

Fly Like a Rock Star

TO ARRIVE IN STYLE, **BOOK A PRIVATE JET.** IT'S SURPRISINGLY WITHIN REACH.

PRIVATE JETS ARE NO LONGER the lofty domain of Hollywood celebrities, Fortune 500 executives, sports stars, rock musicians, or brand-name-company families. "To use a private jet now, you don't have to be super-wealthy," says Craig Ross of **Marquis Jet** (310-452-7995; www.marquisjet.com) in Santa Monica. "Rich, yes. Let's not kid ourselves." His company sells a "jet card" that gives you 25 hours of flight-time on a private jet, priced from \$109,900 (Cessna CitationV Ultra) to \$299,900 (Gulfstream IV). It works like a debit card, and it requires a far lower investment than the more traditional fractional ownership of a jet.

It's easy: Phone ahead, say you want a jet, and it will be waiting for you at a small, convenient airport such as Santa Monica or Van Nuys. You drive your car right onto the tarmac and fly away in total privacy with no hassles. Take along your family and friends at no extra charge. (The jets seat from 8 to 13 passengers.)

GET ON BOARD

Let's say you want to fly on demand without having to buy a certain number of hours. **SkyBridge Private Air** (888-SKY-0001; www.skybridgeprivateair.com), headquartered in Hermosa Beach, selects the right plane for you based on the kind of trip you're taking and your destination. "The Gulfstream is the sexiest, sleekest plane out there, but it wouldn't be right for a family trip," advises SkyBridge co-founder Michael Napoliello Jr. "For that, you'd want a Challenger." The service, which starts at about \$1,800 per flight hour, "is great for a one-time fling," he says. Clients have included a husband who took his wife to New York to see a play for their anniversary, and a group of guys who flew together to the all-star baseball game. One couple booked a SkyBridge private jet to tour Europe. "You can tour Rome with your day bag and return to the plane at the end of the day," Napoliello says.

BEYOND FIRST CLASS

Popular jet-set destinations for Southern Californians include Aspen and Mammoth for skiing, Las Vegas for a prize fight or a concert, Monterey for golf, and the Napa Valley for wine tasting. Adding to the glorious sense of indulgence are concierge services that companies like Marquis and SkyBridge provide. "If an owner is flying on his birthday," says Ross, "I have a cake on board." Want to travel with the children

and the dog? Popular kids' DVDs and dog biscuits will be waiting on the plane. Whether you prefer *The New York Times* or *Daily Variety*, the right newspaper will be laid out at your seat. On SkyBridge, you can arrange anything from a masseuse or a secretary to travel with you, and your pets get the VIP treatment, too. "You're the big wig," Napoliello says. "Just tell us what you want."

When it comes to the actual planes, industry leader Marquis partners with NetJets,

a division of Warren Buffett's Berkshire-Hathaway, which owns the world's largest fleet (562 jets) and has nearly 3,000 pilots, who average three times more hours of training than the FAA requires. Other jet-card providers include **BlueStarJets** (www.bluestarjets.com), **SentientJet** (www.sentient.com), **Citation Shares** (www.citationshares.com/vector), and **Bombardier Skyjet** (www.skyjet.com). SkyBridge contracts with carefully screened individual operators for their fleet, which ranges from the Lear 35A to the Falcon 900EX.

SkyBridge caters mostly to the discreet first-class customer who is tired of dealing with commercial travel, the traveler who knows personal luxury. Marquis Jet clients include Usher and Michael Jordan, whose sky-high incomes enable them to pay the rate of at least \$4,396 per hour in flight. (You're charged only from wheels up to wheels down, never paying for the jet's delivery to your departure point.) Once you fly private, you may never go commercial again. **D**



FLY BUY

When you're ready to buy your own jet, talk to HMS Aviation in Santa Barbara (www.hmsaviation.com), or Komar Aviation in Orange County (komaraviation.com).

IN-FLIGHT GOURMET

Need your flight catered? Chefs with Altitude in El Segundo prepares gourmet meals to order—and they deliver to Southern California airports. (www.chefswithaltitude.com).