Big spenders with points in credit card programs that transfer to miles have lots of international airline options to work with. The nature of frequent flyer programs is to change, and we'll keep working to stay one step ahead."

### Award Booking Services

Name	Owner/Founder/Director	Website	Cost of one passenger	Cost per person for add'l passengers on same reservation	Fee includes booking award with the airline?
Award Booking Service	Bobby Burns	www.awardbookingservice.com	\$100	\$100	Yes
Award Concierge	Justin Forer	www.awardconciierge.com	\$250 air only for two; hotel or car rental add-on, \$50; air and hotel for up to four; \$500	\$250 air only for two; hotel or car rental add-on, \$50; air and hotel for up to four; \$500	Yes
Award Planners	Dennis Konnov	www.awardplanners.com	\$99 one way, \$149 roundtrip, \$199 multi-city	\$49 one way, \$99 roundtrip, \$99 multi-city	Yes
Award Travel Consulting	Christopher Wacker	www.awardtravelconsulting.com	\$100	\$100	No, booking is an additional \$50 per itinerary (includes everyone on the itinerary)
Award Travel Services	Roland Dai	www.awardtravelservices.com	\$60 one way, \$120 roundtrip	\$20 one way, \$40 roundtrip	Yes
Book Your Award	Gary Leff	www.bookyouraward.com	\$150	\$150	Yes
Cranky Concierge	Brett Snyder	www.crankyconciierge.com	\$150	\$90	Yes
Extra Pack of Peanuts	Travis Sherry	www.extrapackofpeanuts.com/award-booking-service	\$150	\$50	Yes
First Class and Beyond	Ari Charlestein	www.firstclassandbeyond.com	Varies according to itinerary	Varies according to itinerary	Yes
First2Board Award Seat	First2Board	www.awardseat.com	\$99 for up to two passengers	\$99 for up to two passengers	Yes
MileValue	Scott Grimmer	milevalue.com/award-booking-service	Generally \$111 but may be higher depending on itinerary	\$111	Yes
0 (Zero) Hassle Awards	Bryce Burchfield	www.pointmetothemiles/need-awardtravel-help	\$100 for two passengers	\$100 for two passengers	Yes
Points Pros	Ben Schlappig	www.pointspros.com	\$200	\$100	Yes
Premier Award Bookings	Omar Ghumrawi	www.premierawardbookings.com	\$119	\$50	Yes
UPGRD.com Award Expert Service	Matthew Klint	www.upgrd.com	\$150	\$100	Yes
Using Miles and Points	Avi Garg	www.usingmilesandpoints.com	\$100	\$50	Yes
We Fly Free	Justin Goodman	www.weflyfree.com	Between \$69 and \$149 per person, depending on flight class	Between \$69 and \$149 per person, depending on flight class, \$249 surcharge for four passengers in business/first on the same trip	Yes
World Class Perks	Sunny Dhuper, Neha Dhuper and Anjali Sharma	www.worldclassperks.com	\$150	\$150	Yes

you qualify, plus an additional 15 months. You need to earn 20,000 tier miles or 15 tier segments to retain your status. Silver members benefit from an extra 25 percent bonus miles on every flight (but not tier miles); exclusive awards, waitlist priority, guaranteed economy seat if booked 48 hours in advance, Pearl business class lounge access for member regardless of class of travel, excess luggage allowance (10kg above the amount shown on ticket) and other benefits.

Gold members are welcomed into the higher status after earning 50,000 tier miles or 40 tier segments. Once you reach Gold, you will maintain your status for the remainder of the calendar year in which you qualify, plus an additional 27 months. You need to earn 40,000 tier miles or 30 tier segments to retain your status.

Gold members earn an extra 50 percent bonus miles on every flight, exclusive Gold tier awards, guaranteed economy class seat if booked 24 hours in advance, Pearl business class lounge access for member and guest regardless of class of travel, priority check-in and boarding, fast-track Immigration and luggage, limousine transfers at Abu Dhabi International Airport and additional luggage allowance (15kg).

The highest tier, Gold Elite, is attained when earning 125,000 tier miles or 60 tier segments. Once you reach Gold Elite, you will maintain your status for the remainder of the calendar year in which you qualify, plus an additional 27 months. You need to earn 100,000 tier miles or 48 tier segments to retain your status. Gold Elite members receive 75 percent more flight bonus miles (not tier miles), exclusive offers, highest waitlist priority, guaranteed Pearl business class if booked 48 hours in advance and guaranteed economy class seat if booked 12 hours in advance, Diamond first class lounge access or Pearl business class if with a companion, excess baggage allowance (20kg) and Gold Elite members can nominate another person to receive Etihad Guest Gold.

There is no lifetime elite membership offered.

## Rules and Conditions

Retroactive mileage credit for new members is not allowed—you earn miles for flights only after you join the program. Etihad miles expire according to your tier level: two years for non-elite, 2.5 years for Silver and three years for Gold and Gold Elite. If you do not earn miles into your account over a period of 36 months, Etihad Airways reserves the right to terminate your membership.

Subject to local laws, applications to join the Etihad Guest program is open to anyone who is at least two years of age. However, applications by persons under 18 must be completed by a parent or guardian on their behalf and redeeming miles can be done only by members who can enter into legally binding contracts under applicable law.

Miles can be pooled between members' accounts through the family program. Family members eligible are: brothers, sisters, father, mother, spouse(s), children, grandchildren, grandparents, parents-in-law, step parents, step children, step siblings, step grandchildren and one household help.

You can claim missing miles online or through the service center up to six months after the flight. Where cash is part of the payment for GuestSeat awards, a minimum contribution of miles may be required; for example, the minimum contribution for GuestSeat awards is 75 percent of miles.

## Service Support

You can contact Etihad Guest via email or one of several service centers based throughout the world. It took 14 minutes on hold to speak to a U.S. representative before the call was answered by a professional and helpful agent when we called on a Friday afternoon. At the same time, we emailed the program with a quick question and we received a response two days later with complete information.

## Online Services

A few years back, the Etihad Guest website won a Freddie Award for best website. The site offers functionality such as enrollment for an instant membership number, award redemption, a miles calculator, Etihad Guest

news and comprehensive program information. The site also features the unique “slider tool” that allows members to choose the amount of miles vs. cash they would like to spend to redeem an award. Missing mileage credit is easy to request online.

## Plus Features

Etihad Guest makes it easy and convenient for members to earn and spend their miles. PointsPay mobile wallet makes it extremely easy to spend miles like cash all over the world. The program has added more airline partners recently, upping the destinations available for award flights. The ability to pool miles between family members is a plus.

## Minus Features

The airline does not belong to a global airline alliance. If you prefer to fly on the cheapest ticket, this program may not be for you because it is not as generous as some for mileage accumulation on discounted tickets.

## Report Card from Readers

### Rating: C

You don't really “feel it” until you reach Gold level. Redeeming points is very easy, the family head status is very good; however, the Etihad website needs to be improved—sometimes it's very hard to access your account. Members complain that the service center does not have a good understanding of the Etihad Guest program.

Pros: Redeeming points is easy, a nice welcome greeting when you reach Gold level.

Cons: Gold elite is really not Elite! Customer service has ZERO IDEA about the Etihad program, just give them a call and see. One time they told me Silver, Gold and Gold Elite status are valid for one year; however, the site said one year for Silver and two years for Gold and Gold elite. And I was asked to take a picture for this sentence and send it! I didn't argue. I knew they have no clue and ended the call. Also, it takes ages to get your official Etihad Guest membership card. ieowi [FlyerTalk]