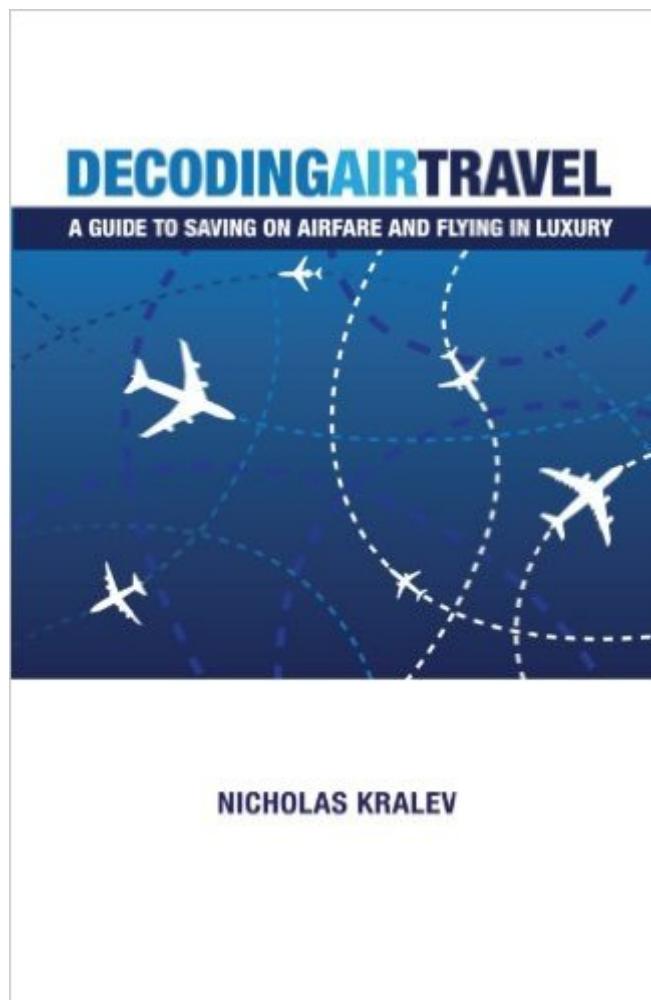


The book was found

Decoding Air Travel: A Guide To Saving On Airfare And Flying In Luxury



Synopsis

Decoding Air Travel is the most comprehensive and insightful work to date on the intricacies of the modern air travel system from a customer perspective, and the most effective tool for making travel more affordable, convenient, comfortable and fun. It's the only book that can teach you how to save hundreds -- even thousands -- of dollars per ticket by building your own airfare, how to fly in Business and First Class for the price of coach, and how to enjoy various travel luxuries at no additional cost. The book has two goals: Improving your travel life and saving you lots of money. It seeks to achieve those goals by helping you become a knowledgeable, smart and sophisticated traveler who has mastered an increasingly complex and frustrating system and can work it to his or her advantage. For more details, visit the book's website: DecodingAirTravel.com.

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Customer Reviews

As noted by other reviewers, Nicholas Kralev was a diplomacy reporter for several years, and flew all over the world on the newspaper's dime -- but newspapers haven't been the most thriving businesses over the past several years, so he had to make the most of a modest travel budget. And he doesn't like flying coach. So he learned the ins and outs of airfares, frequent flyer programs, upgrades, bonuses, and began to think strategically and methodically as he planned out his travels. His travels also earned him a regular travel column in the Washington Times. Kralev has left the Times and has been offering paid seminars at which he teaches techniques for getting the most out of travel for the least amount of money. And having been teaching these seminars for a year, he's now written a book. It's less expensive than a seminar, and this way it fits your schedule. You

should buy it. The book is broken down into three sections: booking tickets, the trip itself, and making the most of frequent flyer programs. In section one, across six chapters, Kralev offers the best introduction to airfare construction and searching out the best airfares that I've ever read. And I write a popular travel blog that's been recommended in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, so I'm no slouch on this stuff. The book isn't for everyone. You might be happy going to Kayak, Bing, or Hipmunk and booking whatever itinerary pops up and looks the cheapest. If that's you, and you're good, then the book may not be for you. If you want to be more advanced than that, really understand how airfare and travel works and how to use that knowledge for your benefit, then it's a worthwhile investment.

Kralev presents his method of using online, 3rd-party flight data sources to piece together itineraries with an eye towards avoiding the more expensive packaged junkets assembled by airlines, and maximizing mileage for rewards. While I enjoyed the book, and it's ideal for frequent travelers, it is not practical for the vast majority of travelers, who only fly occasionally. To be fair, Kralev's introduction clarifies that the time required to master his strategy likely isn't worth it for leisure travelers flying once or twice a year (though one might argue that revelation only follows the purchase of the book...). And the book did have three big pluses for me: (1) it provides a peek behind the curtain obscuring airline pricing and practices; (2) it gives a balanced look at the practical benefits and failings of the biggest frequent flier programs; and (3) is a well-written, entertaining yarn, that accessibly translates complex techniques. However, one of Kralev's stated goals is "to give ordinary people . . . the opportunity to travel to other countries, experience different cultures and try to understand points of view they may not agree with." While that goal is laudable, it's unlikely that most travelers will get much closer to it by reading this book. Let's face it, the lowest threshold for domestic airline rewards, 25,000 miles, is hard to hit, and 100,000 for the top "elite" category is a pipe dream for most people. Indeed, Kralev's focus on the perks associated with elite status will likely be off-putting for more modest travelers (I'm sorry you got stuck with a sandwich instead of a salad during meal-service, Kralev. I'd be sorrier if I weren't still stuck in the airport after your elite self jumped my place on the standby list).

This book on navigating through the seemingly insane system for pricing and issuing airline tickets and getting the most out of your air travel experience is must reading for frequent travelers and illuminating for anyone who ever has to fly anywhere. Nicholas Kralev, longtime diplomatic correspondent for the Washington Times and the Financial Times, has by his own reckoning logged

some 2 million miles in the air. As he says in the foreword to this enlightening manual on beating the byzantine air travel industry, he hasn't sat in economy class in 10 years thanks to his strategies in collecting and using reward miles. As a former journalist, Kralev writes well and guides the reader painlessly through the arcane process of matching a myriad of possible fares with flight inventories to build your own ticket that could well come out cheaper than any issued by automated services like Expedia and Travelocity. He peppers his manual with anecdotes flying around the world to cover four U.S. secretaries of State. Because of the expertise in air travel that he developed in connection with his work - he also wrote an air travel column for the Washington times - Kralev now works as an independent travel consultant with his eponymous firm. Kralev first tells you what all the fare codes mean and how they work for the various airlines. He then introduces you to Web sites that provide raw airline data - the same data that Expedia et al. work with. In this way, you can manufacture your own ticket more advantageously than the computers who do the work in the booking sites. The author modestly refers to this as the Kralev Method, but it is available to any reader willing to follow his step-by-step description.

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