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US BARGAINS IN THE AIR AS FLIGHT PRICES FALL

AIRFARE prices to the United States have fallen to a nine-month low.

Flight Centre Limited marketing executive general manager Colin Bowman said a new wave of discounting was underway on the Los Angeles route, with return fares from Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane currently available from \$994, \$1065 and \$1078 respectively.

Mr Bowman said the fares were the cheapest Flight Centre had advertised since April 2011 and were comparable to some offers that were available during the Global Financial Crisis.

"V Australia sparked a price war on the Pacific route in December 2008 when it offered return fares to LA from Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne for \$1199," he said.

"Prices then briefly fell to levels that were considered unsustainable, before increasing gradually during 2010 and 2011.

"The fares that are available now are again hovering around the \$1000 mark and are 10-17% cheaper than the offers that proved so popular in late 2008, which is great news for travellers.

"The offers do, however, typically expire during the next few weeks, so it's important to book as soon as possible if you hope to take advantage of the current specials."

The \$994 fare from Melbourne is with United Airlines, while the Brisbane and Sydney fares are with Air New Zealand.

Flight Centre's records show that the cheapest return fares to Los Angeles were typically priced from \$1500 to \$1900, before V Australia and Delta launched Trans Pacific services.

Prices fell as low as \$800-\$900 during the GFC as the new airlines and the incumbent carriers competed aggressively for marketshare.

As expected, fares increased gradually during 2010 and 2011, with the cheapest advertised prices reaching \$1300 late last year.

"By historical standards, the fares that are available today are incredible value," Mr Bowman said.

"For example, on January 27, 2007, the cheapest advertised fare from Sydney to LA cost \$1889.

"On January 27 this year – five years later – the cheapest advertised fare was 44% cheaper.

"These discounted fares, coupled with the strong Aussie dollar, means the US is an increasingly attractive destination for Australian holidaymakers."

ENDS: Media enquiries to Haydn Long 0418 750 454, January 31, 2012