

Individual vs. Group Airline Tickets

When planning air travel, one of the critical decisions to make is whether to book individual airline tickets or opt for group tickets. Both options have their unique advantages and considerations, and understanding the differences can help you make the best choice for your travel needs.



Individual Airline Tickets

Individual airline tickets are booked separately for each passenger. You must book individual tickets if you have less than 10 passengers. If you have 10+ people in your group, but they are traveling at different times or from a variety of airports, you can choose individual tickets.

But, keep in mind that for individual tickets, you need to have final payment as well as travelers' names, dates of birth, and genders at the time of booking. Individual ticket prices are always changing as seats are purchased. So, if you don't purchase the tickets the same day you receive the quote, the price is likely to change.

Pros

- **Flexibility:** Travelers have the freedom to choose flights that best fit their own schedules/preferences.
- **Deals and Offers:** More opportunities to utilize special offers, promotions, or last-minute deals available to solo travelers.
- **Loyalty Benefits:** Individuals can use their airline loyalty programs to earn points/miles, and potentially access upgrades.
- **Private Contracts for Individuals:** FTI has 30+ missionary/humanitarian contracts that offer various benefits, including reduced costs for economy and business classes, additional baggage, half roundtrips for one-ways, and flexible terms.

Cons

- **Coordination Challenges:** If several people are traveling together, coordinating different itineraries can be difficult. It may also be difficult to find seats next to your travel companions, as seat selection on individual tickets might be limited by availability.
- **Potentially Higher Costs:** Without the bulk discount of group rates, individual tickets might end up costing more per person, especially if you try to purchase too close to your departure date.
- **Higher Risk:** Tickets are issued in the name of the traveler and most of the time cannot be changed. If someone drops from your group, the fare cannot be reused for another participant.

Group Airline Tickets

Group airline tickets are designed for groups of 10 or more travelers flying together on the same itinerary.

How do Group Bookings Work?

Group space can be reserved up to 11 months in advance of your return date, locking in the base fare available on that date. If you reserve your seats early, you have a better chance of getting the best rate because only a certain percentage of seats on each flight are reserved for group bookings, and the airlines work on supply and demand.



Some airlines allow passengers to originate from different airports and still be counted as part of the group booking, and some also allow participants to travel on slightly different dates from the group. If you think you may have group members who need different flights, let us know when you send in your initial request, as that will help us find the airline best able to fit your group's needs.

Pros

- **Cost-Effective:** Airlines often provide discounts for bulk bookings, which can reduce the overall cost per ticket. Plus, you can lock in low rates (often including fuel) by booking early.
- **Flexible Payment Options:** Some airlines allow group bookings to be held with a deposit, with full payment due closer to the departure date. The deposit amount varies depending on the carrier and is typically due within two weeks.
- **Simplified Planning:** Booking as a group makes the organization easier as everyone's on the same itinerary. Groups are more likely to stay together if a schedule change occurs.
- **Reserve Extra Seats:** You don't need to know the exact number of seats you'll be using until the Utilization Date (about 100 days prior to departure). The passenger count may be reduced prior to the Utilization Date without penalty; the deposits for those reduced seats will be applied to the final balance.
- **Time to Recruit & Fundraise:** You'll know your cost in advance, so you can advertise accurate prices to group members. Though you can hold confirmed space up to 11 months in advance, traveler's names and final payments aren't needed until about 2 months before travel.
- **Name Changes:** If a passenger is no longer able to travel, many airlines will allow a name change even after ticketing – for a fee.

Cons

- **Less Flexibility:** Typically, everyone will need to commit to the same flight times and dates, which might not work for some members of the group.



- **Complex Changes:** Making changes to the dates of a group booking can be more cumbersome and may incur higher fees than individual tickets.
- **Must have at least 10 passengers:** If you end up reducing your number of tickets to less than 10 passengers, you can lose all deposits paid and any special group fares that were negotiated on your behalf with the airline. The group may also be responsible for an additional fee for not honoring the group contract fare.

When Group Tickets Make the Most Sense

Group airline tickets can be particularly beneficial in these scenarios: educational trips, corporate events, sport team travel, humanitarian missions, religious pilgrimages, group vacations, etc.

Making the Right Choice



It is important to note that comparing an individual fare to a group fare is not as simple as one may think. Many fail to realize that though the fare for one ticket on a website may be significantly less than what the group is paying, that price is only for one ticket – not 20 tickets. In the end, the cost for the entire group is far less than if each individual passenger purchased separately.

The decision between individual and group airline tickets ultimately depends on the size of your party, the nature of your trip, and your priorities in terms of cost, flexibility, and convenience. For solo travelers or small groups, individual tickets offer the freedom to tailor travel plans to personal needs. In contrast, group tickets can provide significant savings and benefits for larger parties willing to plan ahead and travel together.

Other Benefits of Working with FTI

At FTI, we support you throughout the planning process.

Experienced Advisors: All our customers are assigned a dedicated individual or group advisor to offer advice and help plan the trip.

Access to Ubi: Ubi, our free online tool, gives 24/7 access to trip documents such as: itineraries, e-tickets, and travel vouchers in addition to your contract, statement, and links to travel resources.

24/7 Emergency Help: If a passenger ticketed by FTI is experiencing a travel emergency outside of business hours, an advisor can be reached at any time of day through our after-hours emergency helpline.

Fellowship Travel looks forward to booking your next trip – whether you opt for group or individual tickets!