

EBACE 2024 - focused on the long-term sustainability challenge

The commitment to sustainability and to achieve net zero carbon emissions was the over-arching focus of this year's European Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (EBACE), held in Geneva from 28 to 30 May. Security was massively stepped up at this year's event following the breaches of the Geneva airport perimeter by environmental protesters last year. While there was no repeat, the agenda was firmly on focused on this single challenge as the bizav sector demonstrated its commitment to change.

This year's EBACE was also notable for OEM absences. Neither Gulfstream nor Bombardier took space in the halls or static display. Both manufacturers had decided to focus on other smaller, more customer-centric events. As a result, the static display boasted just 30 aircraft, a fraction of its size in former years, and there was a notable absence of announcements from OEMs.

New technology was, however, on display throughout the conference. French start-up VoltAero showcased its full-scale Cassio 330 hybrid-electric aircraft, Germany's Lilium displayed a full-scale mock-up of its electric vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft, and Toulouse-based start-up Beyond Aero exhibited the modified ultralight aircraft that flew in February with a small-scale powertrain relying on a hydrogen fuel cell.

While there was discussion of some short-term issues – supply of flight crew and access to airports for bizav aircraft – it was sustainability that dominated. The European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) announced it had joined the 'Climbing.Fast' sustainability initiative, which aims to help bizav achieve net zero by 2050.

"We are campaigning, leveraging our unique position to champion and deploy the initiative in Europe's complex regulatory and political landscape," said EBAA secretary general Holger Kraemer. "More than ever, our sector is increasingly under scrutiny, and it is vital to highlight the essential role we play in Europe's socioeconomic landscape. Business aviation is not just about transportation. It's a driver of economic growth, providing highly skilled jobs, fostering innovation, and supporting various industries."

BBGA protests night slot restrictions

The British Business and General Aviation Association (BBGA) is lobbying the UK government over its decision to effectively close London Luton (LTN) and Stansted (STN) airports to business and general aviation between 11pm and 6am. It is requesting that some ad hoc slots should remain available to non-scheduled traffic.

From 1 June to 30 September all adhoc slots have been cancelled to allow for the operation of potentially delayed commercial airline traffic. It leaves Southend (SEN) as the only London area airport available for adhoc operations. Biggin Hill (BQH), Farnborough (FAB) and Oxford (OXF) close completely for operations from 11pm, 10pm and midnight respectively.

"Keeping the UK open to those who want to invest in our country should be a central part of our country's strategy and these night-time movements facilitate this activity fundamentally," said BBGA chief executive Mark Bailey. "If we close our doors to these investors in the UK, then it will damage UK GDP at a time when growth is so important to us as a nation."

Euro bizav traffic - the May snapshot

The latest traffic data provided by specialist WingX shows a familiar global trend. For the first five months of the year bizjet traffic was 1.2% down on 2023 levels, 2.6% down on 2022, 24% up on 2021, 79.25% up on Covid-hit 2020 and 31.7% up on pre-pandemic 2019.

A detailed look at European traffic produces some interesting comparisons with global numbers. Overall traffic in May was 1% higher than the same month last year and 10% lower than 2022. Each of the top three markets – France, the UK and Italy all reported traffic growth. Both Italy and Greece recorded their strongest May traffic levels for five years. The European data also demonstrates how high-profile events can skew figures. Almost 200 additional bizjet movements were recorded over the three-day weekend when London's Wembley stadium hosted the Champions League football final. Many of these used London Biggin Hill, which saw 68 additional movements compared to the previous weekend.

Huge growth forecast for Saudi bizav

The Saudi Arabian General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) issued a comprehensive blueprint setting out a roadmap for business and general aviation to 2030. The document – Saudi Arabia: A New Global Hub for General Aviation – sets out major new proposals to increase the number of airports, aircraft operators, MROs and FBOs. The proposal is a part of the Vision 2030 strategy to diversify and expand the Saudi economy set out by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The blueprint is predicated on tourism to the Kingdom growing by 250% by 2030. In perhaps the most striking prediction, the report anticipates that there will be 24 bizjet flights per 10,000 of the population by 2030, compared to just five in 2021. By 2030, GACA predicts that the sector will create 35,000 new jobs and contribute some SAR7.80 billion (USD2.08 billion) to the economy.

London Oxford's growing prominence

London Oxford Airport (OXF) reported very strong performance in 2023. The facility, situated some 65km to the northwest of London, is the fifth largest in the UK in respect of business aircraft movements. For the year, Oxford recorded 58,549 movements with a significant number of based aircraft. The facility, which has been owned by the Reuben Brothers since 2007, is seeing some additional significant developments. With effect from last month it now offers sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in two different blends (30% and 10%). In addition, the airport is looking forward to the opening of Airbus Helicopters' new HQ, which will feature some seven helipads and 6,131m² hangar space.

Global Jet Capital market forecast

Finance specialist Global Jet Capital released its annual Business Jet Market Forecast in the run-up to EBACE, which provides highly detailed insight and predictions for the business jet market for the next five years. Overall, the North American market will remain the largest, followed by Europe, while the large cabin, long-range aircraft sector will see the strongest growth as customers look for both capacity and range.

In terms of value, the main headline forecasts total transaction volume of USD193 billion for new and pre-owned business jet deals in the five years to 2028. This is coupled with compound annual growth of 4.4% over the period. The figures represent steady growth in the transaction market through to 2028 following a contraction in 2023 as OEMs continued to deal with supply chain issues.

Global Jet Capital said OEM backlogs for new aircraft are in a much stronger position than prior to Covid, which will lead to increased production. The report also notes that pre-owned transactions will return to steady growth in 2024, with average annual growth to hit 3.8% until 2028.

Jetcraft insight into the pre-owned bizjet market

The latest edition of the Pre-Owned Business Jet Market Forecast produced by sales leader Jetcraft has provided a fascinating insight into the used market over the last few years as it also looks into the future.

In 2018-19 aircraft spent an average of 233 days on the market. At the peak of demand for aircraft during the pandemic this dropped to just 129 days in 2022-23. With the opening up of demand and the lifting of travel restrictions, Jetcraft expects the pre-owned market to remain strong and for these racially reduced sales periods to be maintained.

Used bizjet inventory increasing

According to the latest data from specialist analyst Jefferies, the number of pre-owned business jets on the market increased by 23% last month YOY. A total of 1,195 aircraft are currently for sale compared to 1,161 in April and 969 in May 2023. The bottom line sees 4.9% of the total business jet fleet is available for sale, an increase on the one-year average of 4.3%. Jefferies also makes clear that the delayed certification of the Gulfstream G700 and the commencement of deliveries has seen a 'bounce' in the number of this OEM's models on the market as aircraft are replaced.

Corporate aircraft news

Gulfstream Aerospace announced on 15 May that European regulator EASA had granted certification to its new flagship Gulfstream G700 twinjet, allowing deliveries to start to European customers. The aircraft received approval from the US FAA on 29 March. The OEM intends to deliver aircraft at an even pace throughout this year with a guide of 13 examples per quarter.

Gulfstream president Mark Burns said: "During the flight test programme, we took the G700 across the globe, and the response to the aircraft's cabin size, flexibility and performance has been outstanding. The EASA certification unlocks G700 deliveries for many more of our international customers, and we are excited to see our next-generation fleet grow around the world."

Just a day later, the Savannah-based OEM had further cause for celebration with the announcement that the G650 fleet had surpassed more than one million flight hours. The G650 entered service in 2012, with its longer-range stablemate, the G650ER, joining the fold in 2014. Latest data shows that a total of 598 examples of the G650/G650ER have been registered.

Textron Aviation has provided an update on the progress to certification of its new Cessna Citation Ascend – a significant upgrade to the popular Citation 560 XL. The new aircraft looks on course to receive certification in 2025 and the prototype has completed 125 flights lasting a total of some 350 hours. The Ascend was announced at EBACE in 2023 and offers a new interior, engine enhancements and new avionics.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \ \

Sud Aviation SE 210 Caravelle 10R



CATEGORY

Heavy jet

MANUFACTURER

Sud Aviation, France

ENGINE

2 x Pratt & Whitney JT8D turbofan

LENGTH

32.71 m

WINGSPAN

34.30 m

RANGE

2,800 km

MAX. SPEED

800kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

80 in airline service

NO. OF CREW

2 - 3

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

54,000 kg

DESCRIPTION

There are a small number of airliner designs that gain universal approval for their elegance and beauty. The iconic SE 210 Caravelle is surely among them. A total of 282 examples of this early generation short haul airliner were produced between 1955 and 1972. The Caravelle entered service with Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS) in April 1959 and the last operator, Waltair from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), retired the final example with little fanfare in 2005.

During the Caravelle's 17-year production history, the original design underwent a number of enhancements and developments that resulted in new models being offered to operators. Variants offered improved powerplants, lengthened fuselages, as well as the addition of thrust reversers which were absent from the early models. The Caravelle 10R (pictured above) combined the Pratt & Whitney engines used in the 10B Super Caravelle with the shorter fuselage of the Caravelle VI-R. The aircraft also boasted an increased MTOW.