

## The Best Way to Research All Airfares & Flight Availabilities

### A New and Very Easy Way to Find the Lowest Domestic Airfares and Best Flights

You read it here first. There is now a totally revolutionary and easy way to find the best airfare and most convenient flights offered by any of the major U.S. airlines without having to call numerous airlines or use other, often cumbersome, frustrating or more limited individual airline or online travel agency web sites.

#### www.itasoftware.com – A Real Breakthrough

We mentioned this revolutionary new airfare search engine from ITA Software briefly in earlier issues. While still in the testing stage, it is soon to be employed by ORBITZ, a new online travel agency funded by 5 major U.S. airlines (United, American, Delta, Northwest and Continental).

I have already used the ITA Software (www.itasoftware.com) to find the 'lowest' airfares for several domestic trips. I saved time and money!

Instead of wasting hours or even days using other online airfare booking systems to discover the best routes and fare possibilities, this new search engine quickly gave me a complete printout of sometimes hundreds of fares and airline possibilities. I could then use that information to sometimes get an additional discount with some of my other airline ticket buying strategies, which I have written about for almost 40 years.

For example, when I searched for the best deal for roundtrips between New York City and Kansas City, ITAsoftware.com quickly gave me about 200 fares and routing possibilities for which seats were available. The computer screen and printout are very smartly organized, starting with the lowest fare. One can instantly see which flights are nonstop or if there are several inconvenient connections or other disadvantages.

I always check first if TWA flights are available somewhere near the lower price range and at convenient times. I then note the flight times and routes and buy the actual TWA tickets from lowestfare.com, a company that is able to discount all TWA tickets (even the lowest priced sale fare tickets) about another 25% on their web site, www.lowestfare.com. The discount is about 20% if you call Lowestfare.com by phone at 1-888-777-2222.

Unfortunately TWA does not fly everywhere or seats may be sold out. The special contract lowestfare.com (owned by billionaire Carl Icahn) has with TWA goes back some years when TWA was bankrupt and owed Icahn a few hundred million dollars. Instead of forcing TWA into liquidation, Icahn agreed to buy six hundred million dollars worth of TWA tickets at 40% off. By reselling those tickets at 20-30% off, he not only recouped his loans but turned lowestfare.com into a huge travel firm that has bought out tour operators, such as Maupintour and others. Lowestfare.com also discounts some cruises and hotels.

This is why lowestfare.com can resell any TWA ticket at such a big discount. No other travel firm has such a favorable airline deal. It is perhaps also one of several reasons

why TWA is still weak financially, but their last quarter's figures looked very encouraging to me. Some experts worry if TWA can survive without some kind of a merger in the future. We hope they will survive, as it is a pretty good airline. Recently, TWA had the best on-time performance among the major carriers.

#### Itasoftware Makes It So Easy

Why would I use www.itasoftware.com and/or soon www.orbitz.com to first check on all fares when I may actually buy the tickets from another web site or through my own travel agent or an airline by phone?

There are many advantages of using this airfare search engine first. It is extremely useful and gives so many important details to find the best fares and routes. When you know about *all the flights and fare options*, you can avoid some common travel problems we now read so much about.

Even if you don't have a computer with Internet access, you can still use this method. Most libraries allow Internet access. Librarians travel too, and they may be very interested in learning about these useful travel web sites as well. You may also have friends, neighbors or kids with computers, or use one at work. Your employer will like it, too.

Actually this application (www.itasoftware.com) and some other travel planning web sites, such as www.frommers.com, are so useful that they are reason enough to buy a computer. More about that another time.

#### Senior Discounts, Circle Trip Routings, etc.

An example why I like this airfare search engine so much:

When you or a travel partner is age 62 or older, be sure to check their *Senior* box, don't just check *Adult*. For many flights, seniors 62+ (and a companion of any age) pay 10% less. Itasoftware searches millions of fares in a few seconds and takes all such details and discounts into account.

**Some other airline or hotel reservation web sites don't even ask travelers if they are a senior. There is no place to enter that all-important information.** Obviously, they don't take senior discounts into account. It makes me wonder what other special fares or discounts they are missing.

Itasoftware.com also calculates all children fares. It gives you the total fare, and a breakdown of taxes and surcharges.

#### Being Flexible Can Save Hundreds of Dollars

You can also specify that you are open to depart or return at any time of the day, or prefer the afternoon, or are even willing to leave or return a day earlier or later.

This can make a huge difference in fares when, for example, a discounted fare is available only on certain days of the week or all cheaper seats are sold out for a particular day or time of departure. With many other air reservation systems you can't search for such fare variations.

Itasoftware.com screens and printouts give you details such as how long each trip takes, how many miles you may earn, type of plane, etc.

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**ITAsoftware – cont'd from pg 18****Check All Airlines or Only Your Favorite Carriers**

Other advantages: While itasoftware.com shows you all the fare and flight options initially, one click lets you delete the airline(s) you don't want to fly. For example, United Airlines is currently in contract talks with their pilots. Many flights are canceled because some pilots refuse to work a lot of overtime. Perhaps you are worried about a future strike.

You can delete all the flight options involving that airline. Or, if you prefer to fly, for example, only American Airlines because they have now more space in their coach sections than other airlines, a few clicks with the mouse lets you select a display of only American Airlines flights.

Click on 'Show Booking Details' and scroll down to the lower right and you see the all-important booking and fare codes for the flights you may want to book.

Instead of just telling your travel agent, 'I found a \$499 senior fare to Hawaii,' and he can't find it, you could tell them, 'this was Booking Code K, Fare code KX14S62N.' This can be very important for actually getting a reservation at the lowest fare you researched.

**Better Than Your Travel Agent's Computer**

In many ways this new software is more advanced than the reservation systems used by most travel agents and airlines. It is also extremely user friendly. In the first hour any novice can find more or better fare choices and flights than many travel agents who went to reservation system training courses for many days or weeks.

There are other airfare search engines. Some will find low fares – but they don't check seat availability. What good is a \$49 fare when there are no available seats?

Itasoftware.com checks both, except for a few carriers, such as Southwest Airlines. You can still check all Southwest's fares and flights, but would have to call (or use [www.Southwest.com](http://www.Southwest.com)) for seat availability.

I can't wait until itasoftware.com include also all international flights and fares. It is supposed to happen soon.

**There Is One Limitation (for Seniors only)**

Itasoftware.com checks all fares for individual tickets, including senior fares. It does not alert seniors 62+ that for many flights the senior coupons (you must buy four), or a zone-based fare of a senior travel club (if you joined) could be another alternative and possibly cheaper. Seniors should always compare these two options against the lowest fares shown by itasoftware.com. Taxes, fuel surcharges - and fare rules - should be considered in all airfare comparisons. □

**JetBlue Airlines Expands**

JetBlue, a new lower fare airline, is adding many flights to/from or via NY-JFK airport. Cities served: Los Angeles (Ontario), San Francisco (Oakland), Buffalo, Rochester, Orlando, Tampa, Fort Lauderdale and Burlington, VT. You don't have to stay over a Saturday night to get a reasonable fare. Call 1-800-JETBLUE. Web site [www.jetblue.com](http://www.jetblue.com)

**Trade Dog-Sitting for Free Accommodations**

Marie H., a subscriber from California who travels for extended periods, wrote about a problem and possible solution for millions of pet owners.

There are now many trips on which you can't take your pet, such as a dog or cat, along. The major airlines usually do not accept pets in their cargo holds during the summer months and only certain smaller pets may be taken along in the cabin. Some airlines do not accept pets at all at anytime. Some countries, like Britain, make travel with a pet almost impossible, though some rules were relaxed recently.

Boarding a pet each time one travels is also a significant expense and often very stressful for the animals.

Over 60% of all U.S. households have some kind of pet. There are over 100 million cats and dogs alone. Asking friends or neighbors may be a solution for an occasional short trip, but it could strain a friendship if you ask them to take care of, say, your dog while you are going on a world cruise for three months.

There are, of course, countless professional pet sitters who would briefly come to a home or apartment to feed and walk a pet while the owner is away. But even this can add up to real money and the pet would still be alone for most of the day and night.

Marie wrote that she would be interested in a reliable dog sitter who could have the benefit of staying at her home in California, near the scenic Monterey Peninsula, while she travels about four times a year for extended periods.

What a great idea and unique opportunity, especially for someone who likes dogs! This could be a particularly interesting idea for a retired person who would like to live for awhile in this delightful area of California. Carmel and even Big Sur are among the special places along the coast that could be explored on day trips.

Members interested in exploring such an exchange could write briefly to Marie, c/o TCE. Please include a full size (#10) envelope with a stamp and leave it open. We will add a copy of your Profile Page and forward it to Marie.

*Space permitting*, we are willing to print a very brief listing for other members in good standing for offering a similar non-commercial *hosting exchange*. We know that some pet owners don't travel as much, or to destinations they would like to visit, because of the above problems. This may be a solution. Naturally, it is easier if the pet owner's home or apartment is in a desirable or interesting area.

**Petsitting Web Sites**

For those interested in learning more about professional pet sitting and what is involved, there are many websites, such as: [www.petsitters.org](http://www.petsitters.org) or [www.petsitters.com](http://www.petsitters.com). □

**Eul and Jens Have To Travel, Too**

*Occasionally*, both Eul and Jens may be traveling at the same time and the staff may not have the time to answer all the phone calls. Just leave a brief message or send an e-mail to: [tce@jensjurgen.com](mailto:tce@jensjurgen.com) □