THE BEST (AND CHEAPEST) WAYS TO BUY AVIOS POINTS

News / Airlines

What's the point of buying Avios?

You might think that Avios points are the frequent flyer currency of British Airways, and you're not wrong. The airline launched the currency back in the early 2010s, and it's proven a very popular scheme. What you may not know is that other airlines either use it as their currency or are bookable using Avios. That list includes some big names: Qatar, Finnair, Iberia and Aer Lingus.

You can move Avios between the airlines that use it as their points currency. Those transfers are free and instant.

Earning, rather than buying, Avios

Frequent flyer miles used to be given out only when you paid for a seat on a plane.
Now, you can collect points in a myriad of ways, and the Avios scheme has the most options out of all programmes. From earning points on everyday shopping, car and home insurance, banking

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and to the fairly standard approach of generating points from credit card spend.

Avios seem to be adding new ways to earn points on a monthly basis. That comes partly through the importance of Avios to British Airways. They put significant effort into the programme because it directly, or indirectly, generates a high volume of revenue for them.

Whilst there are many ways to earn points, the time from doing *something*, to getting points for that action is often days, weeks or months. That poses a challenge if you want or need Avios quickly. The answer is to buy extra points, but there is more than one way to do that, and the cost changes significantly.

How to buy cheap Avios

Firstly a word of warning. The cheapest way to buy Avios points is via an online auction site like Ebay. Under no circumstances should you do this. It goes against the terms and conditions of both British Airways and Ebay. You may end up being scammed, and getting no points at all.

The obvious way to buy Avios is to do it direct with Avios.com. This is the official way to purchase points: British Airways does not have a page on it's own site for purchasing points. It's a simple process; the points you buy will land in your account immediately but it is not the cheapest way to buy points (legitimately).

There's a function on the Avios website that allows you to "boost" your points. The Avios Boost name doesn't immediately make it obvious what it is. In simple terms, instead of buying points, you are increasing the points you earned on historic transactions.

Almost any transaction in the last 30 days can be "boosted". If you earned Avios from a recent flight, or via a credit card, or almost any other method, you can request that these points are doubled, tripled or quadrupled.

It feels like a slightly awkward process, but the end result is the same. You pay to "boost" points, and the points will be in your account immediately. You can choose to boost any previous transactions, and you can combine boosting multiple historic transactions in one go.

Pointszilla have a great guide to buying Avios points, which covers the process in more detail, as well as other ways to buy points. Ultimately, boosting will always be the cheapest way to buy points.

Buying Avios directly costs from 1.78p to 2.45p per point. Boosting costs 0.92p per point. That's a significant saving. The caveat with boosting is that you must have had some transactions in the past thirty days to actually boost. If your account isn't active, then this won't be a credible option for you.

Check each Avios-using airline

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All of the major airlines that use Avios will have occasional sales, where you will get extra Avios as a bonus when you buy points directly. While these are occasional, with five key airlines using the currency, a sale is often active at some point.

Typical bonuses range from 20% to 40% more points, and usually the more points you buy the higher the bonus will be. The cost of buying each package of points remains the same, you just get extra (free) points on top.

It does not matter which airline you buy Avios from, as you can transfer those points to any other airline that uses them. You will just need an account with the airline you're buying from, and they are easy to setup.

Subscribing to Avios

Some of the airlines that use Avios will offer subscriptions. In simple terms, you agree to pay a set amount each month, and you get a number of points given to you when that payment is made. This offers points at a cheaper rate than buying directly, but it is not as cost-effective as Boosting.

The challenge with the subscriptions is that the points are given to you each month. It is not a method to use if you need points today, but it can be useful if you want to regularly top up your points for a flight in the future.

How easy is it to use the points you get?

Once you've purchased, boosted, subscribed or earned Avios points, you'll want to use them. Whilst there are more ways to use your points than just flights, the vast majority of collectors are building up their balance exactly for that: business or First class flights on one of the Avios-using airlines.

Reward flight availability has long been contentious for some points collectors. The most popular routes are always going to be the most difficult to book, and that can lead to frustrations.

What is positive about so many airlines using Avios is that it opens up a lot of flight options. There might be no British Airways flights from London to Sydney but there could well be availability with Qatar. Japan is a popular destination that's served by BA, Qatar and Finnair.

More choice doesn't guarantee availability, but it does create more options. What you will find is pricing differences, both in terms of the number of points needed, and often the tax/surcharges levied on reward flights. Qatar, for example, has a pricing table for Avios flights that has two levels. One level is the standard pricing, and there's an upper tier that unlocks more seats but at a higher price.

Focusing on availability first, and then price second, gives you a great chance of securing the flight that you want. You'll also find the experiences significantly different: Finnair's business class is fundamentally different to BA and Qatar. BA's on-board service is different to Qatar. None of the airlines have a terrible experience, or particularly worse seat, but they are different.

In conclusion: buying Avios

To summarise, if you are looking to swap money for Avios and you want those points quickly, then the best option, by far, is to boost your Avios points. Beyond that, look around the points-buying

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pages of BA, Finnair, Iberia and Qatar to see if they have any bonuses available for when you buy points outright.

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