

Expedia Bargain Fares

by Debbie Davies published on 27 August 2004

If you leave booking your bank holiday or weekend breaks to the last minute, then finding a bargain online can be difficult. Fares seem to rise and rise the closer you get to departure dates. Expedia's Bargain Fares work in the opposite way. They offer very, very cheap fares for last minute departure. When we checked today (27.08.04), Bargain Flights were available for plenty of European destinations. For travel dates next week, we searched Expedia for London to Turin £73.20 incl. (compared to £126.20 on Opodo); London to Frankfurt £77.80 incl. (compared to £121.20 on Opodo) and London to Paris £69.50 incl. (compared to £78.20 on Opodo). Finding Expedia's Bargain Fares is more luck than judgement. According to InterActiveCorp which owns the website, they are not available very often. The website does not advertise Bargain Fares, nor can you search for them. It is luck when you pick a destination and your search result throws up a Bargain Fare. There are lots of restrictions on the fares, which are negotiated at the last minute by Expedia with the airlines. Most importantly, the airline you are flying with and the flight times are revealed only once you have completed your purchase. Sometimes the name of the airline is given before purchase, as with the London to Paris flight that we checked (Air France), but this is unusual. Mostly, you can only guess the airline and whether the flight will have a stop over or be a direct flight. You are only guaranteed a flight time between 6am and 10pm, tickets are non-refundable, non-transferable and cannot be cancelled or changed once purchased. Nor can Bargain Fares be purchased with flyer miles. Despite the restrictions, if you know your airports, airlines, and timetables, you can take an informed guess about your flight details. We thought that the heavily discounted London to Turin flight was probably a BA flight from Gatwick. If the airline's bookings have suffered over recent bad publicity, then it is logical to think it will be shifting tickets through bargain basement offers like Bargain



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Fares. The only way to find out was to purchase the ticket. We were right: a direct, scheduled, midday return flight with in-flight meal (maybe not) departure and return dates next week with BA from Gatwick to Turin for a total price of £73.20. Let's hope the airline has its check-in problems sorted out by then.

VERDICT

Online prices often seem to increase as travel departure dates approach. Unlike supermarkets that knock down the price of perishable goods near their sell by date, travel companies seem to prefer putting up prices for last minute bargain hunters. Expedia's Bargain Fares are a much better bet for late bookers, if you can find them.

At a glance

What is it?

travel booking website

Good

Cheaper than the cheapest flight offers for last minute bookings

Bad

Lots of restrictions, no advertising and no search on Expedia's website

Verdict

If you book lots of last minute trips, always check Expedia's website for Bargain Fares. You never know what you might find.

Price price dependent on holiday

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10