

Module 7: Booking Award Travel and Hotel Stays

Purpose of This Module

This module explains how to use your transferred points and miles to book flights and hotel stays for the Africa 2027 trip. It covers how to find award availability, avoid extra fees, and choose the best redemption options for your itinerary.

Understanding Award Availability

Award availability refers to how many seats or rooms an airline or hotel releases for points bookings. Availability changes constantly and can vary based on the route, season, and demand.

For example, premium cabins like business class may only release a few seats per flight, so flexibility and early planning are key.

When to Book

For international flights to Africa, book as early as possible — ideally ****11 to 12 months in advance****. Most airlines release award seats 330 to 355 days before departure.

Hotels can usually be booked with points ****10 to 12 months in advance****, but availability often opens up closer to your travel date. For high-demand areas like Cape Town and Zanzibar, book early to lock in preferred properties.

How to Search for Award Flights

1. Log in to your airline's website (e.g., American, Qatar, or British Airways).
2. Select the 'Book with Miles' or 'Use Points' option.
3. Enter your origin, destination, and preferred dates.
4. Use flexible date calendars to find cheaper or lower-mileage days.
5. Compare options among Oneworld partners — sometimes the same flight costs fewer miles through a different program.

Tip: Use sites like AwardHacker, Seats.Aero, or point.me to cross-check which programs offer the best rates.

Booking Hotels with Points

1. Log in to your hotel loyalty account (Marriott Bonvoy, Hilton Honors, or IHG One Rewards).
2. Search for your destination and select 'Use Points' or 'Points Redemption.'
3. Compare multiple hotels by category and nightly cost in points.
4. Look for free night awards or 5th-night-free promotions (Marriott offers one free night when booking five consecutive nights with points).
5. Always review taxes and fees — most are waived for points stays, but some resorts charge separate service or tourism fees.

Avoiding High Surcharges

Some airlines add large carrier-imposed fees or fuel surcharges, especially on British Airways and Iberia flights.

Ways to reduce these costs:

- Book through partners like American Airlines or Qatar Airways that limit or exclude fuel surcharges.
- Choose alternate routes with lower taxes (for example, starting in a nearby country).
- Avoid mixed-cabin awards where one leg is in business and one in economy — these can be overpriced.

Smart Redemption Strategies

To get the best value from your points:

- Focus on long-haul flights and premium cabins where cash fares are highest.
- Use hotel points for expensive cities like Cape Town and Zanzibar.
- Pay cash for short, inexpensive intra-Africa flights when point redemptions are poor.
- Use 'Miles + Cash' only when necessary — it often reduces value per point.

Booking for Family Members

Most loyalty programs allow you to book tickets or rooms for others as long as you are the account holder. Simply enter their name and passport details during checkout.

Some programs, like British Airways and Marriott, allow you to combine or share points with family accounts. This can simplify large redemptions when one person does not have enough points for a booking.

Tracking Confirmations and Expenses

Keep all booking confirmations in a dedicated folder labeled 'Africa 2027 Travel.' Record details in your Family Points Tracker:

- Airline or Hotel Name
- Date of Booking
- Points Used
- Taxes and Fees Paid
- Confirmation Number

This makes it easy to audit your redemptions later and stay organized across multiple programs.

Example Itinerary Bookings

Example 1: Qatar Airways Business Class JFK–DOH–CAI

- 70,000 Avios + \$150 taxes (Book through Qatar Privilege Club)

Example 2: Marriott Protea Hotel Cape Town Waterfront

- 30,000 points per night or 120,000 for four nights (plus one night free)

Example 3: Hilton Zanzibar Nungwi Beach Resort

- 44,000 points per night, cash price \$260, excellent 0.6 cent per point value.

Summary

Booking award travel and hotel stays is where all your planning pays off. When you confirm an award ticket or room using points, you are turning time and discipline into real savings.

The next module will cover how to track redemptions, protect your value, and prepare for upcoming devaluations or changes to loyalty programs.