



LUNAJETS

“How LunaJets disrupted the private jet industry...”

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The largest European private jet booking platform opened a new office in Gstaad. The fast growing company is operating thousands of private flights per year all over the world. Interview with LunaJets CEO, EymERIC Segard, who founded LunaJets 9 years ago during a family holiday in the Saanenland.

EymERIC, LunaJets is based in Geneva, why a new office in Gstaad?

LunaJets is a global company, operating 24/7 from our Geneva airport headquarter. We are on target to organise 3,300 private jet charter flights in 2017, vs 2,500 last year. We have regional offices in London, Dubai and Budapest, but we also seek local presence to optimally serve our clients. We are already in the top European summer destinations of Olbia, Mikonos, Ibiza, and Palma. We will open soon in St Mortiz, so Gstaad was a logical move. We are delighted to have Michael Tschanz of VIP Gstaad joining our team as our new local agent. The office is ideally located at Cheseryplatz 1, just after the cinema.

Is Saanen airport open for charter flights?

Saanen airport is extremely strict in terms of restrictions; our clients choose alternate airports such as Bern, Sion, Zurich and obviously Geneva. At LunaJets, our job is to look for the best solutions and to manage the logistic throughout the flight process, from permits and pets, to luggage transfer, weather forecast and back-up plans, airport slot approvals, connecting ground transfers, etc.

What are the transfer solutions that you offer?

We organise helicopter transfers from all these airports to Gstaad. For cars or minivans transfers, we use the best providers in Gstaad.

Could you tell us about LunaJet’s clientele in Gstaad?

During the winter season, most of our clients are European families. In the summertime, we have an increasing number of clients from the Middle East, as well as Americans travelling with us on trans-Atlantic flights.

How did you get the idea of setting up LunaJets?

The whole story started here in Gstaad! My wife and I were staying at a friend’s chalet in Gruben. Our friend was complaining about the cost of his private jet card program. At that time, I was working in Mexico as an executive at Ogilvy, the advertising agency. I had never chartered a private jet, but I thought maybe there was a way to significantly disrupt this industry.



And what did you discover?

It was (and in part still is) an inefficient market, with 30–40% of the aircraft flying empty. The industry was also very fragmented, with multiple small operators competing against each other around the dominant player: NetJets. It was my opportunity! I resigned, and moved with my family to Geneva to start up LunaJets. My aim was to aggregate and build an online platform reselling “empty leg flights” and free capacity, at 50–70% discount. It was years before Uber or Airbnb but the concept was similar for private jets flights.

Was it a success?

No, starting up a private jet business – albeit at discounted prices – just 3 months before the beginning of the 2008 financial crisis, was not good timing at all. I lost one of my 2 main investors, and I was very close to going back to the corporate world.

So how did you turn it around?

It was all about turning a challenge into an opportunity. In 2010, after the financial crisis, many aircraft owners and private jet clients were looking to rationalise their costs. LunaJets was the first platform to offer a simple and flexible way to charter a jet with an on-demand “pay-as-you-fly” concept: no minimum notice, no deposit, no minimum annual flight time, no long term commitment, no extra tarmac taxi time, no fuel surcharge. Obviously, we did not create the private jet charter market, but we built the technology, the online platform and developed the human expertise, to guarantee the best solution for our clients. We had the “first-move advantage” in Europe. We quickly started to increase our client base, and received a lot of media exposure, from the likes of Bloomberg, CNBC, CNN, TF1, the FT...

Did you notice private jet users changing their habits due to the financial crisis?

Yes. The business aviation market has yet to fully recover from 2008. Clients have since become much more price sensitive. As LunaJets provides a suitable offer with an ef-

ficient, transparent and independent solution, we have the real competitive advantage. Gone are the days, where a client who wanted to charter a flight would have to stick to one operator and make a choice among its limited fleet of aircraft. With direct access to 4,800 aircraft worldwide, LunaJets is independent from any operator. And thanks to our very high booking volumes, we pre-negotiate heavily discounted prices on behalf of our clients.

Who are your competitors?

NetJets has a different business model but remains a clear competitor. There are also a lot of new entrants bringing concepts such as “air clubs with annual fees”, “jet sharing”, and automated mobile booking Apps. Yet these smaller players are lacking in personalised service quality and operational expertise. Private aviation is strictly regulated, and it is perhaps the most logistically challenging market in the luxury industry. A trip on a private jet does not compare to an Uber car ride. The stakes and prices are higher, and it is a much more complex mode of transport.

How do I book a jet using LunaJets service?

You can request a flight through our website, mobile App, call us or obviously come and meet us at our Gstaad office to discuss your exact needs. Depending on the urgency of your flight, you will be receiving 3-5 negotiated options shortly after placing your request. The DNA of LunaJets is all about service and price - whether you book with us only one flight or 100h per year, our 24/7 Private Aviation Advisor team will assist you the same way throughout the flight process.

How do you see the future for LunaJets?

As we are growing fast, the key for us is to expand our market share but also to maintain the level of service for our clients. This means investing in more innovative technology combined with the best fully trained and up-to-date human talent. It is a challenge that we like.

Thank you Eymeric, and good luck.



About Eymeric Segard

Eymeric, 48, is half French, half Colombian. He spent his childhood in France, the UK, Colombia and Brazil. He studied at Brown University in the US, and worked in NYC, London and Mexico, starting his career at Merrill Lynch, before joining WPP’s Ogilvy. He speaks fluently 5 languages. In 2008 he founded LunaJets and moved to Switzerland with his Brazilian wife and their 2 ski-addicted kids. Expanding and managing LunaJets is his passion, but he is also an active “Ironman” triathlete.