

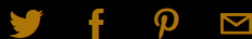
Condé Nast Traveler

All of the Airline and Hotel Loyalty Program Changes Due to Coronavirus

by RAMSEY QUBEIN
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Delta and United have extended elite status for existing members for 12 months.



Given the global situation concerning the coronavirus, frequent travelers have **hunkered down** to prevent further spread of the illness. As we wish for the safe health of others, we're all dreaming of a return to normalcy. While no one can quite predict when that might be, travel companies have made moves to keep their programs active.

Both airlines and hotels have started to make vast extensions to elite status. Delta, for example, is one of the most recent to make a big move by extending Medallion status for existing elite members by 12 months through early 2022. United MileagePlus followed with a similar 12-month extension.

Here's what to know about the latest loyalty program changes, **elite status**, and qualifications moving forward.

<https://www.cntraveler.com/story/all-of-the-airline-and-hotel-loyalty-program-changes-due-to-coronavirus>

Accor Live Limitless

Accor's loyalty program is crediting 50 percent of the status nights and points required to requalify for your current status level. This automatically gets you halfway toward the same status for next year.

Aeroplan

Air Canada **is extending Altitude status for existing elite** members by 12 months, but for those that still earn it this year, they get a bonus option to gift equivalent status to someone else as well. The airline is also pausing the expiration of miles until May 14, which means if you had miles set to expire before then, they now last until mid-May. Altitude members are receiving additional eUpgrade credits in their accounts, which are valid until May 31, 2021. Members who donate to an eligible charity fighting the COVID-19 crisis can earn miles that count toward status.

Best Western Rewards

Best Western was one of the **first to extend status** for members until January 31, 2022. This means that your current status remains the same, unless you earn a higher level this year. Plus, anyone who was downgraded in status based on travels in 2019 will be boosted to their previous level until January 31, 2022, as well.

Cathay Pacific Marco Polo Club

Cathay is automatically adding monthly increments of points between now and April to get travelers closer to status thresholds even when they cannot travel. In addition, those with lounge passes, upgrade certificates, and Gold Companion Card nominations will receive six-month extensions to use them.

Choice Privileges

Any points set to expire have been extended through the end of May 2020.

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Delta SkyMiles

Medallion members are getting a 12-month extension to elite status through early 2022. In addition, existing Medallion Qualification Miles are being rolled over to 2021 to make it easier to re-qualify for 2022 status. Sky Club memberships with an expiration of March 1, 2020, or later are getting a six-month extension. Delta 360, an **invitation-only program** for Delta's biggest spenders, is not part of the current extension. If you have certain upgrade and companion certificates that were supposed to expire this year, their validity has been extended by at least six months.

Emirates Skywards

The airline is **lowering elite threshold requirements** between now and June 30 by 20 percent.

Etihad Guest

The airline is **delivering bonus tier miles on a monthly basis** to pad member balances and help them toward annual elite thresholds during the travel slowdown.

Flying Blue

Miles will no longer expire this year, and for those with status expiring this spring, elite status requirements are **being lowered** by 25 percent.

Hilton Honors

Hilton announced **sweeping extensions** to both elite statuses and its points expiration dates. Any Hilton member whose 2019 status (whether it's Diamond, Gold, or Silver) was set to be downgraded on March 31, 2020, will be extended through March 31, 2021. All 2020 statuses will be extended 24 months through March 31, 2022. Hilton is also pausing the expiration of all points that were set to expire between now and December 31, 2020. The expiration date of all unexpired Weekend Night Rewards have also been extended, and any new ones issued until August 30, 2020, won't expire until August 31, 2021.

IHG Rewards Club

IHG was a first mover in **making status easier** for travelers. Travelers now have lower requirements to earn elite status. For example, Gold Elite status now requires 7,000 qualifying points (instead of 10,000) or seven qualifying nights (instead of 10) this year to earn status. Top-tier Spire Elite status only requires 55,000 qualifying points (instead of 75,000) or 55 nights (instead of 75).

I Prefer Hotel Rewards

Those with elite status in the Preferred Hotels & Resorts loyalty program will keep their current level of status through June 30, 2021. In addition, any points that were about to expire have been extended through Aug. 31, 2020.

LATAM Pass

Current elite status is being extended by one year for members with **status remaining through March 2022**.

Marriott Bonvoy

If you have free night or Suite Night awards (used for room upgrades on eligible stays) in your account, these will be extended until January 31, 2021. In addition, any points set to previously expire will be extended to the same date.

Qantas Frequent Flyer

Status is being extended for current elite members by 12 months.

Qatar Airways Privilege Club

Elite status that would expire by January 31, 2021 is **being extended by a year**; this means current status is now valid until January 31, 2022. Also, Gold and Platinum member Qcredits, which are used for perks like upgrades or to pay for excess baggage, will be valid for two years as long as a member maintains their eligible status.

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Radisson Rewards

Current elite status **has been extended through February 2022**, and any upcoming points expiration has been extended through the end of August.

Shangri-La Golden Circle

Current elite status is being extended for another year to December 31, 2021.

United MileagePlus

The airline is **extending elite status for existing Premier members** through the end of January 2022. In addition, 2021 Premier qualification thresholds have been reduced by half for each status tier to make it easier to achieve status. United Club and Economy Plus memberships, among others, are being extended by six months. Global Services, an invitation-only program for United's top spenders, is not part of the current extension, but members are promised at least Premier 1K status in the coming year.

Virgin Australia Velocity

Members who currently have elite status with the airline will receive a 12-month extension.

Virgin Flying Club

Elite status is **being extended by six months**.

World of Hyatt

Anyone **with existing elite status will see it extended** with no need to re-qualify for an additional year (through Feb. 28, 2022). Also, any current unused Free Night, Suite Upgrade, or Club Lounge Access awards with an expiration between March 1, 2020, and December 31, 2020, will get a free extension through December 31, 2021. Points from inactive accounts that were due to expire this year will now remain active through December 31, 2020.

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Proposed changes to award categories (the designated number of points needed to redeem for a free night's stay) will not go into effect this month as planned. Instead, it will be postponed to 2021. That's good news for stays at many luxury hotels, where the free-night points rate was going to increase.

Why have other brands not made adjustments yet?

Given the uncertainty of the situation, some airlines or hotels may be waiting to see the extent of travel disruption before making an announcement.

For instance, American Airlines executives **have said**, that they are still evaluating options. Frequent travelers are vitally important to these companies from a business perspective, so future promotions and concessions for elite status requirements are sure to come.

Even currently announced loyalty program adjustments may change again before the end of the year. For now, a little patience and a lot of compassion go a long way.

This story was last published on March 30, 2020. It has since been updated with new information. ♦