

Happy landings

This year PrivatAir celebrates its 30th birthday. We look back on a 30-year history that's taken the private aviation industry by storm and made PrivatAir one of the best in the business

PRIVATAIR HAS COME a long way since its inception in 1977. Originally starting out as the corporate aircraft fleet of the Latsis Group, a global conglomerate whose operations extend from oil tankers to luxury yachts, banking to construction, the airline soon became a firm favourite with high-profile connoisseurs of taste and discretion. Royalty, heads of state, actors and sports stars were all appreciative of the company's legendary service and were often thankful passengers.

The company grew quickly, acquiring its first Boeing 737 in 1979, and enabling passengers to access what some say was one of the original Boeing Business Jets (20 years before Boeing launched the official product) – a 737 with extra-range capability and a VIP interior. In 1989, the company went one step further and acquired a Boeing 757 which it fitted with a VIP interior and 50 seats. During this time the company also operated a series of more traditional business jets.

Eventually, in 1995, the company decided to act on the advice of many of its passengers and launched a bespoke flying service, for which it is now world renowned. PrivatAir, as a company in its own right, was born.

In 1995, the Federal Office of Civil Aviation granted PrivatAir its Swiss Air Operator Certificate, and the organisation continued to grow further. In 1998, it became the first commercial operator to put in an order for two Boeing Business Jets. For the



The Boeing 737 – one of the first charter aircraft operated by the company back in 1979

first time, clients had the option to charter an ultra-long-range aircraft, opening up a world of opportunities, both for those travelling on business and pleasure.

The following year, PrivatAir acquired a third Boeing Business Jet and became the first commercial operator of the new generation Boeing aircraft.

Another 'first' for the company came later in 1998. In December, PrivatAir became Europe's first airline whose quality system fulfilled the ISO9002 certification standards for all its services.

Following on from its recent successes, PrivatAir had an eventful millennium year. First it acquired US company Flight Services Group, followed swiftly by Transair's ground-handling services at Le Bourget Airport in Paris, France. The acquisition was completed in December 2000, and in March 2001 the PrivatAir Group was formed.

In its first month of operation, the PrivatAir Group was awarded with ETOPS 180 minutes and FAA 129 Foreign Carrier approval as a designated carrier under the US-Switzerland bilateral 'open skies' agreement. These approvals have allowed the company to offer the most direct routes across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans as well as unlimited operations to the US. Even today, PrivatAir is the only ad hoc commercial charter operator in the world with these approvals, providing clients with a greater choice and more flexibility in their travel plans. For example, when US airspace re-opened after its closure in the wake of the fateful events of September 11th 2001, it was a PrivatAir aircraft that was the first international aircraft to arrive in the US.

In February 2002, construction was completed on PrivatAir's new terminal at its Geneva headquarters. The 'C3' terminal is a joint venture between PrivatAir and Geneva International Airport and offers a full range of VIP passenger services to all PrivatAir customers, including an exclusive luxury lounge and seamless boarding facilities.

Later that same year, PrivatAir pioneered an entirely new concept in business aviation – the transatlantic, scheduled business-class-only service. The company began operating a six-days-a-week scheduled business-class-only service between Dusseldorf and New York's Newark airport on behalf of German carrier Lufthansa. This proved highly successful and,

in March 2003, Lufthansa added two further routes – Dusseldorf to Chicago and Munich to New York – to their schedule.

The success of this business-class-only concept has been enormous, demonstrated today by the large number of 'copy-cat' business-class-only airlines that have sprung up, for example, Eos and MaxJet. However, few people know that it was originally PrivatAir who led the way in establishing this model.

In May 2003, PrivatAir embarked on another new project. The company was approached by aircraft manufacturer Airbus to enquire as to whether they could operate a five-days-a-week corporate shuttle service for Airbus staff between its production sites in Toulouse (France), Hamburg (Germany) and Filton (United Kingdom). Naturally, PrivatAir accommodated all the company's requirements and acquired two new Airbus A319s for the service. It is still going strong today.

Not content with just offering their clients an increasing number of more varied services, PrivatAir then looked at other opportunities.

The company can offer the most direct routes across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans as well as unlimited operations to the United States

In May 2003, the organisation collaborated with ground-handling agent Swissport, to create a joint company called PrivatPort, which plays a substantial role in the exclusive executive jet-handling business at Geneva Airport.

Later the same year, in October, PrivatAir announced that it had received JAR-145 approval over its aircraft engineering and maintenance contracts from the German Civil Aviation Authority. This meant that the company was given greater autonomy and flexibility within the framework of its operations on behalf of Lufthansa and Airbus, enabling PrivatAir to take full responsibility for all cabin standards and achieve near-perfect on-time performance.

In 2004, following on from Lufthansa's lead and recognising the success of PrivatAir's business-class-only transatlantic



Thirty years on, the company has seen many changes but its core values of safety, security and service remain



services, Swiss International Airlines approached PrivatAir regarding operating a similar service, this time between Zurich and New York Newark. In January 2005, PrivatAir began operating a six-day-a-week scheduled business-class-only service.

Furthermore, a fourth transatlantic service began in October later that year, travelling between Amsterdam and Houston and operated on behalf of Dutch airline KLM.

The business-class-only concept has definitely been a strength for PrivatAir and is just one of the business areas that is likely to experience considerable continued growth over the next few years.

In the meantime, while all these new developments were happening, PrivatAir's traditional heritage businesses were also

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growing apace through one of the worst recessions in recent aviation history.

In May 2006, the company sold one of its two VIP Boeing Business Jets with only 16 seats to make way for the acquisition of a Boeing 767 with 50 VIP configured seats, demonstrating the growing demand for larger aircraft accommodating more passengers in comfort. This aircraft will enter service this summer.

PrivatAir is built around the central core of its people without whom none of its success would be possible. The future is bright for this ever growing company with its dynamic 'extra-mile' ethos.

There have been many changes to PrivatAir throughout the last 30 years. New ventures for one thing, such as entering into the ground services arena, private airline services as well as aircraft sales and management.

But one thing hasn't changed and that's something which, according to PrivatAir, will never change. Since its first day in operation PrivatAir has striven to provide the very highest standards in every aspect of its business – whether that's safety, security or personal service, on the ground or in the air. Anything less just isn't good enough. ■





PrivatAir's VIP passengers can be assured of receiving the highest standards of comfort and personal service



Pivotal private charter

AS THE ORIGINAL division of PrivatAir, private charter has always played a pivotal role in the ongoing development of the company. Indeed, the very ethos of today's entire organisation is still very much entrenched in the three core values developed 30 years ago: to provide the very highest standards of safety, security and personal service.

Today, it is still these three aspects which resonate to the heart of every aspect of the PrivatAir business, be it ground services, aircraft sales and management, airline services and of course, private charter.

Like the rest of the aviation industry, the private charter sector has undergone many changes during the last 30 years. Consequently, PrivatAir's own private charter division has had to evolve in order to continue to exceed market demands and stay one step ahead of the competition.

During its first 20 years of operation, the company focused predominantly on providing VVIP private travel to the companies of the Latsis Group.

However, when PrivatAir became commercial in 1995, it entered a new phase.

Opened up to competition from other charter operators, the company built on its previous experience in the VVIP sector and had soon carved out a niche for itself as a specialist in the VIP charter of larger aircraft. As such, it was the first commercial operator of the Boeing Business Jet.

As the market evolved, the competition from other private operators continued to increase. By the late 1990s, during the era of the dot-com boom, there was a very high demand for private jet charter, both from companies and wealthy individuals, and

PrivatAir needed to grow if it was to continue to succeed.

In order to compete, PrivatAir acquired FSG Group in the US, who specialised predominantly in chartering small jets – an area in which PrivatAir had limited experience. With the acquisition under its belt and strong footholds in both the European and US markets, PrivatAir now had the capacity and the geographical reach to respond to all market demands and expand into the wider business aviation sphere. Based on the knowledge and experience gained by

With ever-changing market trends and consumer demands, PrivatAir has succeeded in constantly renewing its private charter, offering to provide clients with the ultimate in service and value



As the private charter industry as a whole has become increasingly sophisticated, PrivatAir has refined its charter offerings on both sides of the Atlantic and kept ahead of the trend

FSG Group in the US market, PrivatAir developed its European sub-charter business, demand for which had been steadily growing throughout the Continent.

Over the last few years, the market for business aviation has become much more knowledgeable about the types of options that are available to them, from fractional to full ownership, card membership, block hours... the list is endless. As a result, the private charter industry as a whole has become increasingly sophisticated.

Keeping ahead of this trend, PrivatAir refined its charter offerings on both sides of the Atlantic. Clients can now benefit from chartering an aircraft from the PrivatAir fleet, sub-chartering through one of PrivatAir's preferred partners or weekend charter of the company's Airbus A319, which is particularly

popular with tour operators and sports groups. Added benefits from US initiatives such as PrivatAir's Select programme and our road-show division ensure that clients can choose from a comprehensive range of options.

As market demands continue to shift, we are likely to see two major trends emerging over the next few years.

Firstly, there is likely to be a growing demand for very light jets. The launch of Eclipse has opened up the private jet industry to a whole new target audience. Previously, individuals with only a few million dollars have been financially excluded from being able to own their own aircraft – this has now changed with prices today starting at around \$1.5 million for a four-seat aircraft. This will undoubtedly have a knock-on effect on the private charter industry with increasingly

smaller jets entering the market. At the other end of the size scale, is the trend towards large-cabin long-range aircraft, accommodating more passengers and fitted out in VIP comfort. PrivatAir is already planning for this with the introduction of its new Boeing 767, which enters service later this summer, and its Boeing 787 which will arrive in 2012.

With ever-changing market trends and consumer demands, PrivatAir constantly has to review its private charter offering to ensure that it continues to provide clients with the ultimate level of service and value. After all, this is what has made PrivatAir what it is today. Who knows what the next 30 years will hold for the company? However, one thing is certain – that the high standards we have come to know and love from PrivatAir will be the key to its future success. ■