



## Frequent Flyer news released on June 15, 2010

*Vietnam Airlines* is a new SkyTeam member and has used the opportunity to redesign completely its **Golden Lotus Plus** program. The program now operates on a mileage basis and has integrated all partners - but does not really have any outstanding element making it a must have. Vietnam Airlines is also not (yet?) included to the SkyTeam upgrade awards. *Cathay Pacific*, however, will leave the program on August 23. Romanian carrier *Tarom* joins SkyTeam on June 25, but will abandon its own program **Smart Miles** in favour of Air France KLM's program **Flying Blue** in this process.



Only last month we talked about China Eastern's decision to join the SkyTeam alliance rather than the **oneworld** alliance as widely expected. That this decision came indeed as a kind of surprise can also be seen by the fact that China Eastern and **oneworld** member Qantas have started a reciprocal Frequent Flyer partnership in their programs **Eastern Miles** and **Frequent Flyer** in the meantime. Such partnerships have often an advance preparation of some six months - whether it will be a lasting one in front of the changed background remains to be seen, however.



It is pretty unusual in these times if airlines improve their Frequent Flyer Programs without any ifs and buts. However, that is exactly what has happened with Air Austral, based on La Réunion in the Indian Ocean, which has extended the lifespan of its points from two to three years in its **Capricorne** program on one hand and has lowered award levels in Economy Class on the other hand. Whether the airline gets ready like that to become the first airline worldwide to operate two Airbus 380 aircrafts in a single-class configuration with more than 800 seats each, probably as of 2014, which will then need to be filled somehow...? Its largest aircraft today are two Boeing 777-300 with a 364-seat layout.



Frequent Flyer Programs with low cost airlines are more and more on the advance, including in regions where they would not necessarily be expected. As an example, the leading Russian low cost airline *Sky Express* has recently started an own Frequent Flyer Program, **EVERYBODY FLIES** (also known under the Russian name **ЛЕТАЮТ ВСЕ**) - and *Air Asia* seems to be short before the launch of an own program. *easyJet* and *Ryanair* with their stubborn attitude towards Frequent Flyer Programs become more and more isolated like that - but since Ryanair would probably apply a fee to collect miles, it might be even better like that...



Hotels traditionally offer promotions during the summer season in order to compensate the slower demand in the business travel segment. And much more than with airlines, the offers often look the same. This summer, the focus is not on bonus points, but on free nights after two to four stays, depending on the program. Some of the hotels offering such promotions in their programs, or going to offer them soon, include *Best Western* (**Best Western Rewards**), *Carlson* - including the brands *Radisson* and *Regent* (**goldpoints plus**) -, *Hilton* (**HHonors**), *Marriott* (**Marriott Rewards**) and *Starwood* (**Starwood Preferred Guest**).

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