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Revealed: flight-booking hacks that can save you cash

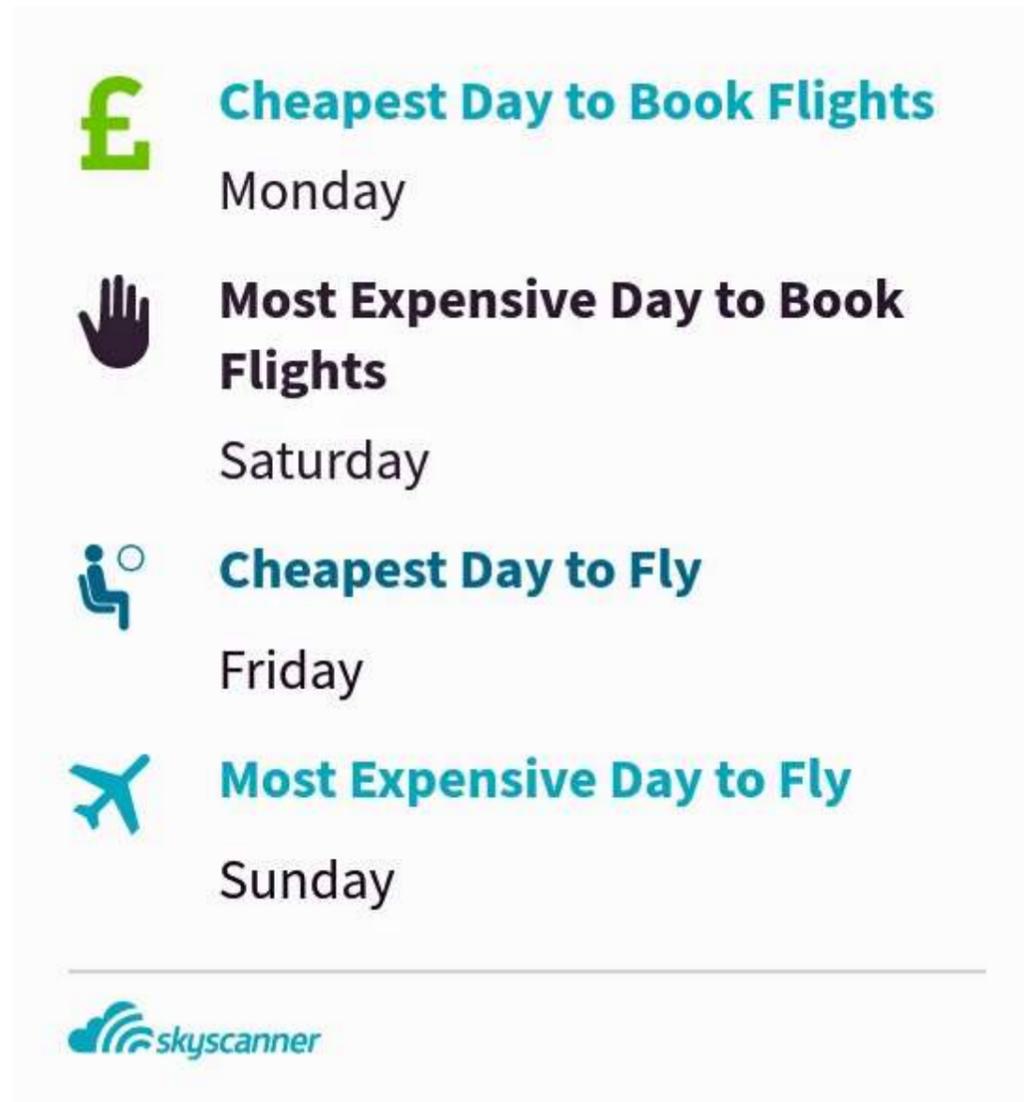
January 29, 2018 by Jill Starley-Grainger



Back in the day, smart travellers could make savings by flying out on Tuesdays instead of the weekend, or switching to smaller airports. But times change – and so do airline pricing models. We analysed three years of Skyscanner booking data, and discovered some surprising new money-saving tricks.

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£ Cheapest Day to Book Flights
Monday

✋ Most Expensive Day to Book Flights
Saturday

🧑 Cheapest Day to Fly
Friday

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Sunday



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Manic Mondays

Lots of us research our holiday plans during the week, then discuss the options with our travelling companions at the weekend. But if you go online on a Saturday to buy your tickets, you could be paying over the odds. Airline pricing models are fluid, so a price you see one day (or even minute!) might increase or decrease the next. The airlines keep their pricing model data close to their chests, so there's no set rule about when is the best time to whip out your plastic.

However, looking at three years' worth of data (2015-2017), we found that travellers who bought their tickets on a Saturday paid on average 5% more than those who went online to make their purchase on a Monday. On a £500 flight, that's £25. While it might not make a huge difference for the cheapest fares (after all, how much lower can a £9.99 flight go?), for group trips or pricey flights, it could be worth the wait.

Want to increase your odds of booking at the right time? Check out the [Best Time to Book tool](#), which gives an indication of the best time to book your tickets between set routes for hundreds of destinations – and the cheapest months to travel, too. So whether you want to book a dream trip to [Tokyo](#) or a citybreak to [Krakow](#), it'll tell you how far ahead to book – and which months to travel – to maximise your chances of the lowest fares.



TGIF

Conventional wisdom has long held that the cheapest fares are for Tuesday or Wednesday departures. But our research turns this 'fly midweek' wisdom on its head.

An analysis of three years of Skyscanner flight data indicates that the cheapest day to depart from the UK is typically a Friday – hooray for the weekend! And the priciest day to fly from Blighty? Sunday. That's great news for short-breakers – or those who want to [turn five days off work into nine days away](#).

Flying out on a Friday instead of a Sunday saw an average saving of an impressive 18%. On pricier flights, that could easily pay for an extra night in a [hotel](#) – or that piece of [lightweight carry-on luggage](#) you've been eyeing up.



Bigger can be better

If you're lucky enough to have a choice of airports, you might assume the smaller ones always have better fares because of lower overheads. But that's not necessarily the case. In fact, when we checked, we found that a family of four flying to [Tenerife](#) could save £160 if they switched from London Luton to Gatwick, and a family flying to [Malaga](#) could save £188 flying from Gatwick instead of Southend. But the reverse can also be true, and our data doesn't give any solid answers as to whether you'll typically save by booking at a smaller airport or a larger one.

But you can always find out which is cheapest for your flight with this one simple trick – when doing any flight search on [Skyscanner.net](#), tick the 'Add nearby airports' option. If you'd prefer to limit it only specific airports – perhaps Heathrow, Gatwick and Southend – then on the search results page, you can untick the airports you don't want to fly from.

This works for your arrival airport, too, but a note of caution – if you're unsure where the airports are and how to get to and from them, do your research before booking. Sometimes the cheaper airport can cost you more in transportation costs, eliminating any savings you might have made on the fare. The fixed-fare price for a taxi into the city centre from [Rome Fiumicino Airport](#) is €48 (per vehicle, not per passenger), compared to just €30 from [Rome Ciampino Airport](#), so bear this in mind when deciding on which flight to book.



Mix it up

Long gone are the days when it was always cheaper to book a return flight on the same airline. Our research indicates you can frequently save by being disloyal. When we checked flights from London to [Gran Canaria](#) in August, we found savings of £76 for a family of four by going out with one airline and back with another.

But doing a comparison of all the flight options on the airlines' own websites would take hours. But on [Skyscanner.net](#), every search scours all the airlines and brings you the best deal, whether it's flying out and back with the same airline or mixing it up – or even flying into and out of different airports.



The waiting game

Know where and when you want to travel, but not in a rush to book? You can make savings by setting up a [price alert](#). Simply log into [Skyscanner](#) (setting up an account is easy and free), do a search on the [Skyscanner.net](#) website or in the [app](#), then press the Alarm Bell icon. You'll then be sent notices when the flight prices increase or decrease.

But what about just holding tight and waiting until the last-minute? Unfortunately, this trick isn't the tried-and-true method of yesteryears (i.e. the 1990s). Our data indicates that many airlines ramp up prices in the days before departure.

However, Jack from [Jack's Flight Club](#) has this advice: "If you need a last-minute flight, and you don't want to pay over the odds, be flexible with your airline choice. Some of the smaller carriers and those that specialise in package holidays to beach destinations will discount unsold seats as the departure time nears. Use Skyscanner's [Search Everywhere](#) tool to find these deals. Simply input the nearest Whole Month for your travel dates, select 'direct only' and hit Search Flights. Then scroll down the list of destinations until you see one with an insanely good deal.

"And if you're not sure where to go, use Skyscanner's handy [Map View](#) feature to find the best-value destinations from your local airport. You can easily set filters to your travel month and for direct or indirect routes. Then it's simply a matter of scrolling through the map and

you'll see the best value destinations – with some of the best bargains already highlighted for you.”



Winter-sun savers

Excellent news for everyone who dreads the bleak midwinter. Our data reveals that long-haul fares tend to be lowest in January and February. Flying from the UK to sunny [Bangkok](#), for example, we found February the cheapest month to depart. And to soak up that perfect winter weather in [Dubai](#), January is the best time to fly.

As ever, this varies by route and when you book, so the easy way to figure out where to go when is to put in your preferred destination on [Skyscanner.net](#), then instead of entering a

date, simply choose 'Cheapest Month'. And the results will show the month with the lowest fares, based on recent searches.

Not sure where you want to go? Simply choose 'Everywhere' and you'll see a raft of options and prices, so you can decide if you'd rather go to [Basel, Switzerland](#) in April, to [Montenegro](#) in February or [New York](#) in September.

Based on Skyscanner flight data from 2015 to 2017, looking at exits from the UK to all destination for the average flight price of return economy adult fare at the point of travel for each day of the week, and at the point of booking for each day of the week; London to Tenerife fares based on live results from Skyscanner.net on 15 January 2018, for a trip flying out of London 27 May 2018, returning 1 June 2018; London to Malaga fares based on live results from Skyscanner.net on 24 January 2018, flying out of London on 6 April 2018, returning 13 April 2018; London to Gran Canaria fares based on live results from Skyscanner.net on 15 January 2018, flying out 11 August 2018, returning 22 August 2018.

Return
 One way
 Multi-city

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To

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