

SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

Those who are frequent fliers to the first degree can get a lot more out of their air mileage – not through one’s credit card, per se, but through airline philanthropy and the many wonderful charities and causes that major airlines support. Gray Keller

You are blessed. You fly in style all over the world for business, pleasure and even philanthropic and humanitarian purposes. You enjoy flying well and traveling light. You’ve perfected this to an art – carry on is only ever your Louis bag or Prada, which fits nicely in the overhead compartment, or within the private closet of your intimate onboard suite. You know the importance of showing up refreshed, rejuvenated and ready to hit the town in style. But there is another side to you as well; it is the side of compassion, the side of charity and the side of giving back to the community.

Whether this community is caught up in the hustle and bustle of India, under the vast African sky, or simply down a dusty road where villagers appear to live at a much slower pace of life, you’ve experienced a place where poverty seems to be everywhere and yet a richness of wealth lives within the smiles of women and children who barely scrape by on a dollar or two a day. Within these paradoxical moments of travel, the lyrics to *Somewhere Over The Rainbow* start dancing in your head and you find yourself thinking about how you can make a difference.

Communicating through their in-flight magazines, this charitable desire is often highlighted by airlines such as Qatar, Lufthansa, Virgin, Emirates, and Singapore, to name but a few. These elite air carriers highlight specific charities; for example, Qatar collects in-flight donations for the Educate A Child program, which seeks to teach children around the globe who have been denied their fundamental right to learning.

Lufthansa also cares for children’s education, alongside many other philanthropic projects. Their Paperless Helping campaign allows Lufthansa’s passengers the opportunity to check-in electronically while saving paper that would otherwise be printed for boarding passes. As a result, for every paperless check-in, Lufthansa donates a piece of paper for schoolbooks, which means thousands of books can be donated every month to schools in places such as Ghana. In addition to travelers contributing money or participating in various programs, airlines also realize that money alone is not enough. Often it is people who are most needed, in a hands-on voluntary capacity. Virgin Atlantic

creates opportunities for its Flying Gold Club travelers to actually roll up their sleeves and go on a mission to serve others. These global travelers contribute their knowledge, passion and time as they take on a more holistic approach to donations.

In addition, one can participate through The Emirates Airline Foundation by donating money and/or miles, which the Foundation explains, “aims to improve the quality of life for children, regardless of geographical political, or religious boundaries, and to help them maintain or improve their human dignity.” Through healthcare, housing, food and education, The Emirates Foundation provides sponsorships for doctors travelling on medical missions. By visiting their website you can view photos, projects and places where ‘philanthropic flying’ truly does make a difference, from Bangladesh to India, reaching many other parts of the world. You can also read up on current transformational life stories, where 95 percent of all donations go directly to the projects they support.

Finding the right charity initiative is easier than you might have thought. Since most airlines offer in-flight Wi-Fi, you can search many charities and philanthropic causes even as you fly. Singapore offers a vast array of choices, from the opera to the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, for not all charity has to be focused solely on developing world issues. After all, if that music is still dancing in your head, then perhaps supporting the arts is the path for you.

And so, as the jet engines start roaring, you find yourself off on another great adventure. But this time, your adventure is more significant, strategic, and solely for the purpose of making the world a better place – or trying to, at the very least. Yes, you agree that money is only a portion of the philanthropic pie, and people like you must make up another slice.

Whether you desire to give money, miles, or make meaningful memories by participating hands-on, you can be more than just a traveler by taking part in the charitable side of aviation. So wherever you are traveling to next, remember to engage your heart and empower others, because “Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high” your actions really are making a difference.



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