

BEST FREQUENT FLYER AND FREQUENT GUEST PROGRAMS CHOSEN IN THE 18TH ANNUAL FREDDIE AWARDS

COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO. - In a ceremony celebrating the 25th anniversary of frequent flyer programs, Southwest Airlines Rapid Rewards was named frequent flyer Program of the Year, and InterContinental Hotels Group Priority Club Rewards took top honors among hotel programs at the 18th Annual Freddie Awards on Thursday.

Internationally, the TAP Portugal Victoria program took top honors in the Europe/Middle East/Africa region, and Singapore Airlines KrisFlyer earned first place in the Asia/Pacific region.

This year's ceremony marked the 25th anniversary of the creation of the modern frequent flyer program. American Airlines launched its AAdvantage program on May 1, 1981, with United Airlines unveiling its Mileage Plus program just days later. By the end of the year, both Delta Air Lines and Northwest Airlines (Northwest Orient, at the time) had followed suit. All four carriers were honored last night for their contributions to loyalty marketing.

Over 390,000 frequent travelers worldwide cast ballots to determine the winners. The awards represent excellence in frequent travel programs and rate the best frequent flyer and frequent guest programs in eight different categories: Program of the Year, Best Award, Best Bonus Promotion, Best Web Site, Best Elite-Level Program, Best Member Communications, Best Award Redemption and Best Customer Service. The Best Affinity Credit Card was also chosen. Voters were permitted to vote for programs in one of three global regions: Americas, Europe/Middle East/Africa, and Asia/Pacific.

Starwood Preferred Guest, which had been named hotel Program of the Year for seven straight years, maintained the top spot in the Asia/Pacific region. IHG Priority Club Rewards usurped first place in the Americas, and Marriott Rewards claimed top honors in Europe/Middle East/Africa.

Southwest Rapid Rewards reclaimed Program-of-the-Year honors in the Americas, after having given ground to Alaska Airlines Mileage Plan for three years straight. The Dallas-based program also won first place in the Best Award, Best Bonus, Best Web Site, and Best Award Redemption categories this year.

Club Rewards from Diners Club was named top Americas credit card for the ninth consecutive year, and Alaska Airlines Mileage Plan took home the award for Best Elite-Level Program-Americas.

The awards were announced yesterday by InsideFlyer Editor Randy Petersen during a ceremony at the Four Points by Sheraton LAX in Los Angeles. Over 300 airline, hotel and credit card representatives attended the ceremony, along with several members of the voting public.

Mr. Petersen also presented an "Industry Impact" award to Air Canada Aeroplan, noting that its decision to leverage the asset of loyalty marketing via an initial public offering "will serve as a financial milestone for other frequent flyer programs in the years to come."

Middle Eastern programs were also big winners on the night, with Emirates Airlines Skywards, Qatar Airways Privilege Club, and Gulf Air Frequent flyer claiming five awards collectively. India's Jet Airways Jet Privilege, which last year had won an Industry Impact Freddie for pioneering a means by which members may qualify for elite status, won two more awards last night in the Asia/Pacific region - Best Bonus and Best Customer Service.

The Freddie Awards honor quality, not quantity. Winners are determined based on the overall merits of each program as reflected in “Value Voting.” Value Voting asks the voter to assign a number between one and 10 to the program for which he or she votes. To be eligible to win a Freddie Award, however, a program must receive at least one percent of the popular vote.

The awards are named after the late Sir Freddie Laker, who attracted fame (and a knighthood in the United Kingdom) for pioneering low-cost air travel across the Atlantic in the 1970s.

This year, InsideFlyer magazine partnered with Executive Travel SkyGuide, Points.com, Priority Pass, Awards For Mortgage And Real Estate, and BookingBuddy.com to present the event for the 18th consecutive year.

THIS YEAR’S WINNERS ARE:

Program of the Year

Americas Airline: Southwest Rapid Rewards
Europe/Middle East/Africa Airline: TAP Portugal Victoria
Asia/Pacific Airline: Singapore KrisFlyer
Americas Hotel: IHG Priority Club Rewards
Europe/Middle East/Africa Hotel: Marriott Rewards
Asia/Pacific Hotel: Starwood Preferred Guest

Best Award

Americas Airline: Southwest Rapid Rewards
Europe/Middle East/Africa Airline: SN Brussels Privilege
Asia/Pacific Airline: Emirates Skywards
Americas Hotel: IHG Priority Club Rewards
Europe/Middle East/Africa Hotel: Marriott Rewards
Asia/Pacific Hotel: Marriott Rewards

Best Bonus Promotion

Americas Airline: Southwest Rapid Rewards
Europe/Middle East/Africa Airline: Qatar Privilege Club
Asia/Pacific Airline: Jet Airways Jet Privilege
Americas Hotel: IHG Priority Club Rewards
Europe/Middle East/Africa Hotel: Starwood Preferred Guest
Asia/Pacific Hotel: Starwood Preferred Guest

Best Web Site

Americas Airline: Southwest Rapid Rewards
Europe/Middle East/Africa Airline: Aeroflot Bonus
Asia/Pacific Airline: Qatar Privilege Club
Americas Hotel: IHG Priority Club Rewards
Europe/Middle East/Africa Hotel: Marriott Rewards
Asia/Pacific Hotel: Hyatt Gold Passport

Best Elite-Level

Americas Airline: Alaska Airlines Mileage Plan

Europe/Middle East/Africa Airline: Virgin Atlantic flying club

Asia/Pacific Airline: Qatar Privilege Club

Americas Hotel: Marriott Rewards

Europe/Middle East/Africa Hotel: Marriott Rewards

Asia/Pacific Hotel: Hyatt Gold Passport

Best Member Communications

Americas Airline: Alaska Airlines Mileage Plan

Europe/Middle East/Africa Airline: TAP Portugal Victoria

Asia/Pacific Airline: Gulf Air Frequent flyer

Americas Hotel: IHG Priority Club Rewards

Europe/Middle East/Africa Hotel: IHG Priority Club Rewards

Asia/Pacific Hotel: IHG Priority Club Rewards

Best Award Redemption

Americas Airline: Southwest Rapid Rewards

Europe/Middle East/Africa Airline: TAP Portugal Victoria

Asia/Pacific Airline: Virgin Blue Velocity

Americas Hotel: Starwood Preferred Guest

Europe/Middle East/Africa Hotel: Starwood Preferred Guest

Asia/Pacific Hotel: Starwood Preferred Guest

Best Customer Service

Americas Airline: Midwest Airlines Midwest Miles

Europe/Middle East/Africa Airline: SN Brussels Airlines Privilege

Asia/Pacific Airline: Jet Airways Jet Privilege

Americas Hotel: Marriott Rewards

Europe/Middle East/Africa Hotel: Marriott Rewards

Asia/Pacific Hotel: Starwood Preferred Guest

Best Affinity Credit Card

Americas: Diners Club Club Rewards

Europe/Middle East/Africa: SN Brussels Airlines Privilege American Express

Asia/Pacific: American Express Membership Rewards

Industry Impact Award

Air Canada Aeroplan

Lifetime Achievement Award

American AAdvantage

Delta Frequent Flyer/SkyMiles

Northwest WorldPerks

United Mileage Plus