

# Can I Take 3 Checked Bags On United Airlines?

**Direct answer: yes — United Airlines accepts a third checked bag on most itineraries, and on domestic economy routes it costs \$200.** That sits on top of \$45 prepaid for the first bag and \$55 prepaid for the second, so three bags on a domestic one-way comes to **\$300 prepaid**, or **\$310** if you pay all three at the airport.

The jump from the second bag to the third is severe — \$55 to \$200 — and it is deliberate. Airlines price the third bag to discourage it rather than to sell it. Before paying, it is worth knowing that several categories of traveller get bags free, and that some contents do not count as checked bags at all.

If you are weighing whether to pay \$200, ship ahead or restructure the trip, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can price the options against your specific route.

## Domestic economy fees

| Bag                                  | Prepaid online | At the airport |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| First checked bag                    | \$45           | \$50           |
| Second checked bag                   | \$55           | \$60           |
| <b>Third and each additional bag</b> | <b>\$200</b>   | <b>\$200</b>   |

These rates apply to United Economy and Basic Economy on flights within the U.S., and also to Mexico, Canada, and much of the Caribbean and Central America.

**Prepay online.** The \$5 per bag saving on the first two is small but free, and prepaying removes a transaction from the counter queue.

## International routes change the maths considerably

United's international baggage rules vary sharply by region, and on several long-haul routes the first bag is free in standard Economy — which reshapes the third-bag question entirely.

| Region (standard Economy) | 1st bag | 2nd bag | 3rd+ bag |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Europe                    | Free    | \$100   | \$200    |
| Asia                      | Free    | Free    | \$200    |
| Middle East and Africa    | Free    | Free    | \$200    |
| Australia and Oceania     | Free    | \$100   | \$200    |
| South America             | Free    | \$100   | \$200    |

| Region (standard Economy)                  | 1st bag | 2nd bag | 3rd+ bag |
|--------------------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| India                                      | Free    | \$200   | \$300    |
| Mexico, Canada, Caribbean, Central America | \$45    | \$50    | \$200    |

Two observations worth acting on. On **Asia** and **Middle East and Africa** routes in standard Economy, two bags are free — so a third bag costs \$200 total rather than \$300. And on **Basic Economy** international fares the free allowances largely disappear: Europe becomes roughly \$75 for the first bag, South America around \$70, India \$75.

**India is the outlier at \$300 for the third bag.** If you are flying to India with three bags, that route deserves its own calculation.

## Who gets free checked bags

Before paying \$200, check whether you fall into one of these.

**MileagePlus Premier status.** Silver receives one free checked bag in Economy; higher tiers receive more, and Premier members travelling in first, business or Polaris business receive three free checked bags at up to 70 pounds each. For a Premier member in a premium cabin, the third bag is already covered.

**Chase United credit card holders.** The Explorer card and its siblings include a free first checked bag for the primary cardholder and a companion on the same reservation — but **you must book with the card**. This one condition defeats more claims than any other. At a \$95 annual fee, waived the first year, a single round trip with a checked bag covers it.

**Premium cabins.** Premium Plus, business and first include two free checked bags. Third and subsequent bags still cost \$200.

**Active-duty U.S. military.** United provides expanded free baggage allowances, both on orders and for personal travel. Identify yourself at the counter — it is not applied automatically from the fare.

**Star Alliance Gold members** receive an additional bag allowance when flying United.

## Weight and size limits

**Standard checked bag:** up to **50 pounds** and **62 linear inches** (length plus width plus height). Premium cabins and Premier members in premium cabins allow **70 pounds**.

Overweight and oversize charges are separate from and additional to the per-bag fee, and they are steep. Exceeding both weight and size limits on the same bag means paying both surcharges on top of the \$200 third-bag fee — a single bag can plausibly cost more than a domestic ticket.

**Weigh at home.** A luggage scale costs less than a single overweight charge, and the gap between 50 and 51 pounds is one of the most expensive pounds in travel. Weigh each bag and redistribute before you leave.

## What does not count as a checked bag

Before paying for a third bag, confirm you actually need one.

**Mobility devices and assistive equipment** — wheelchairs, walkers, canes — travel free and count against nothing. This is a U.S. accessibility requirement, not airline discretion.

**A car seat and a stroller** travel free for a ticketed infant or child and do not count as checked bags. Families regularly pay for a bag they did not need because they assumed the stroller counted.

**Trained service dog equipment** does not count against your allowance.

**Sports equipment** is generally treated as a standard checked bag within normal weight limits rather than attracting a separate surcharge, though bulkier items such as bicycles and surfboards have their own handling and charges.

**Musical instruments** small enough for the cabin can travel there; larger ones may need a purchased seat.

## Packing to avoid the third bag

**Redistribute rather than add.** Three two-thirds-full bags usually become two well-packed ones. Compression bags help considerably with clothing.

**Wear the heavy items.** Coats and boots worn through the airport count against nothing. It looks slightly ridiculous and works perfectly.

**Ship ahead for long stays.** For relocations or extended stays, ground shipping frequently beats \$200 and removes the risk of the bag not arriving with you.

**Buy at the destination.** For consumables and bulky low-value items, buying on arrival often costs less than flying them.

**Mind United's carry-on rule.** This is where United differs from Delta and it matters: **domestic Basic Economy does not include a full-size carry-on** — personal item only, with a **\$65 gate check charge** if you bring one anyway (\$45 bag fee plus a \$25 gate handling fee). On standard Economy and above, a full-size carry-on plus a personal item is included, and using both properly absorbs a surprising amount that would otherwise become a third checked bag.

If you are travelling with a lot of luggage, Basic Economy is almost never the right fare on United.

## When the fee is set

Baggage fees follow the rules in effect when the **ticket was purchased**, not when you check in. After a fee increase, a ticket bought earlier retains the older rates even if the flight departs months later. If

the counter quotes something higher than you expect, it is reasonable to raise the purchase date. The reverse also applies: voluntarily changing or reissuing a ticket can reset it to current fee rules.

## If a bag is delayed or damaged

Paying \$200 makes a bag's safe arrival more than an abstract concern.

- **Report before leaving the airport.** File at the United baggage service office in arrivals. Reporting later is substantially harder.
- **Keep the bag tag receipt and the fee receipt.** These are the evidence for any claim.
- **Track in the United app**, which usually shows the bag's location before an agent can.
- **Interim expenses.** Reasonable essential purchases during a delay are typically reimbursable. Keep receipts.
- **Ask about a fee refund.** If a checked bag is significantly delayed, the fee paid may be refundable — but it is not applied automatically.
- **File damage claims at the airport.** Wheels, handles and scuffs are commonly excluded as normal wear; structural damage generally is not.

## Common mistakes

**Paying at the airport.** \$5 more per bag on the first two, for nothing.

**Forgetting to book with the Chase card.** The free bag benefit requires the ticket to be purchased with the card.

**Assuming domestic rules apply internationally.** On several long-haul routes two bags are free in standard Economy.

**Booking Basic Economy with lots of luggage.** No carry-on domestically, a \$65 gate charge, and no relief on checked fees.

**Counting a stroller or wheelchair as a bag.** They do not count.

**Not weighing bags at home.** Overweight charges stack on top of the per-bag fee.

## Checking in three bags on the day

Practical logistics, because three bags changes how the airport works.

**Allow more time.** Three bags cannot be dropped at a self-service kiosk as quickly as one. Add 20 to 30 minutes over your usual buffer, and more at a busy hub such as Newark, Chicago or Denver.

**Prepay online before you arrive.** The first two bags are cheaper, and you arrive at the counter with the transaction already done rather than paying at the desk.

**Use bag drop where available.** Checking in online and printing tags at a kiosk, then using the dedicated bag drop line, is usually faster than the full-service counter.

**Check the airport's baggage cut-off.** Most airports require checked bags to be dropped a set time before departure — commonly 45 minutes domestically and 60 minutes internationally. Miss it and the bags do not travel even if you do.

**Label everything internally and externally.** Put a card with your name, phone and destination address inside each bag as well as on the outside. External tags come off; internal ones are how bags without readable tags get reunited with owners.

**Photograph each bag** before checking it. If one goes missing, a photograph describes it far better than a verbal account under stress.

## Alternatives worth pricing

If three bags is a recurring need rather than a one-off, some options change the economics permanently.

**A Chase United card** costs \$95 a year, waived the first year, and covers a free first checked bag for the cardholder and a companion. Two round trips a year with a bag more than pays for it — and it also restores a full-size carry-on on Basic Economy, which addresses the other half of United's luggage problem.

**Premier status** delivers free bags as a by-product of flying frequently. Not worth chasing purely for baggage, but worth knowing if you are close to a tier.

**Ground shipping** is the honest competitor to the \$200 third bag. For anything not needed on arrival day, a shipped box is often cheaper, arrives independently of your flight, and removes the airport handling entirely.

**Buying a cabin upgrade** occasionally works out cheaper than the bag fees. Premium Plus and above include two free checked bags, so on a route where the upgrade is modest and you would otherwise pay for two bags, price the upgrade before paying the fees.

## Where to get help

| Contact                                         | Number                                  | Best for                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Travel reservations and baggage cost comparison | <b>1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)</b>        | Pricing three bags against your specific route, comparing fares where allowances differ, checking whether a different cabin works out cheaper overall |
| United Airlines Reservations                    | Published on <a href="#">united.com</a> | Prepaying bags, confirming route-specific allowances                                                                                                  |
| United baggage service                          | Published on <a href="#">united.com</a> | Delayed, damaged or missing bags                                                                                                                      |

| Contact                    | Number                  | Best for                  |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| MileagePlus service centre | Published on united.com | Premier allowance queries |

## Frequently asked questions

**Can I check 3 bags on United Airlines?** Yes, on most itineraries. The third bag costs \$200 on the majority of routes, and \$300 to India.

**How much are three checked bags on a United domestic flight?** \$300 prepaid — \$45, \$55 and \$200 — or \$310 paid at the airport.

**Is the third bag cheaper if I prepay?** No. The \$200 third-bag fee is the same online or at the airport. Only the first two bags carry a prepay discount.

**What is United's checked bag weight limit?** 50 pounds and 62 linear inches in economy; 70 pounds in premium cabins and for Premier members in premium cabins. Overweight and oversize charges are additional.

**Does Premier status give free checked bags?** Yes. Silver receives one free bag in economy, higher tiers receive more, and Premier members in first, business or Polaris receive three free bags at up to 70 pounds.

**Does the Chase United card give a free bag?** Yes, for the primary cardholder and a companion on the same reservation — but the ticket must be purchased with the card.

**Are checked bags free on United international flights?** On several routes the first bag is free in standard Economy, including Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, South America and Oceania. Basic Economy international fares largely lose these allowances.

**Does United Basic Economy include a carry-on?** Not on domestic routes — personal item only, with a \$65 charge if you bring a full-size bag to the gate.

**Do strollers and wheelchairs count toward my allowance?** No. Both travel free and count against nothing.

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## The takeaway

United will carry a third checked bag, and on most routes it costs **\$200** — a deliberate step up from \$55 for the second. Three bags on a domestic flight is \$300 prepaid.

Before paying it, run three checks. First, whether your route already includes free bags: on standard Economy to Asia, Africa or the Middle East, two are free. Second, whether you qualify through **Premier status, a Chase United card booked with the card, a premium cabin or active-duty military status**. Third, whether the third bag's contents can be redistributed, worn, shipped ahead or bought at the destination.

One United-specific trap is worth repeating: **domestic Basic Economy has no full-size carry-on** and charges \$65 at the gate if you bring one. On a luggage-heavy trip, the cheap fare is rarely the cheap trip.

To price three bags against a different fare, cabin or shipping option on your particular route, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can compare the total cost rather than just the ticket.