

How To Book A Multi-City Flight On United Airlines

Direct answer: On united.com or in the United app, select **Multi-city** on the search form rather than Round Trip or One Way. Enter each leg separately — origin, destination, date — adding a row for each additional segment, then choose a flight for each and pay once. The result is a single ticket, one confirmation number, and connection protection across the whole itinerary.

United has one feature that no other U.S. carrier matches, and it is the reason multi-city is worth learning properly here: the **Excursionist Perk**, which can add a free additional flight to a qualifying MileagePlus award itinerary. Used well, it turns a two-city award trip into a three-city one at no extra cost in miles.

Complex routings, mixed cabins and Star Alliance partner segments are often easier to build with an agent than through the online form. **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can construct and price an itinerary the website declines to display.

Three trip shapes, one tool

True multi-city. Denver to Chicago, several days, Chicago to Boston, several days, Boston home to Denver. Three legs, three cities, one ticket.

Open jaw. Fly into one city, home from another, with your own transport in between. Newark to Rome, then Milan back to Newark, with a train through Italy. The most useful and most underused pattern — travellers who do not know the term routinely book two round trips and pay roughly double.

Stopover. A deliberate extended stay in a connecting city. San Francisco to Frankfurt, four days, then onward to Istanbul. United's Star Alliance partnerships with Lufthansa, Swiss, Austrian and Turkish make European stopovers particularly workable.

All three are built through the same multi-city search.

Step by step

- 1 **Open the booking form** on united.com or in the United app.
- 2 **Select Multi-city** from the trip-type selector.
- 3 **Enter leg one** — departure airport, arrival airport, date.
- 4 **Add each further leg** as an additional row, in chronological order.
- 5 **Set passengers and cabin.** Cabin selection applies across the itinerary online; mixing cabins by segment generally needs an agent.
- 6 **Search**, then choose a flight for each leg in turn.

- 7 **Review the total** before continuing. Multi-city fares are constructed as a whole, not summed from the cheapest option on each leg.
- 8 **Add passenger details, choose seats, pay.** One transaction, one confirmation number.

Use airport flexibility

Where the search offers nearby-airport options, use them. An itinerary that can arrive at one New York airport and depart from another frequently prices lower — and on United that means **Newark and LaGuardia**, since United does not currently serve JFK.

The Excursionist Perk

This is United's genuinely distinctive multi-city feature, and it applies to **MileagePlus award bookings**.

In broad terms, on a qualifying award itinerary that includes travel within a single region away from your home region, United can include **one additional flight at no extra miles**. The conditions are specific: the itinerary must involve more than one region, the free segment must be within a single region that is not the region where the journey began, and the origin and destination of the overall trip must be in the same region.

A typical shape: fly from the U.S. to Europe, take a free flight between two European cities, then fly home from the second city. The intra-European leg costs no additional miles.

Two practical notes. First, **the perk applies automatically when the itinerary qualifies** — you do not request it, you construct a booking that meets the conditions. Second, the rules are intricate enough that building a qualifying itinerary through the website is genuinely fiddly, and a small change to the routing can silently disqualify it. If a booking you expected to trigger the perk does not, an agent can often see why.

For anyone with a MileagePlus balance planning a multi-city trip abroad, this feature alone justifies booking with United rather than converting points elsewhere.

Why one ticket beats several

Connection protection is the main reason. On a single United ticket, if leg one is delayed and you miss leg two, United is responsible for rebooking you and, in qualifying cases, for accommodation. On separate tickets, the second airline has sold you a seat on a flight you did not board, and you buy a new ticket at the walk-up fare.

That protection justifies a modest premium on any itinerary where legs connect the same day.

Bags can check through where the connection allows.

International fare construction is often cheaper, because one-way international pricing is frequently punitive and multi-city fares are built from components that can total less.

One reservation is simpler — one confirmation number, one check-in, one place to make changes.

When separate tickets are better

Domestic itineraries with long gaps. Five days in each city means there is no connection to protect. Separate one-ways price fairly on domestic routes and let you take the cheapest carrier for each leg.

When a low-cost carrier serves one leg. A United multi-city ticket locks you into United and Star Alliance. If another airline is materially cheaper on the middle leg with a week's gap, take the separate ticket.

When one leg needs flexibility. Changing a single segment of a multi-city ticket can reprice the whole itinerary. On separate tickets you change only the affected leg.

When one leg is best paid with miles. Mixing cash and award travel requires separate bookings — with the notable exception of the Excursionist Perk, which achieves something similar within a single award booking.

The working rule: **legs connecting the same day, one ticket. Days in between, price both ways.**

Routings that work well on United

Europe with a Star Alliance stopover. Into Frankfurt, Munich or Zurich, a few days, then onward on Lufthansa or Swiss to a second city and home from there. The intra-European leg often prices modestly as part of the whole — or free, on an award, via the Excursionist Perk.

Transatlantic open jaw. Into London, out of Rome. Nearly always beats two round trips.

West Coast to Asia with a domestic stop. United's San Francisco gateway makes an itinerary that pauses on the West Coast before continuing across the Pacific straightforward, rather than forcing a same-day connection.

Domestic hub chains. Chicago O'Hare, Denver, Houston Bush and Washington Dulles connect to nearly everything United serves, with the frequency to recover if something goes wrong.

New York in a multi-city trip. Remember that United means Newark or LaGuardia. Under the Blue Sky partnership United also sells JetBlue flights, which can open JFK options — but check the operating carrier, because it determines the airport.

Common mistakes

Too little time between connecting legs. Single-ticket protection means United fixes it, but you still lose the day. Allow 90 minutes domestically and three hours internationally.

Legs entered out of order. The search builds the itinerary in the sequence you enter.

Assuming cheapest-per-leg equals cheapest total. A slightly pricier flight on leg one sometimes lowers the whole fare.

Overlooking the baggage rule. On mixed domestic and international itineraries the allowance is often set by the most significant segment — which can work in your favour. Check before paying \$45 for a bag already included.

Booking Basic Economy for a multi-city trip. It cannot be changed domestically, includes no full-size carry-on, and on a complex itinerary something usually needs to move. A poor fit.

Ignoring transit visas. Multi-city international travel can require transit documentation for countries you only pass through.

Breaking the Excursionist Perk with a small routing change. The qualifying conditions are precise.

Changing a multi-city booking

Changing one segment normally requires the whole itinerary to be repriced under current rules, which can mean a fare difference across the ticket rather than just the changed leg.

United's no-change-fee policy on standard Economy and above helps considerably — you pay any fare difference but not a penalty. Domestic **Basic Economy multi-city bookings cannot be changed at all**, which makes them a poor choice for complex trips.

If you know one leg is likely to move, either book standard Economy or above, or split that leg onto its own ticket from the outset.

The 24-hour rule applies: a ticket bought at least seven days before departure can be cancelled for a full refund within 24 hours. Use that window to check every date and airport code — multi-city bookings have more places for an error to hide.

Baggage and check-in across a multi-city trip

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

The allowance can be set by the most significant segment. On an itinerary mixing domestic and international flying, the international allowance often governs the whole ticket — which can mean a free checked bag on a domestic leg that would otherwise cost \$45. Check before prepaying.

Bags check through where the connection permits, but on a multi-city itinerary with days between legs you obviously collect them at each stop and re-check for the next flight.

Check in separately for each leg. A multi-city ticket is one reservation but each flight has its own check-in window, typically opening 24 hours before that segment departs. Set a reminder for each rather than assuming a single check-in covers the trip.

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 in My Trips.

Missing a leg voids the rest. This is the most consequential rule on any multi-segment ticket. If you skip a flight — even deliberately, even having decided to make your own way — the remaining

segments on that ticket are generally cancelled automatically. Never simply not show up for a leg you no longer need; call and change it instead.

Where to get help

Contact	Number	Best for
Travel reservations and complex itineraries	1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)	Building multi-city and open-jaw routings, mixed-cabin itineraries, Star Alliance partner segments, itineraries the website will not price
United Airlines Reservations	Published on united.com	Direct servicing of United-issued tickets
MileagePlus service centre	Published on united.com	Award multi-city bookings and Excursionist Perk questions

Multi-city is one of the clearest cases where a phone booking outperforms a website. The online search applies conservative rules about which combinations it will offer; an agent working the fare system directly can often build a routing the site declines to display, and can say immediately whether the Excursionist Perk will trigger.

Frequently asked questions

How many segments can I book on one United multi-city ticket? The online form supports several legs. Longer or unusual itineraries can be built by an agent.

Is multi-city cheaper than separate one-ways on United? Frequently on international routes where one-way fares price high. Often not on domestic routes with long gaps. Price both.

What is the Excursionist Perk? A MileagePlus award feature that can include one additional flight at no extra miles on a qualifying multi-region award itinerary, typically a free intra-region segment away from your home region.

Can I include Star Alliance partners in a United multi-city booking? Yes — Lufthansa, Swiss, Austrian, ANA, Air Canada, Turkish and others, plus codeshare partners.

Can I book an open-jaw trip on United? Yes. Enter it as a multi-city search with different arrival and departure cities and omit the middle segment.

What happens if one leg is cancelled? On a single ticket, United is responsible for rebooking you. That is the main advantage over separate tickets.

Can I mix cabins across segments? Not readily online. An agent can price economy on one leg and Polaris on another.

Does the 24-hour cancellation rule apply? Yes, for tickets purchased at least seven days before the first departure.

Should I use Basic Economy for multi-city? No. Domestic Basic Economy cannot be changed and includes no full-size carry-on.

The takeaway

Booking a multi-city flight on United is mechanically simple — select Multi-city, enter each leg in order, pay once. The judgement lies in knowing when one ticket is right: same-day connections, yes, because connection protection has genuine value; days between legs, price both ways and shop each independently.

Two things make United distinctive here. **Open-jaw itineraries** through its Star Alliance partners open up European and Asian routings that a simple round trip cannot, and the **Excursionist Perk** can add a free flight to a qualifying award booking — a benefit no other U.S. carrier offers in the same form.

If the website will not build what you want, or you are combining cabins, partners or award space with the Excursionist Perk in mind, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can construct and price the itinerary directly rather than working around the form's limits.