

the WAYFARER



French Polynesia: one of the places you can go on the cheap during shoulder season



PHOTO: BY MAVA BENTLEY

8 Places Your Miles Can Take You This Fall

It's shoulder season, which means traveling is cheap—and even cheaper when you use points and miles.

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SHARELINES

  Got some miles to burn? There's no better time than shoulder season.

Now that fall is upon us, destinations roll out shoulder-season deals to entice travelers. Those with miles and points to burn will find that the bargains get even better. Here are some suggestions to consider between now and the holidays—and the best ways for you to get there.

1. Sarasota, Florida

The sun is still shining in the sunshine state, and Sarasota is a particularly well-rounded family destination thanks to its thriving art scene; it includes the [Ringling Museum of Art](#) | ☺, which features a permanent exhibit dedicated to the namesake circus. Three airports within a two-hour drive mean there are sure to be frequent flier award seats for redemption. To better your search chances, be sure to [take advantage of online tools](#).

Redeem 50,000 points per night at the [Ritz-Carlton Sarasota](#) | ☺ for its beach club with umbrella-shaded lounge chairs, a large pool, café, and tennis courts. American Express cardholders can take advantage of special deals that [bundle breakfast and \\$100 resort credits daily](#). Club-level rooms come with five food and beverage presentations, which can boost the savings for families, while Marriott Rewards members can also opt for spending cash and points at \$170 and 26,000 points per stay.

2. Seattle, Washington

Pay a visit to the towering [Space Needle](#) | ☺ or explore [Pike Place Market's](#) | ☺ winding maze of eclectic stores and cafés. With Delta and Alaska feuding over top spot in the marketplace, there are lots of award seats up for grabs on either side. Take advantage of [Delta's latest sale](#), putting one-way tickets on sale for as little as 5,000 miles if booked by September 30.

The renovated [W Seattle](#) | ☺ has an artsy vibe with regular DJ performances in the lobby and a new penthouse, Sound Suite, in the works. Designed for musicians (amateur or pro), the recording studio and writing room offer a dedicated and soundproofed place to get your jam on. One night at the W costs 12,000 Starwood Preferred Guests points. Even better, guests staying more than two nights can opt to receive 500 points per day in lieu of housekeeping as part of Starwood's Make a Green Choice program.

3. Paso Robles, California

Wine and food lovers know [Napa Valley](#)—but since September is California Wine Month, try this more affordable alternative. Redeem American, British Airways Avios, or Delta miles to fly into [San Luis Obispo](#). From almost anywhere along the West Coast, it is only 10,000 United miles each way, and a flight from LAX only costs 7,500 American miles or Avios points each way. From there, it's a super-short drive to [La Bellasera](#) | ☺, a luxury hotel that can be booked via Rocket Miles (ideal for scoring bonus miles).

Make this your home base to explore the city's numerous area wineries, such as Calcareous Vineyards, San Antonio Winery, and Jada Vineyard and Winery, with [Uncorked Wine Tours](#) | ☺. Foodies can busy themselves at places like [Fromagerie Sophie](#) | ☺ and [Limerick Orchards](#) | ☺, whose walnut oil is used in cooking and beauty products. After filling your reusable grocery bags, use all your ingredients at [Refugio Kitchen](#) where you can learn to prepare a full meal to pair with the region's excellent wine.

If you have always dreamed of foot stomping grapes, a la "I Love Lucy," be sure to visit during Harvest Wine Weekend in mid-October.

When making a purchase, always consider the credit card you use. Chase Sapphire Preferred and Citi Prestige offer double points for dining while Citi Prestige also offers double points for entertainment. It all depends upon how the business is classified with the credit card company.

4. Hamburg, Germany

Across the pond, Germany's busiest port city attracts tourists for its waterfront beauty (the Elbe River leads to the North Sea and the city wraps around Alster Lake), popular fish market, and miniature wonderland site that recreates the world's most famous sights in teensy models. Skip the crowds in [Berlin](#) or [Munich](#) and relax with a craft pale ale from [Ratsherrn brewery](#) | ☺.

Use Hilton HHonors points (40,000) to stay at the historic, yet trendy, [Reichshof Hamburg](#) | ☺, a Curio Collection by Hilton hotel. United's nonstop flight from New York to Hamburg is the fastest link to the city and costs only 30,000 miles in each direction. A hint when searching for award seats: Travelers with the United-branded Chase card tied to their account will have a better shot at finding space.

5. [St. Moritz, Switzerland](#)

The glamorous [Kulm Hotel](#) | ☺, a member of The Leading Hotels of the World, in glitzy St. Moritz is less than four hours via panoramic train ride from Zurich airport and offers stunning views of Lake St. Moritz and Swiss Alps no matter what the season.

American Express Platinum cardholders who book through Amex enjoy late checkout, daily breakfast, and spa and dining credits. Credit card points can also be used as cash to pay for flights and hotel stays without wasting time trying to find award space.

Whether pampering yourself in al fresco spa whirlpools overlooking the lake or tucking into fondue with a side of air-dried Engadine beef at the mountain chalet restaurant, this renovated grande dame is a winner—but be sure to dress for dinner (jackets required).

Leading Club, the hotel grouping's loyalty program, gives members automatic bonuses like free breakfast for two and room upgrades. Despite the \$150 annual fee, there is tremendous value in earning a free night after staying just five nights at any Leading Hotels property. Its classical sister property,

[Grand Hotel Kronenhof Pontresina](#) | ☺, has an even larger spa known for thalassotherapy treatments. Start early to get a reservation at famous Swiss Kronenstubli, but save room for the three dozen local cheeses available at breakfast.

6. Montreal, Canada

Not enough miles to get to Europe? Consider French-speaking Montreal. The Canadian city is cheaper to reach using miles, plus its charming old town features beautiful European architecture, cobblestone streets lined with shops, and a variety of cuisines to tempt any palate. From the Northeast, it only takes 7,500 American miles or British Airways Avios points to fly one way on American (remember you can transfer American Express and Chase points to Avios—although Chase offers more points in the transfer). It's [1,000 miles cheaper](#) on American if you have the cobranded Citi card.

United only charges 10,000 miles one way if traveling from less than 700 miles in distance (like Newark to Montreal); if flying from further away, it only costs 12,500 miles one way on American, Delta, or United. Many credit card sign-up offers, like the ones you see in airports or magazines, deliver enough for a free round-trip at that price!

7. Bora Bora, Tahiti

This year-round favorite is even more rewarding thanks to a [promotion from Starwood](#) that has put prime resorts like [Le Meridien Bora Bora](#) | ☺ and [St. Regis Bora Bora](#) | ☺—one of the most photographed properties in the Pacific—on sale between now and February 28, 2017. It allows people to save as many as 35 percent of their points when redeeming for a room; plus, stay four nights on points and receive the fifth night for free.

Redeem 40,000 American or Alaska miles each way to fly via LAX with Air Tahiti Nui or 50,000 Delta miles each way to fly both Delta and Air France to get there. American and Alaska offer the better mileage deal—but to find it, you have to call the respective airline or use [Expert Flyer](#).

8. Great Barrier Reef, Australia | ☺

If you've made it this far in the South Pacific, northern Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef are just a few hours more. Fly into [Cairns](#), but make the hour's drive north to [Port Douglas](#) for a quieter and more laid-back gateway to the reef. For only 10,000 Starwood Preferred Guest points per night, you can stay at the legendary [Sheraton Mirage Port Douglas Resort](#) | ☺, which is fresh from renovation. Be among the first to stay in the redesigned rooms, which boast showers with views to the lagoons surrounding the grounds. Take advantage of the new SPG Keyless program (the first hotel in Asia Pacific to offer it), which allows guests to use their phone's Bluetooth capability to unlock the room.

Have the concierge book one of the nearby reef tours, which will pick you up from the hotel and take you to your ferry transfer to paradise. Even better, book your tour through a travel website like Orbitz [via a shopping portal](#) to earn bonus points or miles.