

How To Book A Multi-City Flight On Southwest Airlines

Direct answer: Southwest offers a **Multi-city** option on its booking form — select it instead of Round Trip or One Way, enter each leg with its own origin, destination and date, choose a flight for each, and pay once.

But here is what makes Southwest genuinely different from every other airline in this article series: **the multi-city tool matters far less than it does elsewhere.** Southwest prices every ticket as a standalone one-way. There is no round-trip discount, no complex fare construction, and no penalty for booking legs separately. Combined with **no change fees on any fare**, separate one-way bookings are usually just as cheap as a multi-city ticket — and considerably more flexible.

On United or Delta, choosing between one ticket and several is a real financial decision. On Southwest it mostly is not. **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can price both approaches on your particular itinerary if you want the comparison confirmed.

Why Southwest's pricing model changes the question

Legacy airlines construct multi-city fares from components that can total less than separate one-ways, particularly internationally, where one-way pricing is often punitive. That is the main reason to use a multi-city tool.

Southwest does not work that way. **Every Southwest fare is a one-way fare.** A round trip is simply two one-ways added together. There is no discount for booking them as a unit, and no penalty for not.

The practical consequences:

- **Separate one-ways cost the same** as the equivalent multi-city booking in most cases
- **You can mix fare bundles** — Basic on a leg where you are travelling light, Choice Extra on one where you need bags
- **You can mix payment methods** — cash on one leg, Rapid Rewards points on another
- **You can change one leg without touching the others**, which a multi-city ticket does not readily allow

That last point is worth emphasising. On a multi-city ticket at most airlines, changing one segment can reprice the whole itinerary. With separate Southwest one-ways, each leg is independent and each can be changed with no change fee.

When to use the multi-city tool anyway

It is not useless. Reasons to prefer a single booking:

Convenience. One confirmation number, one place to manage everything, one check-in flow to remember.

Same-day connections. If two legs connect on the same day, a single ticket means Southwest is responsible for rebooking you if the first is delayed. On separate tickets, a missed second flight is your problem and your expense. This is the one genuinely important reason to book together.

Group bookings. Keeping a party of travellers on one reservation is simpler for seat selection and boarding.

Bag benefits. A-List and A-List Preferred bag benefits extend to up to eight additional passengers **on the same reservation**, so consolidating can matter if you are relying on someone's status.

The rule: **legs connecting the same day, book together. Days in between, separate one-ways are fine and often better.**

Step by step: the multi-city tool

- 1 **Open the booking form** on southwest.com or in the Southwest app.
- 2 **Select Multi-city** from the trip-type selector.
- 3 **Enter leg one** — departure airport, arrival airport, date.
- 4 **Add each further leg** in chronological order.
- 5 **Set passengers**, then search.
- 6 **Choose a flight and fare bundle for each leg.** Because Southwest prices per one-way, you can genuinely evaluate each independently.
- 7 **Review the total**, add passenger details, select seats and pay.

Airport flexibility

Use nearby airports where they help. On Southwest this means knowing its network quirks — in New York, **LaGuardia and Long Island MacArthur in Islip**, since Southwest serves neither JFK nor Newark. In Chicago, **Midway rather than O'Hare**. In Houston, **Hobby rather than Bush**. In Dallas, **Love Field**, which is subject to its own route restrictions.

Southwest's preference for secondary airports is a genuine planning consideration on a multi-city trip, both for cost and for ground logistics.

Open jaw itineraries

An open jaw means flying into one city and home from another, with your own transport in between — Nashville to Denver, drive through the mountains, home from Salt Lake City.

On most airlines you build this through the multi-city tool. On Southwest you can simply **book two one-ways**, because that is what it would be anyway. There is no round-trip discount to forfeit.

This makes Southwest unusually well suited to road-trip-style travel, where you fly into one point and out of another. The pricing does not punish you for it, and the no-change-fee policy means you can adjust the return as plans firm up.

Using points across a multi-city trip

Rapid Rewards works cleanly here.

Points and cash can be mixed across legs if you book separately — points where the fare is high, cash where it is low. A single multi-city booking generally requires one payment method throughout, which is another argument for separate bookings.

Award pricing tracks the cash fare, so there are no sweet spots to hunt and no blackout dates. If a seat is for sale, points can usually book it.

Points bookings can be cancelled with points redeposited, which makes a points-booked leg effectively a free option on an uncertain plan. On a multi-city trip where one leg's date is not settled, booking that leg with points is a sensible hedge.

The Companion Pass applies to every booking, cash or points. On a multi-city trip with several legs, a companion travelling for taxes and fees on each one is a substantial saving.

What Southwest's network means for multi-city planning

Southwest is a **point-to-point domestic carrier**, not a hub-and-spoke network, which changes how multi-city trips work.

Strengths: dense coverage of U.S. cities, many direct routes that legacy carriers would route through a hub, and a large presence at convenient secondary airports.

Limitations: an overwhelmingly domestic network with some Caribbean, Mexico and Central America service. **No transatlantic or transpacific flying.** And critically, **Rapid Rewards points cannot be redeemed on partner airlines** — Southwest has partnerships with some international carriers including Icelandair, but at present you can neither earn nor redeem points on partner-operated flights.

So a multi-city trip that leaves North America cannot be built on Southwest alone. It becomes a Southwest itinerary to a gateway city plus a separate international ticket — and those are genuinely separate tickets, with no protection between them. Allow generous time.

Changing a multi-city booking

No change fee on any fare. You pay any fare difference, or receive the difference back as credit if the new flight is cheaper.

On a multi-city ticket, changing one segment may require the itinerary to be repriced. On separate one-ways, you change only the affected leg. This is the strongest practical argument for separate bookings on a trip with gaps between legs.

The Basic fare is the exception. Introduced in May 2025, it does not carry the same flexibility as Choice fares and above. For a multi-city trip where something is likely to move, Basic is the wrong choice.

Missing a leg voids the rest on a single ticket. If you skip a flight on a multi-city booking, remaining segments are generally cancelled automatically. Never simply not show up — call and change it. On separate one-ways this risk disappears entirely, which is another point in their favour.

Baggage and check-in across a multi-city trip

A few operational details that catch people out on longer itineraries.

Bag fees apply per leg. This is the change that most affects multi-city planning since May 2025. A three-leg trip with one checked bag now costs \$45 three times, not once. Under the old Bags Fly Free policy a multi-city trip carried no baggage cost at all; today it can add well over \$100 to a three-city itinerary.

The free carry-on still applies on every leg, which makes packing to carry-on size disproportionately valuable on a multi-city trip. Three legs of savings compound quickly.

Status and card benefits apply per reservation. A-List and A-List Preferred free bags extend to up to eight companions on the same reservation. On separate one-way bookings, the benefit applies to each booking individually, which generally still works — but confirm the Rapid Rewards number is attached to every booking, not just the first.

Check in separately for each leg. Whether you book one multi-city ticket or several one-ways, each flight has its own check-in window opening 24 hours before that segment departs. Set a reminder for each.

Seat selection applies per segment. Choosing a seat on leg one does not select seats on legs two and three. Work through the whole itinerary.

Fare bundles apply per leg too — which on separate bookings is an advantage, letting you buy Choice Extra on the leg where you need bags and Basic on the leg where you are travelling light.

Common mistakes

Assuming a multi-city ticket is cheaper. On Southwest it usually is not, because every fare is a one-way anyway.

Booking separate tickets for same-day connections. This is the one case where a single booking genuinely protects you.

Using Basic for a complex trip. It lacks the flexibility that makes Southwest useful.

Forgetting airport quirks. Midway not O'Hare, Hobby not Bush, LaGuardia or Islip not JFK.

Expecting points to work on partner airlines. They do not.

Not checking flight credit expiry before cancelling a leg.

Too little connection time. Allow 90 minutes where legs connect the same day, even on one ticket.

Where to get help

Contact	Number	Best for
Travel reservations and complex itineraries	1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)	Comparing a multi-city booking against separate one-ways, building open-jaw routings, combining Southwest legs with another carrier for international travel
Southwest Airlines Reservations	Published on southwest.com	Servicing Southwest bookings and changes
Rapid Rewards service	Published on southwest.com	Points bookings, redeposits and Companion Pass

Frequently asked questions

Does Southwest have a multi-city booking option? Yes, on the booking form alongside Round Trip and One Way.

Is multi-city cheaper than separate one-ways on Southwest? Usually not. Southwest prices every fare as a one-way, so there is no round-trip or multi-city discount to gain.

Should I book separate tickets instead? For legs with days between them, yes — you gain flexibility at no extra cost. For legs connecting the same day, book together so Southwest is responsible if the first leg is delayed.

Can I book an open jaw on Southwest? Yes, and you can simply book two one-ways, since there is no round-trip discount to forfeit.

Can I mix points and cash across a multi-city trip? Across separate bookings, yes. A single multi-city booking generally requires one payment method.

Can I use Southwest points on partner airlines for the international portion? No. Rapid Rewards points can only be redeemed on Southwest-operated flights.

What happens if I miss one leg? On a single multi-city ticket, remaining segments are generally cancelled. On separate one-ways, only that leg is affected.

Does the no-change-fee policy apply to multi-city bookings? Yes, on Choice fares and above. Basic is more restricted.

Which airports does Southwest use in major cities? Often the secondary one — Midway in Chicago, Hobby in Houston, Love Field in Dallas, and LaGuardia or Islip in New York.

The takeaway

Southwest has a multi-city tool, but it is the one airline where you should think hard before using it. Because **every Southwest fare is priced as a one-way** and there are **no change fees**, separate bookings usually cost the same and give you far more control — mix fare bundles, mix points and cash, change one leg without touching the others.

Book together for one reason only: **legs that connect the same day**, where a single ticket makes Southwest responsible for rebooking you if the first flight is delayed. That protection is worth having and cannot be replicated with separate tickets.

Two planning notes specific to Southwest. Its **secondary-airport network** — Midway, Hobby, Love Field, Islip — changes both cost and ground logistics on a multi-city trip. And because **points cannot be redeemed on partner airlines**, any itinerary leaving North America becomes a Southwest ticket plus a separate international one, with no protection between them.

To compare a multi-city booking against separate one-ways on your route, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can price both and tell you which actually wins.