

United Airlines Apollo Training Center: A Hotshot Travel Agent's Fast Track to Certification

By the time I landed at the **United Airlines Apollo Training Center**, I was already a rising star in the travel industry. My agency saw potential in me and needed me to be officially certified, so they sent me off for a **two-week intensive course**—on their dime. Not only did they cover my training, but they also paid for my time off work. That's how I became a fully registered **International Air Transport Association (IATA) travel agent**.

Apollo: The Backbone of Airline Reservations

For those unfamiliar, **Apollo** was one of the major **computer reservation systems (CRS)** used by airlines and travel agencies back in the day. It was a **Global Distribution System (GDS)**, similar to Sabre and Amadeus, that allowed agents to book flights, hotels, and rental cars in a pre-internet world. Think of it as a command-line interface for the travel industry—**no fancy graphics, just raw text-based power**.

This was an era when **travel agencies ruled**. Booking a flight wasn't as easy as a few taps on a smartphone. Instead, you had to call a travel agent, who would type cryptic commands into a terminal to **hunt down flights, fares, and availability**. The fastest and most knowledgeable agents got the best deals for their clients. And I was damn good at it.

A Glimpse into the Training

The Apollo Training Center wasn't just a classroom—it was a **miniature airline operations hub**, filled with row after row of computer terminals where we **practiced real-world booking scenarios**. We drilled everything from **complex multi-city itineraries to last-minute rebookings**, mastering fare structures and the art of finding hidden deals.

It was during this training that I started **developing an idea ahead of its time**. If I could use Apollo to book flights, why couldn't my **corporate clients** do the same without calling me? I envisioned an **automated reservation system**—something that would let customers search and book flights on their own.

At the time, this was just a wild concept. The internet wasn't yet the commercial juggernaut it would become, and **online booking was a decade away from becoming mainstream**. But I saw the potential.

A Certification That Opened Doors

After two weeks of immersion in Apollo, I **earned my official certification** and became a fully accredited IATA travel agent. This credential gave me access to airline fares, ticketing capabilities, and industry benefits that only a handful of agents had. It also gave me **serious credibility**—clients trusted that I could navigate the complex world of travel logistics like a pro.

More importantly, the experience reinforced my belief that **technology would revolutionize travel**. Years later, when online travel agencies like Expedia and Travelocity took over, I knew I had been onto something.

Legacy of the Apollo Training Center

United Airlines eventually phased out Apollo, selling it off to Galileo (which later became part of Travelport). Today, the travel industry operates on a completely different landscape—one where airlines push direct sales and traditional travel agencies are far less dominant.

But back then, Apollo was **the gold standard**, and mastering it was like holding the keys to the kingdom. My time at the **United Airlines Apollo Training Center** wasn't just a training course—it was an inside look at an industry on the cusp of transformation.

And for me, it was just the beginning of a long and **innovative** career in travel.