

Date : 26 Octobre 2020

## Private Jets Take Off As Wealthy Flyers Seek To Avoid Virus



Soaring numbers of wealthy flyers are switching to private jets to reduce the risk of catching coronavirus from other passengers on regular commercial flights.

Several private jet operators and brokers have reported an influx of business from first-time users who are happy to pay a premium for a bespoke itinerary, involving minimal contact with the travelling public.

Private jet passengers are often able to drive straight on to the tarmac to get to their flight, cutting out any mingling with other passengers at the airport or on board.

While commercial flight numbers have halved, the number of private flights only dipped 10 per cent between September 1 and October 15 compared with last year, according to aviation consultancy WingX.

In August, the number of private flights rose compared with last year, boosted by travellers racing home ahead of new restrictions in the face of rising case numbers.

"The crisis has helped raise the profile and benefits of flying privately among those who can afford to do this," said the managing director of broker company.

Date : 26 October 2020

A short haul on-demand private charter flight in Europe typically starts from €4,500 (£4,010) according to the **LunaJets** website, depending on the size of the jet and distance travelled. However, taking the “empty leg” return journey from another booking could cost as little as €2,000 (£1,779) bringing the cost of private air travel closer to that of flying business class.

The managing director of another private jet company, said most passengers were leisure travellers, but there had been a limited recovery in business trips, including expensive long-haul flights.

“These are families keeping their circles tight, individual executives or teams of colleagues that need to conduct business overseas that before would have used private flying only for short hops,” she said.

However, the industry is not immune to wider problems across the travel sector. With the holiday season over, some worry the corporate travel market could suffer from restrictions caused by the second wave of virus cases.

Alain Leboursier, managing director of **LunaJets**, said he expected the next few months to be tough. “We were supposed to fly some business people from Chicago to Zurich and back this week and they cancelled because of new restrictions in Switzerland,” he said.

“When somewhere is closed, it is closed for everybody — it doesn’t matter if you come in on a private jet.”

Flying on a private plane emits up to 20 times more carbon dioxide per passenger mile than taking a commercial flight, according to a UK based jet charter company.

Hotels are struggling with the same problem of precipitous drops in business travel but have also found that some wealthy customers are willing to pay more for extra privacy and space.

InterContinental Hotels said on Friday that its suite-only brands had outperformed the rest of its portfolio, with its 375 Candlewood Suites hotels in the US reporting occupancy rates of nearly 70 per cent of last year’s levels over the summer.

By contrast, occupancy at its InterContinental brand, was less than a fifth of 2019’s figures.

The fear in the industry is that a fall in business travel will have a knock-on effect on leisure travel because people will not be earning loyalty points on corporate trips that they can then spend on holidays.