



PHOTOGRAPH: Netjets Europe

» with the pilot over the headset. Quite what air traffic control is making of the invitation to picnic on a Riva is hard to say.

Villa Feltrinelli was Mussolini's home for the last two years of World War II. When Il Duce was there under luxurious house arrest his SS guards mounted an anti-aircraft gun on the roof to repel rescuers. No sign of it now, but the gardeners are securing urns as we set down in the park. If Feltrinelli, a sumptuous

lakeside folly with *Belle-Époque* furnishings and Michelin-starred cooking, is the financial community's most stylish escape, then helicoptering in is certainly the way to arrive.

Is the extravagance justified? For six or more flying together, the cost can be comparable to business class. With the hotel packaged in, the price seems less troubling still. "Businessmen can't afford the delays and top-end holidaymakers don't want to get their

AVOLUS

is the only company to charter private jets, helicopters, yachts and limos so you have only one point of contact and one invoice even if you need to use all four in one trip. All vehicles can be as luxurious as you want (Avolus outsources all transportation) and the company can organise in-flight chefs. It has even been known to fly pampered pooches as the sole passengers on transatlantic flights. avolus.com

NETJETS EUROPE

offers a variety of schemes, depending on what you need. The Owner Programme, based on the concept of fractional ownership, allows Owners to buy a share of an aircraft equal to the anticipated number of hours of flying each year – starting with as little as 1/16th of an aircraft (50 hours). The Private Jet Card allows a private user 25 hours of flying time, with aircraft available on just 24 hours' notice, from 131,000 euros. netjetseurope.com

BLINK

calls itself Europe's first "air-taxi service". It flies from more than 600 airports, and you simply pay per use (no contract or monthly fees) but the further ahead you book, the cheaper it is. flyblink.com

LASTMINUTEJET.COM

is a scheme where members can take advantage of unbooked private jets, saving up to 50% on the normal price. A short flight from London to Paris on a small/light cabin aircraft (seats five to seven) would typically cost £4,000 one-way. The lastminutejet.com saving would be at least £2,000. lastminutejet.com

JEFFERSONS PRIVATE JET HOLIDAYS

- A private jet two-day holiday for four to the 18th Century Château de Curzay in the Loire Valley costs £2,498 per person and includes return flights in a Jeffersons Citation Jet, champagne, soft drinks and a Jeffersons hamper on board, limousine transfer, one night in a deluxe suite, dégustation dinner menu, breakfast and a Jeffersons travel portfolio (based on departures from Luton until Sept 2008).

- A private jet 10-night honeymoon to the exclusive North Island, Seychelles – including flights by Gulfstream G550, private helicopter transfers from Mahe to North Island, 10 nights in a Presidential Villa with private butler, all food and drink, scuba diving courses and activities, sea kayaking, half-day deep sea fishing, an island 'buggy' and mountain bikes – costs from £129,995 per person.

020 8746 2496; jeffersons.com

For six or more flying together, the **cost** of a **private jet** can be comparable to **business class**

trips off on the wrong note," says Robin. "It is not that security is less tight when flying private, simply that six passengers take a lot less time to process than two hundred."

The two nights the others are staying is nowhere near long enough for Sarah and me. So we miss out on the private jet back – and on the helicopter – reverting to Ryanair, a salutary experience.

Once you have flown private you never want to be wafted in from paradise any other way. Particularly not into Luton. ■

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