

5 Ways to Make Back the American Express Platinum Annual Fee



David Holmes, 2014-09-10

Normally I speak and write about network security. Because of that, I frequently get called to speak at conferences, as well as meet customers all around the world. So, I travel all the time and dabble in the black arts of frequent-flier-mile gaming and credit-card shuffling.

For years, I was tempted to get the American Express Platinum card, but was always scared off by the \$450 annual fee. That's a lot of Starbucks. Heck, that amount is half the cost of a round-trip ticket to London. But I talked myself into it, and after living with the card for a couple of years, I've figured out how to make sure that I get at least that amount of value out of it.

Here are 5 ways you can earn back that \$450 annual fee by recouping costs that might not normally be covered under business travel.

Number 1: \$100 back on your Global Entry application fee

Global Entry is a United States border protection program that lets members bypass immigration lines when flying into the U.S. I recently flew into Newark from Frankfurt, and instead of having to wait 45 minutes in the immigration line, I walked to the Global Entry kiosk, scanned my fingerprints and was through in less than a minute.



The Global Entry application costs \$100, but American Express will credit your Platinum account if you pay for it with your card. Global Entry is a lifetime membership, so this benefit is only good once. However, there are benefits to the Golden Entry program that will unfold in year two.

American Express Platinum Annual Fee	\$450.00
Global Entry Fee Reimbursement	-100.00
Remainder	350.00

Number 2: Save \$85 with TSA PreCheck

An automatic side-effect of your Global Entry application is that you get enrolled into the TSA PreCheck program. This means that in many domestic airports, you go through the PreCheck security screening line (which is often very, very short) and you can keep your belt, shoes and jacket on. At my home airport in Denver, I am literally through security in less than 2 minutes on most days. Be aware that not all airlines and not all airports participate with the TSA PreCheck program. See [here](#) for the definitive list of those that do.

Something was up with [@TSA #PreCheck](#) at DIA today. It took 3.5 minutes instead of the usual 60 seconds to get through :)

— David Holmes (@dholmesf5) [September 15, 2014](#)

TSA strives to keep your passage through security at 5 minutes or less. The time you save with PreCheck will quickly translate into money somewhere. When you enroll in Global Entry, you are automatically enrolled to TSA PreCheck. But

even if you choose not to enroll in Global Entry, you can just join TSA PreCheck program, and American Express will credit your Platinum card the \$85 application fee.

Number 3: \$200 reimbursement on airline fees

When you apply for your Platinum card, you can designate your preferred airline. Then when flying on that airline, if you should incur personal fees (such as overweight luggage or extra bags), simply pay with your Platinum card and these fees will be credited up to \$200, by American Express. On a trip to Europe last winter, I picked up so many souvenirs that my suitcase exceeded the 50 pound limit. The \$100 charge to fly transatlantic with overweight luggage was paid for by American Express.

American Express Platinum Annual Fee	\$450.00
Global Entry Fee Reimbursement	-100.00
Airline Incidental Fee Reimbursement	-200.00
Remainder	150.00

Number 4: \$125 Savings on PriorityPass Select Lounge Access

One of the benefits that comes with the Platinum card is membership in the Priority Pass Select program. The Select membership, though, is of limited value. It gets you access to several hundred second-class airport lounges around the world. I say second-class because most of the premier lounges don't accept it. But many airports have both premier and second class lounges and most of the latter will take it. And many of these lounges have decent Wi-Fi, free drinks, and hot food in them.

The Priority Pass [website](#) will tell you which lounges accept the Select card and which do not. For example, here's the entry for a United Club which **does not** accept the Select card.

Lounge Information

Airport: Melbourne - International (MEL), Terminal 2 (International)

Lounge: UNITED CLUB

Location: Airside - Level 1, Satellite Area. The Lounge is only available to passengers with a valid boarding card for a flight departing from the same terminal.

Opening Hours: 08:15 - 10:40 & 18:00 - 20:30 Monday, Thursday & Saturday. 08:15 - 10:40 Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday & Sunday. Hours may vary according to flight schedules.

Conditions: International (T2) flights only - Limited to six guests per cardholder - Cardholder must be 18 years of age or older - Children under 2 years are admitted free - Alcoholic drinks are only available to passengers 21 years of age or older - Dress code applicable - Non-smoking.

Note: Members holding a Priority Pass Select membership card and Priority Pass cardholders in the U.S. that receive their membership through a U.S. financial institution will not be allowed access to this Lounge.

Lounge Facilities:

But I did recently use the card to get access to lounges in Frankfurt and Johannesburg.

The entrance fee for these lounges usually around \$25. If you visited five of these lounges throughout the year, you could recoup \$125. Obviously, if you visit more, you can save more.

American Express Platinum Annual Fee	\$450.00
Global Entry Fee Re-imbusement	-100.00
Airline Incidental Fee Re-imbusement	-200.00
5 visits to Priority Pass Select Lounges	-125.00
Remainder	25.00

Number 5: \$26 in per diem meals in Priority Pass Lounges

As I just mentioned, many of the Priority Pass lounges have free food in them: sliders, tea sandwiches, fruit, chips and yogurt. It's not gourmet, but many times it is a light lunch that is all you were looking for.



How does this help you make money back? Suppose you eat such a lunch in the San Jose United Club lounge, and then claim your travel account's per diem. If your lunch per diem is \$13, then do this twice in a year and make back \$26. Now you're ahead by a dollar!

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Global Entry Fee Re-imbursement	-100.00
Airline Incidental Fee Re-imbursement	-200.00
5 visits to Priority Pass Select Lounges	-125.00
Two Lunches in Lounges	-26.00
Total	+1.00

Other Benefits

There are other benefits in the Platinum plan, but I personally haven't taken advantage of them. Three of the ones on [the list](#) look interesting:

- The associated Boingo Hotspot program would help with bad Airport Wi-Fi.
- Automatic gold membership in the [Starwood Hotels program](#) could be handy for Sheraton and Westin.
- And, of course, there is a discount for premium private jets, if that's your thing

So there you have it! Five ways to make back that American Express Platinum Card annual fee. If you needed justification to get the card, I hope this helps. After you get the card and start using it, I'd love to hear any feedback you might have. Leave a comment below if you can add another tip, and see you in the lounge.

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