



# Come fly with me...

Discerning travellers looking for flexibility and a personal touch are choosing private

**W**ith more and more people living a time-stretched day-to-day existence, faced with ongoing security issues and delays at airports, it's no surprise private air travel is becoming an increasingly popular option.

Jamie Martin, director of corporate development for Hunt & Palmer, says: "With stringent security measures on scheduled flights, passengers are noticing the time constraints and reduced luggage allowances more than ever. So it's no wonder that discerning travellers are choosing to take advantage of the flexibility offered by private jet travel for leisure as well as business."

A report by Eurocontrol (the European organisation for the safety of air navigation) last year showed a rise of almost 9% in private air travel in 2005 – almost 7% of the 9.2 million flights in Europe were on private executive jets. Over in the US, it's an even bigger picture. Douglas Gollan, president and editor-in-chief of *Elite Traveler* magazine – dedicated to those who regularly travel by private aircraft – says: "There are approximately 30,000 private jets operating world-

wide and about 60% of those are based in the US. And this will only grow – Honeywell projects 15,000 more private jets will be delivered between now and 2015. Figures from the US Federal Aviation Administration project growth of 300% in the next decade. Travellers with this new private jet lifestyle are prepared to do whatever they can to avoid commercial air travel."

Private jet travel suits busy execs and the growing band of high-net worth individuals who want to travel privately for both leisure and business. Gavin Copus, passenger sales manager, Air Charter Service, says for many company chiefs, jets act as a "time machine" giving them back hours spent on commercial aircraft. But he adds the leisure market is definitely growing too. "For a family of four, plus grandparents, plus nanny, it works out cheaper than flying everyone business class."

According to George Galanopoulos, managing director of UK private jet operator London Executive Aviation (LEA): "We have seen clear and growing demand for larger aircraft. This has been one of the notable trends over the past 12 months." LEA

## Private jet firms

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air travel. By April Hutchinson

has just bought a second 13-passenger Legacy for Europe/Middle East routes.

Companies such as Jeffersons, Avolus and Club328 have tapped into a market for those for whom private air travel is becoming something of a lifestyle choice. All three have moved beyond chartering of jets, organising everything from a chauffeur service to the jet, lunch at a top restaurant to hotel stays, and all three also offer yacht charter. Justine Agnelli, co-founder of Avolus, says business is booming: "We have had lots of requests from agents and many have told us that until fairly recently, they would sell a private jet trip once every two to three months, now that's more like one or two bookings a month."

Operators such as ITC Classics and Elegant Resorts are working more with private jet firms too. David Atkin, business development manager for Elegant Resorts, says: "We work with Hunt & Palmer, Starflight and Air Partner and are finding that a growing number of clients are looking to private jets as an alternative to scheduled air travel. Some clients also look to private jets for special occasions, others for small incentive groups. The beauty is that the jet is as flexible as the client needs it to be."

## Jeffersons

**Who are they:** Jeffersons is based in London and was started in 2002 by Robin Fawcett, managing director. It stakes a claim as "the only UK tour operator to specialise in private jet holidays", offering inclusive luxury holidays within Europe using private jets as the sole means of air transportation and some of the finest hotels in the world. Celebration packages combine private jet travel with a dinner or lunch at a choice of Michelin-starred restaurants, with wine tours or Grand Prix tickets.

**What's new:** Ski short breaks by private jet and yachting in the Med. Upon arrival at the destination, a limousine, or helicopter whisk guests to the yacht.

**Client fit:** Client profile is 35-plus people who are affluent but not mega-wealthy. Jeffersons says 60% of clients seek a luxury holiday for an important celebration, and 40% are more affluent and have selected Jeffersons as their upscale holiday company of choice.

**Key destinations:** Throughout Europe and down to Marrakech, but most popular countries are France and Italy, particularly Reims and Venice.

**What the jets offer:** Jeffersons does not have its own jets – the company regularly charters Citation CJ1 (four seats), Raytheon Premier 1 (six seats), Learjet 45 and Citation Excel (both eight seats) aircraft. Each flight includes provision of hamper containing luxury foods and chilled champagne.

**Contact:** 0870 850 8181, [www.jeffersons.com](http://www.jeffersons.com)

**Price:** A one-day visit to Champagne by private jet from Farnborough costs from £1,556 per person (based on six passengers in a Raytheon Premier 1) and includes private tasting at a champagne house and lunch at the two Michelin-starred Les Crayeres. Yachting breaks from £3,510 per person.

**Recommended by:** "This product is perfect for special occasions. I booked Jeffersons for a wife who wanted to surprise her husband for his 70th birthday by taking him to Bruges for a gourmet lunch. Jeffersons arranged for a Mercedes pick-up from their home and took them to Farnborough. After an excellent lunch in Bruges and a short canal trip, the clients embarked on their return journey and the chauffeur took them home again. The couple are now planning a longer trip to Italy with Jeffersons to celebrate the wife's 70th birthday and their anniversary."

*Carolyn Lodge, managing director, Carolyn Lodge Travel*

