

EBACE 2018 - remembering Serge Dassault and looking forward

EBACE 2018 in Geneva was dedicated to the memory of Dassault Group chairman emeritus Serge Dassault, who died at the age of 93 on the eve of the show. Serge Dassault, who served as CEO from 1986 to 2000, was at the forefront of diversifying the family firm's interests into civil aviation and the Falcon family of corporate jets dating back to the 1960s owes much of its success to his vision.

The European Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (EBACE) returned to the Palexpo site adjacent to Geneva international airport from 29 to 31 May. Europe's largest corporate aviation event, it boasted a static park of 50 aircraft of all sizes, along with some 400 exhibitors and 13,000 visitors.

Commentators pointed to quiet optimism for the state of the corporate market in Europe, coupled with continuing efforts to innovate and develop. These themes were carried over into the opening session, which featured 'Jet Man' Yves Rossy, the inventor of a series of experimental individual jetpacks.

The media lunch on 28 May saw the launch of the 'Business Aviation Guide to the Use of Sustainable Alternative Jet Fuels' (SAJF), a major new initiative focused on raising awareness and adoption of available and emerging alternative jet fuel options. Other high profile sessions during the show covered the challenges facing the industry from Brexit, the use of helicopters as a bizav tool and the role of women in the industry.

EBAA chairman Juergen Wiese said: "This was a decidedly upbeat, optimistic EBACE week, which highlighted the passion and enthusiasm at the heart of the business aviation community, the show reflected a reverence for the industry's history, as well as an embrace of its future."

Bombardier grabs the EBACE headlines

Bombardier was clearly the talk of EBACE 2018. The Canadian manufacturer used Europe's largest bizav event to launch two new models as well as the renaming of its forthcoming flagship. 'Profoundly reshaping', 'category-killing' and 'dramatic' were just some of the responses to the unveiling of the new Global 5500 and 6500, which are set for certification and entry to service by the end of 2019. The new models are seen as Bombardier's response to the Gulfstream G500 and G600, which are due for first deliveries this year.

The Global 5500 and 6500 are direct developments of the Global 5000 and 6000 models but with new engines and new wings. Both aircraft will be powered by Rolls-Royce's newly announced Pearl 15 engine and the enhanced models will offer ranges that exceed the competing Gulfstreams. The aircraft also boast a number of cabin enhancements, improved fuel burn and increased maximum speed, which is due largely to a redesigned trailing edge to reduce drag.

The Global 7000 on display in the EBACE static park was marked as the Global 7500 following the programme's rebrand. The name follows the manufacturer's confirmation of performance enhancements forecast upon service entry. The 7500 is a direct competitor to the Gulfstream G650ER but exceeds the Gulfstream's 7,700nm (14,260km) range and matches its maximum speed of Mach 0.925 (1,133kmh).

Used aircraft inventory shrinks again

The latest data compiled by New York-based aviation researcher JETNET confirmed the shrinking pool of aircraft available for sale. A total of 5,675 aircraft were available for sale in Q1 2018 across all sectors (including rotary craft), which is down 680 aircraft (10.7%) over the same period last year. The largest fall was seen in the business jet sector with a fall of some 350 units to just 9.3% of the active worldwide fleet. The survey also confirmed that business jets are taking an average of 16 days less to sell than last year.

The power of prayer...

Louisiana televangelist Jesse Duplantis published a video saying that Jesus has asked him to buy a new private jet. And not just any jet; he (Jesus) had specified a new Falcon 7X with a price tag of US\$54 million. Duplantis, who already has the use of a Cessna Citation 500, an IAI Westwind II, and a Dassault Falcon 50, was seeking donations from his followers because aircraft with good fuel efficiency allowed him and his ministries to reach more people around the world. After a media uproar, Duplantis subsequently clarified his position: "I'm not asking you to pay for my plane. The Lord said, 'I didn't ask you to pay for it, I asked you to believe for it.' That is what I said. So I'm believing, and I want you to believe with me."

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Rolls-Royce launches new engine

Rolls-Royce used EBACE to unveil a new family of engines designed to power large cabin and long-range corporate aircraft. The first example, the Pearl 15, will be used to power the two new Bombardier Globals, the Global 5500 and 6500, which were also launched at EBACE. The Pearl 15 has been under development for some years and offers a 7% improvement in fuel consumption along with a reduction in noise levels. It also fits the existing nacelles on the current Global 5000 and 6000. The new engine family maintains the UK manufacturer's long tradition of naming its engines after rivers, which is based on the idea of continuous flow.

Cayman Islands promotes commercial operations

The Civil Aviation Authority of the Cayman Islands (CAACI) used EBACE to promote the opening of its register to commercial operations in addition to corporate and private owners of business aircraft. CAACI said the move was in response to requests from owners to allow their aircraft to be available for charter. In order to secure an air operator's certificate (AOC), operators must establish their principal base of business in Cayman and employ an account manager within the jurisdiction. Previously commercial operations were limited to national airline and carriers covered under Cayman's Article 83 bis Agreement with Saudi Arabia, which dates from 2009.

Moves to combat 'grey' charters

The European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) and the Air Charter Association (BACA) agreed, at EBACE, to join forces to tackle the problem of illegal charters. The extent of the use of private aircraft for unauthorised fare paying passengers – often referred to as 'grey charters' – is largely unknown due to a lack of reporting. In a joint statement, the two associations said: "BACA and EBAA will collectively gather data via a joint reporting mechanism, in an attempt to gain a more accurate picture of an activity that clearly puts at risk the safety and integrity of the air charter market as a whole."

Corporate aircraft news

The Gulfstream G600 is on course to receive certification by the end of this year. The new generation design, making its European debut at EBACE in Geneva, was displayed alongside the smaller G500, which is due for imminent regulatory approval. In April, the two twinjets also made record-breaking transpacific flights in their weight categories. Both covered the route Shanghai-Honolulu-Savannah at an average speed of Mach 0.90 (1,103kmh) with the G500 taking a total of 16hrs, 18mins and the G600 covering the distance in 16hrs, 24mins.

According to press reports, John Rosanvallon, CEO of French manufacturer Dassault Aviation has confirmed that most of the customers that had ordered the ill-fated Falcon 5X were now looking to convert to the replacement Falcon 6X. The Falcon 5X project was cancelled following much-publicised problems with the Safran Silvercrest engines. The Falcon 6X, which was announced in late February, is due to enter service in 2022.

Airbus Corporate Jets expects to commence final assembly of the first ACJ320neo this month. The first aircraft is due for delivery for cabin outfitting by the end of this year. The manufacturer holds orders for six A320neo alongside three ACJ319neo. It has also unveiled a new cabin concept for its wide-body family of new generation corporate jets, including the ACJ330neo and the ACJ350 XWB. Named 'Harmony', the new cabin layout is based around concentric circles – "like ripples on a pond" – which offer space to work, socialise and rest.

Honda Aircraft unveiled a new version of its HA-120 HondaJet at EBACE in Geneva. The HondaJet Elite now boasts a substantially increased range of 1,437nm (2,661km) over the standard version's 1,180nm (2,185km). The Elite also includes new paint options, a full galley, refined aerodynamics and enhanced fuel capacity. The new variant has received FAA and EASA approvals and first deliveries are expected in August this year.

Swiss manufacturer Pilatus has confirmed that it expects to deliver up to 24 of its ground breaking PC-24 light jet this year. It further anticipates raising production to 40 in 2019 and 50 per year thereafter.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

Piper M350



CATEGORY

Piston

MANUFACTURER

Piper Aircraft, USA

ENGINE

1 x Lycoming TIO-540-AE2A piston

LENGTH

8.80 m

WINGSPAN

13.11 m

RANGE

2,487 km

MAX. SPEED

395 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

6

NO. OF CREW

1

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

1,969 kg

DESCRIPTION

Since Piper Aircraft re-designated the PA-46 Malibu family of aircraft as the M-Class line in 2015, the M350, which originally entered production as the Malibu Mirage in 1988, has been the smallest. The Malibu Mirage boasted a more powerful Lycoming piston engine than the earlier Malibu, which was first launched in 1982. Over the years the design underwent a series of enhancements to include a Garmin G1000 glass cockpit, strengthened wings and tools to counter pilot hypoxia. The M350 was launched in 2015 and received FAA certification that year.

The M350 features the Lycoming powerplant along with a Hartzell three-bladed propeller. Piper promotes the M350, which currently retails for around US\$1.15 million, as "the only current production pressurised piston-engine aircraft available today." It further claims that "with standard dual turbochargers, owners can also expect a consistent fuel burn at any altitude keeping operating costs down." For these reasons the M350 has proved very popular.