

For mid-September trip, I was able to get award seats easily for the LAX-JFK flights. 25,000 miles plus a \$10.00 charge for taxes, booked more than 21 days out to avoid upcharges.

Hotel booking was very difficult, all hotels in the city were \$400. and up, including Super 8 and other budget properties. Airport hotels were under and around \$100., but those were near Newark, I had locked myself into JFK, which I found had nothing under \$160.

Decided to try Priceline, went to biddingfortravel.com, a great site that tells you how to bid and master priceline and also what things are going for. I searched and saw people were getting hotels in the city for \$150-\$200. a night, half price of what I could find on orbitz, hotels.com and every other online booking option.

Trying to stay on a budget, and being locked into JFK, i decided to find something cheap near JFK and not spend the money to stay in the city. I would arrive in NY at 11 PM, do the press appearance at 8 AM the next morning, then fly back to Los Angeles that next afternoon.

I found name brand properties around JFK going for \$80-\$100, and bid \$50, with nothing, kept moving up and ended up with \$80., which was accepted. I got an Extended Stay America for \$101., including taxes and fees. Unfortunately it was near La Guardia, not JFK. It also had no airport shuttle, so this made a \$40 cab ride necessary from JFK to the hotel.

I tried bidding on properties in Manhattan but could not get anything under \$150. I believe I could have gotten something for \$175-\$190. but thought it was too much. After adding some of the extra travel costs, I may have been better off just doing that. I spent \$180. on hotel and transfers, and I did try bidding that on Priceline for a Manhattan hotel without success.

Starting the trip, from my place in downtown LA, I told an \$8.00 cab to Union Station. I bought my \$8.00 roundtrip Flyaway bus ticket and was quickly on my way to LAX to catch the 1:25 PM departure. Traffic was light, arrived on time. After the big recent train crash, I did make note to sit in the middle of the bus.

AA Flight 32 LAX-JFK 9/17/08

Flight was uneventful, quite a letdown comfort-wise after my recent first class peru journey. Seats were way back row 36. Service was good, we arrived on time at JFK. I havent been in NYC for a few years, it was nice to see the sights, hears the sounds and smell the smells, even in the airport.

Got a town car (fancy way of saying gypsy cab) from JFK, we told him we needed to go to hotel near LGA and he said \$35. There was a long line for regular cabs, so we took our chances. Uneventful ride to the hotel, its a straight shot down the expressway, 25 minutes from JFK, no traffic at 11 PM. The driver chatted on his phone in what I would later learn was Bengali, an Indian dialect, as in Bengal tigers. Along those lines, I did notice every single airport worker at the gift stores, and food stores at JFK was Indian. At least in the terminal we arrived at and

walked thru. Seems to be a lot of Filipino people work at those stores at LAX and also all the parking lot cashiers at LAX are from Ethiopia. Check it out next time you're there.

Arrived at the hotel, nice, clean, quiet, with friendly receptionist. Room was small but they have a little kitchen area and big bathroom. We had taken the drivers number and he offered to return to pick us up at 6:30 the next morning for my ride into the city. Had to do some prep work before retiring, hotel was very quiet, no sounds from other guests, we had the window open, no street noise.

Car was waiting promptly at 6:30 AM, traffic was light and made the ride into midtown and was at our destination, across from Radio City Music Hall by 7:30, even after circling the block and not finding the building, then being dropped off a few blocks away by mistake and walking back.

Did the press appearance was done by noon. Had a nice lunch and then had another meeting a few blocks away, also in midtown Manhattan. Beautiful sunny day, but everyone was pissed off as the stock market had dropped 450 points that day.

Return flight was scheduled for 7:30 PM departure that night, with a 11 PM arrival at LAX, but my business partner needed to return sooner to make a connection out of LAX that same night. Called AA and found there was a 4 PM and a 5:30 PM, but both did not have available award seats for us, or even confirmable \$50.00 per person standbys. We were offered the option of showing up and trying to standby in person for no fee. After meetings and lunch, could not make the 4 PM, but finished around 3 PM, so we decided to try for the 5:30.

Planned to take the airport bus from midtown to JFK (\$15.00), a good option from midtown not only price-wise but also because the buses can take special bus lanes during rush hour, sometimes saving a lot of time over cabs. I know this option is especially true when heading from the airports into the city during morning rush hour time. We were a block or two from Grand Central Station, one of the bus stops. They come every 20 minutes, we bought tickets at the little van on the street that serves as a mobile ticket booth. This all happens across the street from Grand Central Station. The buses also depart from Penn Station and Port Authority Bus Terminal.

Bus left promptly, traffic was light and we arrived at JFK within 35 minutes or so. Driver was Chinese and yelled on his Nextel most of the time. Also noticed he didn't wear seat belt, also both Flyaway drivers in Los Angeles didn't wear them either. I don't say anything, but am always surprised when people who drive for a living don't take that basic safety precaution. I wish the bus had them for the passengers, but they don't. Put seat belts on the bus and charge me \$10. instead of \$8, I'm cool with that. I just checked with my good friends down the street at [LAPD](#)

[Central Traffic Division](#)

, protecting and serving the entire downtown area, and they confirmed vehicles over 10,000 pounds, like a bus, are exempt from seatbelt laws in California. Another call to my good friends at the

[NYPD 100th Precinct in Queens](#)

told me bus drivers in New York state do have to wear seat belts, taxi drivers are exempt though.

Tried to get in AA check-in line but the gatekeeper agent asked what we wanted and pointed us to the machines. She said the line was mainly for those late for flights. In fact as I stood there a family arrived and asked about their Rome flight and the girl told them, in that friendly NYC vibe, "Oh You too late for that late" and they begged to differ. I repeated about the standby request and she repeated we could do that on the machine, which I did not think possible. I was wrong, we were able to check in for our original flight, get the boarding pass, and also apply for standby for the earlier flight, which was very cool. We made our way to the gate, checked in there and waited. Another cool thing they had was a big LCD display with the standby list and your position thereon, we were 5th and 6th, which I thought was good. The display also showed the upgrade list, if you have Gold and above status on American (and partners), you can standby for upgrades, based on space.

I did ask the gate agent how our chances were given our positions, she said we would make the flight. Well we got seats 40C and 40E, and yes, there are only 40 rows on the plane. We were at the very back, backs against the wall, with limited recline space. Some, but limited. Also the pitch when upright seemed almost pitched forward, so when you would recline, that was like a regular seat at upright position. It was easy to get up to walk around, and since we were close to the galley, service was constant and always available. It was quite tight when the person in front of me reclined.

AA Flight 181 JFK-LAX 9/18/08

Flight left on time, arrived back at LAX early, around 8:20 PM. My partner made their connection easily and I waited for the Flyaway bus to return to Union Station. As I arrived, the Van Nuys bus was loading, they said I missed the Union Station bus by 10 minutes. They come every 30 minutes, so I sat down to wait. Flyaway is a great option, its only \$8.00 roundtrip, they have service from LAX to Union Station, Van Nuys, Westwood, all separate. I waited around 25 minutes and the bus arrived. Quick 20 minute trip to Union Station. It was a nice night so, even with my backpack and laptop pack, I walked home, about ten blocks.

\$10.00 Aadvantage ticket fee
\$8.00 cab to union station
\$8.00 Flyaway roundtrip airport bus
\$40.00 car to hotel
\$40.00 car to city
\$15.00 bus to JFK
\$30.00 food
\$101.00 hotel