

Media Release

Early Bird Travel Hacks – How Kiwis Can Book Smarter for UK and Europe 2026

1 September 2025 – The runway for booking your 2026 European escape opens today and the best deals are already taking off.

September is when airlines release their best early bird fares for the year ahead and House of Travel says the most in-demand seats, routes and travel dates historically sell out fast.

To help Kiwis travel smarter, House of Travel is sharing expert hacks to help travellers make the most of their next European adventure.

Hack 1. Book early before fares rise

“With dynamic pricing, fares increase as seats fill up on a particular flight and often rise closer to departure,” explains David Coombes, House of Travel chief executive.

“Flights to Paris are 3% cheaper than last year while fares to London have jumped 6%, so booking early is the smartest move to lock in preferred fares, routes, seats and stopover options.”

Hack 2. Pick the fare that works for you

The cheapest deals out there can be tempting but often exclude baggage, seat selection and flexibility, long transit and/or flight times and unseen costs like transit visas.

“For most travellers, Value or Flexi fares give more leeway if plans change and usually include better baggage allowances,” Coombes says. “Choosing the right fare upfront helps avoid surprises or extra costs later, especially if travellers plan to shop at Zara, Selfridges, or bring home half of Galeries Lafayette.”

Hack 3. Choose your flying style

“Matching the air experience to the budget and travel-style that travellers want can turn the flight into part of the holiday,” Coombes says. “Some travellers prioritise reaching their destination quickly with a direct route being important. Others value comfort or flexibility, and some people appreciate extras like generous baggage allowances, onboard experiences or the chance to sightsee during stopovers and transits.”

Fastest routes: Singapore Airlines and Emirates provide connections through hubs in Singapore and Dubai with daily flights from Auckland and Christchurch. Flight times to London average 26–27 hours, while Paris and Rome are slightly longer.

Stopover mini-breaks: Emirates offers a stopover programme with hotel stays, transfers and guided tours. Singapore's free Changi stopover tour is available for layovers longer than 5.5 hours and Qatar's "Doha Experience" includes accommodation and transfers.

Luxury extras: Emirates' chauffeur service, Singapore's "Book the Cook" dining option, and Qatar Airways' Qsuites are sought-after extras. Air New Zealand codeshares to London via Los Angeles, Singapore, Tokyo, or Hong Kong featuring Skycouch and Premium Economy for travellers wanting added comfort. These options sell out fast, so booking early is essential.

Value options: Korean Air and Malaysia Airlines often have deals if travellers are flexible on baggage, seat choices, and travel dates.

Hack 4. Travel in shoulder seasons

"More Kiwis are choosing to travel to Europe in the shoulder seasons of spring and autumn to stretch their travel budgets and fewer crowds at popular attractions," Coombes says.

"We've seen a 16% increase in bookings during these months with customers heading to destinations like Paris, Rome, or Zurich and many taking advantage of stopover mini breaks in the transit hubs of Singapore or Doha."

Hack 5. Play the points game

Travellers collecting frequent flyer points should stick with airline alliances. Star Alliance includes Singapore Airlines, Lufthansa, and Air New Zealand. Oneworld covers Qantas, Malaysia Airlines, and Qatar Airways. SkyTeam includes Korean Air. Booking early secures fare classes that give the best shot at upgrades and extra perks.

"Booking early is the key hack for European travel," Coombes concludes. "The best deals are out now and waiting often means paying more. As Kiwis' trusted travel partner, we help customers lock in the best fares, seats, travel dates and extras tailored to their needs - so they get the best holiday ever from take-off to stopover to returning home."

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ABOUT HOUSE OF TRAVEL

- House of Travel is committed to being an iconic brand.
- House of Travel is the largest New Zealand owned travel company and the largest privately owned retail travel company in Australasia.
- The House of Travel Group includes HOT retail, Orbit World Travel, HOT Product, HOT Holdings, Global Travel Network, TravelManagers PTY Ltd Australia, Travel Advocates, Mix & Match, Hoot, CruiseDeals, Wanderlust Travel Experts and Discover Travel Christchurch.
- House of Travel retail stores are 50% owner-operated in a unique and successful partnership with House of Travel Holdings.
- House of Travel was recognised as the top brand in New Zealand by 2,500 Kiwis in the latest Kantar Customer Leadership Index 2024 for customer excellence.
- House of Travel was named the best of the large businesses (400-plus employees) in the Best Places to Work 2024 awards.