



By the time all the taxes, fuel fees and other add-ons were computed, the actual cost was \$136 each way. We also booked a well-located Los Angeles hotel at the advertised special discount price of \$129 per night. With local taxes and other add-ons, the actual cost was \$179 per night.

We can certainly sympathize with airlines and hotels for trying to make their fees sound attractive in their ads, and the fact that the heavy extra charges are not their fault. But, now the airlines are making it worse by piling on ridiculous extra fees, hoping no one will notice.

Applying more smoke and mirrors, the airlines apply a fancy name to it: à la carte pricing. Like a French restaurant menu, where the buttered snails are extra. In addition to the required heavier fees for heavier luggage, passengers may choose from an ever-growing menu of formerly free items.

Blankets, pillows, bags of peanuts, soft drinks, tea, coffee, wi-fi and much more. More favorably located seats are now higher priced. Early boarding is now extra. Also, in the confusion of booking flights, there may be added charges if you make your reservation by phone instead of on the internet.

And remember all those frequent flyer points you earned for a free trip? Not only do they require many more paid flights to get them, but for each free flight you may have to pay an extra fee of from \$50 to \$250. We recently turned in frequent flyer points for a cross-country flight, but making reservations seemed to suddenly run into trouble.

No matter what flight we tried to book, it was all sold out. Finally, the airlines rep confessed that only a few seats on each flight were allowed for frequent flyer points, and suggested there were

some uncrowded red eye (late, late night) flights we could book. Of course, instead of non-stop, they included several changes of planes en route.

Air passengers, already loaded down with oppressive security check-ins and sardine-can seating in the sky, are getting more and more alienated by sneaky extra charges the airlines are imposing. What are the former friendly-skies companies doing about it? Last we heard they're considering installing pay toilets on aircraft.