

PrivatAir launches dual-class services

CREATING FLEXIBILITY FOR AIRLINE PARTNERS



PrivatAir has launched dual-class scheduled services to help airlines better match capacity to demand during the economic downturn. Taking advantage of its extensive experience in operating business class-only flights on behalf of its three airline partners, Lufthansa, Swiss and KLM, PrivatAir's new flexible dual-class operations may be easily switched by its airline partners between routes as economic circumstances dictate, allowing them to maintain maximum profitability across their networks.

'We began operating our all-business-class services during the economic downturn following 9/11, which had resulted in a decline in economy load factors worldwide,' says Paul de Salis, senior VP, Scheduled

Services. 'This time around, the recession has reduced demand across all travel classes, leading to overcapacity on many long- and medium-haul routes. As a result, some airlines are only able to keep routes open by operating aircraft that are too large to economically service these lower levels of demand. However, working in partnership with PrivatAir to operate a narrow-body service enables airlines to make these routes profitable again.'

The new dual-class services are tailored to each airline's individual requirements, with the seating configuration, cabin service elements and onboard branding determined by the airline's specific needs.

PrivatAir's first dual-class services will begin operation later this summer,

on behalf of Lufthansa. Two of the three current all-business-class aircraft which PrivatAir operates on behalf of the German flag carrier will be reconfigured with 32 business class and 60 economy seats to serve Middle Eastern destinations. PrivatAir's Frankfurt to Pune flight, which is also operated on behalf of Lufthansa, will remain all-business-class, as will the services PrivatAir operates for Swiss and KLM.

'There is currently a major gap in the market in addressing sub-100 seat long- and medium-haul capacity,' continues de Salis. 'PrivatAir takes traditional short-haul, narrow-body aircraft and converts them for longer-range operations of up to 11 hours by adding extra fuel tanks, upgrading the aircraft's electronic

systems, certifying the aircraft for long-range operations and adapting the cabin interiors to create a unique product.'

Such technical modifications would be a major challenge for airlines to implement within their established fleets since they require specialist technical expertise and micro-management to implement. It can also be difficult to subsequently reintegrate customised aircraft into the mainline short-haul fleet due to their additional weight and range modifications. PrivatAir's dual-class offer is therefore the ideal complement to airlines' existing fleets, allowing them to maintain profitability on long- and medium-haul routes where passenger demand has fallen significantly as a result of the global downturn.

GREEN INNOVATIONS

The aviation industry is an energetic pioneer in reducing environmental impact

In this age of climate change and the environmental agenda, the aviation industry is suffering from an image problem. Protests surrounding the development of new runways, locally charged debates over excessive noise pollution from airports and concerns over the world's rising carbon emissions have all painted a rather unflattering picture of the air transport sector. However, media hype aside, what exactly is the industry's stance on the issue and how is it improving its green credentials?

According to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), aviation currently produces around two per cent of the world's man-made emissions of carbon dioxide. Despite passenger numbers growing by an average of five per cent a year, the industry's emissions output has increased by only three per cent, due to its continuous investment in new technologies and more efficient operating procedures. As aviation grows, however, the IPCC estimates that the sector's share of global man-made emissions will increase to three per cent by 2050, making the environment one of the industry's greatest priorities moving forward, alongside safety and security.

In March, nearly 400 leaders and environmental experts from across the international aviation industry met with representatives of civil society, governments and suppliers at the Fourth Aviation & Environment Summit, held in Geneva, Switzerland, to discuss the sector's ongoing progress on tackling the issue and to debate what further steps need to be taken.

It is worth noting, though, that for the aviation sector, the 'green challenge' is not a new concern. In fact, the industry has been improving its environmental performance for more than 50 years – in part, because greater efficiency directly benefits the profitability of airlines and operators as well as the environment. The following are just a few statistics

on the progress made thus far: technical developments since the 1960s mean that today's new aircraft produce 50 per cent less carbon monoxide than they did 50 years ago as well as 90 per cent less smoke and unburned hydrocarbons. Nitrogen oxide levels have also been reduced, with today's aircraft emitting 40 per cent less than in 1981. Likewise, noise levels have been lowered considerably. According to Boeing and Airbus, today's aeroplanes are up to 50 per cent quieter than just 10 years ago, and it is estimated that each new generation of aircraft produces 15 per cent less noise than the one it replaces. Impressive statistics indeed, but there is clearly much more work to be done.

In pursuing further environmental progress, the aviation industry has adopted a four-pillar strategy, targeting technological innovations, operational efficiencies, infrastructure improvements and economic measures. Until now, it is the development of lighter materials and more efficient engines that has driven a majority of the industry's environmental progress. Indeed, some of the greatest strides in this area have been made with the development of two of the newest generation of aircraft – the Airbus A380 and the long-awaited Boeing 787. Moving forward, however, the spotlight for technological initiatives is likely to be turned towards the development of alternative fuel sources. Rapidly developing research indicates that next-generation bio-fuels can be a feasible energy source for aviation, and the sector expects that further studies will lead to the development of low-cost, large-scale production with minimal impact on the environment.

Bio-fuels currently in an advanced state of investigation for aviation include algae and jatropha – both fast-growing non-food crops that don't take up land that could be used for food production. One major benefit is that they can be cultivated very effectively in extremely harsh environments, with low requirements for fresh water. For example, an acre of algae can produce enough oil to make 3,000 gallons of jet fuel in a year. To put this in perspective, the world's entire fleet of airliners could be powered from an area the size of Belgium. There have now been several successful flights using bio-fuels blended with traditional kerosene, and initial results demonstrate a significant level of success.

The IPCC estimates that up to 18 per cent of aviation fuel is wasted as a result of inefficient operations. Many airlines are addressing this through the adoption of various schemes to help save fuel at every stage of their operation. These initiatives include taxiing to and from the runway using only one engine, cleaning aircraft engines more frequently and numerous aircraft weight-reduction measures.

Improvements in air traffic management also have the potential to reduce unnecessary fuel burn. Currently, many flights are unable to use the most direct routings, and instead have to zigzag around military zones, national borders and different air traffic control areas. Proposals such as the Single European Sky would lead to the harmonisation of air traffic control across the EU, maximising the efficiency of the airspace. Similar initiatives have been put forward to improve efficiencies across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

It is not only aircraft that create environmental concern, but also the associated infrastructure such as airports and flight paths. Airports recognise that they have a vital role to play in their local area – providing jobs, stimulating the economy and aiding tourism and local business opportunities. However, they can also create noise, pollution and traffic problems. With this in mind, many airports have adopted a series of 'green' measures to reduce their impact on local communities. Some of these schemes include: reducing ground emissions by introducing vehicles which run on low-emission technologies or alternative fuels; investing in carbon offsetting programmes; building 'green-certified' terminals; investing in solar panels to provide some or all of the airport's electricity; and waste recycling initiatives. In addition, many airports are also pressing governments and local authorities to provide more environmentally friendly ground access to airports, for example trains or metro systems.

While emissions from domestic aviation are covered under the Kyoto Protocol, those from international aviation are not. Instead, signatories to the agreement decided to pursue the reduction of such emissions through the UN's worldwide aviation body, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). One method suggested to reduce emissions is to set up a global emissions trading scheme.

This would involve establishing an overall limit on company emissions and then allowing businesses to buy and sell emission allowances to meet their reduction targets. Currently, such a scheme does not exist. However, as of 2012, international aviation will be included in a regional version of this, the European Union's emissions trading scheme. Many in the aviation industry view this new scheme as being too localised in its approach to what is essentially a worldwide problem, and they are currently pushing for a global alternative.

Economic measures have not been limited to emissions trading. Government-imposed green taxes are a cost added to each flight landing in or taking off from that country and are aimed at changing consumer demand for aviation. However, in most cases the money raised from such taxes has not been reinvested in environmental improvement measures but diverted into the general government treasury instead – the UK's Air Passenger Duty is just one example of this.

Economic measures are controversial, both within and outside the aviation industry, but most people are united that any monies collected from such measures should first be used to boost the research, development and deployment of new technologies, as opposed to simply being a tool to suppress customer demand. The use of tax credits and direct funding must be explored as incentives to drive new technology programmes and encourage companies to invest in more efficient equipment. Some such initiatives have already started. The EU's Clean Sky joint technology initiative, for example, will develop breakthrough technologies to significantly improve the impact of air transport on the environment. Funding of €1.6 billion over seven years aims to reduce fuel consumption, CO₂ and NOX emissions and noise levels between 50 per cent and 80 per cent, in addition to developing a green product life-cycle.

Only time will tell as to whether all these schemes will be successful. What is most important, however, is that the industry is not deterred from continuing its steady pace of progress in tackling its environmental responsibilities. Despite being frequently criticised for its impact on the environment, few industries are doing as much as the aviation sector to try and reduce their green footprint, and this aspect should not be overlooked.



PrivatAir introduces PrivatTraining

SHARING EXPERTISE ACROSS THE
PRIVATE JET SECTOR

PrivatAir has recently introduced a brand new training division to its portfolio of services. PrivatTraining is aimed at helping other private jet operators manage all their cabin crew training requirements, and its development could not be timelier.

Forthcoming regulatory changes to private jet operations in Europe mean that every operator will be required to

provide mandatory and regular training to flight crew, regardless of the type or number of aircraft they own or manage. Working alongside the relevant national and international authorities, PrivatAir's PrivatTraining division creates bespoke programmes to ensure that private jet operators fulfil their full legal obligations in this area, including providing safety, medical, dangerous

goods, security and crew resource management training. Alongside this, the new division also offers a wide range of other tailored training courses and recruitment services to help organisations make the most of their crew and improve the overall passenger experience they offer.

'Training has always played a key role in PrivatAir's success,' says Victor Grove, vice president, Selection, Training and Customer Service. 'As an operator ourselves, we recognise that each organisation has a unique client base, so we ensure that all training is tailored to suit both the exact customer needs as well as the individual company culture.'

PrivatTraining uses a combination of PrivatAir's long-standing expertise

in training its own crews, as well as a selection of external partner companies, to ensure that all courses are as comprehensive as possible. These partners include organisations such as Lausanne Hospitality Consulting, part of the world-renowned Swiss hotel school Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne, which offers a significant component of some of the inflight service training courses.

'We are thrilled to be part of this brand-new service,' says André Mack, senior consultant at Lausanne Hospitality Consulting. 'For several years, we have been helping PrivatAir to train its flight attendants to provide a level of onboard service on a par with that offered by some of the best hotels in the world – and we now look forward to helping other companies do the same.'