What are bereavement fares, and how do you book one?

Key facts

- Only a small group of carriers still publish a bereavement fare: Delta, Alaska, Air Canada, WestJet, and Hawaiian for interisland travel (Delta, Alaska Airlines, Air Canada, checked 2026-09-19).
- American Airlines and Southwest say directly that they do not offer bereavement or emergency fares (Southwest Airlines, American Airlines, checked 2026-09-19).
- United dropped its bereavement discount fare on March 14, 2014, and now handles a family death through case-by-case customer service exceptions instead (AFAR, checked 2026-09-19).
- Delta requires travel to begin within 7 days of the death or imminent death, and the ticket cannot be bought on delta.com, only by phone or Fly Delta app messaging (Delta Air Lines, checked 2026-09-19).
- Real savings are often modest: industry reporting puts typical bereavement discounts around 5 to 25 percent off the lowest available fare (AFAR, checked 2026-09-19).
- A separate federal right helps regardless of bereavement status: a ticket bought 7 or more days before departure can be held or cancelled free for 24 hours (US Department of Transportation, checked 2026-09-19).
- Airlines offering a bereavement fare still waive ticketing penalties, but fare differences and baggage fees usually apply (Delta Air Lines, checked 2026-09-19).

Step-by-step checklist

- [ ] Confirm your relationship to the person fits the airline's definition of immediate family
- [ ] Check whether your airline currently publishes a bereavement fare using the table above
- [ ] Call the airline's reservations line; do not try to book a bereavement fare online
- [ ] Have the funeral home's or hospital's name, address and phone number ready
- [ ] Ask the agent to compare the bereavement fare with the lowest published fare on that flight
- [ ] Confirm the travel timing window before you commit, since it varies by airline
- [ ] Book within the window, then send any requested documentation by the airline's deadline
- [ ] Keep a copy of the confirmation and any documentation you send, in case of a dispute