

ABU DHABI CHARTER OPERATOR GI AVIATION TARGETS PRIVATE FLYERS

News / Business aviation



GI Aviation on Sunday launched its value charter aviation services aimed at corporate and leisure clientele looking to make a saving on private jet travel.

The Abu Dhabi company operates turbo prop aircraft – the Swiss-made, single-engine Pilatus PC-12NG – which has lower operating costs than a small or mid-size jet.

"We sit between first class and a private jet but cost 30 to 40 per cent below a private jet," said Marios Belidis, GI Aviation's general manager.

He said the plane is a unique proposition in the Arabian Gulf region and believes that the energy industry will be particularly interested in its versatility and flexibility.

With the business climate in the region subdued because of a low oil price and strong US dollar, it is not an easy time to start a private plane charter service.

"We believe its cost savings, being a single-engine turbo prop, will make C-level executives who need to do business in Doha and Bahrain look towards the advantages it offers.

"Our expansion and growth is reliant on how the market reacts to the proposition. We will grow slowly but surely. "

The plane has a maximum range of four hours' flying time, lending itself to the GCC's business centres. It can take a maximum of eight passengers and has the ability to land on grass or gravel air strips.

GI Aviation's first aircraft will be based at Al Bateen airport in the capital and its second plane, due at the end of February, will be based at Dubai World Central.

Industry experts suggest the cheaper, exclusive option has been long needed in the Gulf and the problem with starting small is that profitability will be hard to come by in the beginning.

"This plane and service is what has been missing in our region," said Ali Al Naqbi, the chairman of the Middle East Business Aviation Association.

"I think, however, that it needs at least 11 planes to make it viable. If you tell a chairman or a CEO you do not have availability, then you have lost a customer."

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