



GENERAL AVIATION SERVICE NON-STOP DANCE OF HIGH SEASON IN SPAIN – TRAFFIC, SOLUTIONS, HAPPY CLIENTS

News / Business aviation



Which destination will come to your mind first if I say vacation? Spain.... Ibiza? Palma de Mallorca? Both Ibiza and Mallorca airports are among the top ten airports with the most private flights in August and June, while Palma airport is the only airport in May and Ibiza the only one in Spain in July. Of the 27,122 private jet flights that landed at Spanish airports in 2023, Palma de Mallorca accounted for a notable 27.6% of the total, becoming the airport with the highest number of such operations nationwide. Ibiza followed with 6,504 flights (24% of the total) and Málaga with 6,314 flights.

The high season for business aviation has already begun in Spain. It wasn't easy to get Commercial Director of General Aviation Service Luis Hurtado Barrutia on the line, but I had questions and needed answers, so we got together for a chat :

T.O. After brilliant celebration, small but still we got it, back on EBACE, I guess you are very busy with all bases of General Aviation Service. The high season in Spain is now. How are you doing, is there still time for sleep ? Tell me how you're dealing with the high season ?

L.H.B. Yeah, it's a real challenge. We see some airports, many more than last year, having troubles allocating planes. So, we are doing magic to try to find a place for your flight. Especially from the Balearic islands, is the same problem as usual. But other airports are reacting to this and don't want to have as much traffic diverted from the same destination as Ibiza just to relocate the planes. Well, it's challenging but in the end we are managing. It's just a matter of having people insisting, looking for places, comparing and it's a very hard job. But for the moment it's working. We cannot have 100% of flights in Ibiza sleeping every day. Unfortunately we have to move it. But we have opportunities to give solution to our clients. And we are happy with this.

T.O. I guess you have a lot of clients who are reaching out to you on a very short notice. How you're dealing with them and what timing would be an absolutely not possible to deal with.

L.H.B. Well, we are 24/7 and we have people everywhere. So, in every location, if you manage to land and you have everything set up before that, we'll be there. There are some problems.. Yeah. Is more for certain locations. A last minute flight in Ibiza on a Friday is more likely that we will manage to allow you to drop the passengers and fly to another destination. But having overnight in Ibiza at the same day on a Friday is impossible to say like this. So it's very complicated. Especially for bigger planes. But we are persistent, it is a fact. Last minute changes happens everywhere. Cancellations happens the last minute too. And we had some situations when we managed to have last minute and, and comply with it and find the parking. Even we couldn't believe it. The problem is that the customer thinks this is normal. So, next time imagine when he's gonna ask us to come.

T.O. Your customers are pretty much used that you're doing magic. They don't know how and they taking it for granted, for normal. It is just the quality of services given by General Aviation Service, that's normal.

L.H.B. Well, I have to say that we don't do magic. It's just persistence and hard work. This is the only way to succeed. The only thing we can do is continually asking, checking for the customer if another situation could be OK for him. And this is a tedious work ! You don't even have the flight here and you are using all your resources to call every airport. To speak with all the bases to see hey, please, I need a space for this flight two days. And this is crazy, but at the same time is what makes the summer like go that fast. You know, because it goes super fast for us.

T.O. You have amazing islands and I guess a lot of people want to enjoy Spanish weather, Spanish vacation. How you're dealing with the traffic on the island bases ?

L.H.B. Our central operations team is all the time requesting slots, communicating with customers. And on the ramp - it's a non stop dance. One of ramp team is responsible to communicate with operations, he's leading the rest of the team on the ground. This is the way we organize ourselves. So, you will see everybody dancing around. The WhatsApp chats are boiling there. It's quite. How to say... dynamic, to see them working. It's very cool to see them working. This is

tedious job. But this is great. It's great. Whenever you get a parking, when there wasn't any parking. Or having clients coming from another provider that couldn't get him the parking and you managed to get it the solution. That is amazing feeling in Ibiza. This is like winning the lottery, really.

T.O. So you're winning pretty often. Are there any issues? I am sure it is far from magic, it is due to perzsistant hard work. When everyone wants to fly in the same airport and spend some days at the same airport. I mean, the airport is not growing. Are clients willing to understand that maybe one day or two day, different date would be better for him? Or it's up to you to deal with airport to find the space to accommodate plane.

L.H.B. Our job is to find a solution for our clients. Because we understand, if you plan to come four days, it would be strange if someone would tell you, you can come three days only. If you tell me for this Friday in Ibiza, Boeing 737 and you want to stay overnight the whole weekend, I would have to tell you no, but I'm going to give you solutions. I'm going to tell you, OK, maybe we can park the plane in Palma. It's a very short movement. We put it in the hangar and then you pick up the passengers back in two days, two, three days. We know it's not the optimum solution, but sometimes it's the only solution. We always give a solution to our clients. Trying to find them the cheapest airport where they can park, trying to make a deal with them so they don't have to relocate the plane and have the same cost as if it was with passengers. So, there is always a way. Maybe for the clients wasn't planning to move the plane to Valencia. But we can try to make him a discount and find him very nice locations to stay. So the clients says afterwards it was a good solution. The customer is happy. Sometimes for us the best option would be to have Ibiza multiplied by 10, the ramp. That would be starting to be a good solution. But it's complicated, very complicated.

T.O. You know, I'm just back from Caribavia. Believe me, investment in the airport development in that region, it's close to US\$2 billion. So, they really want tourism to come safely and in numbers. We should reach out to Ibiza airport authorities and maybe try to find a solution.

L.H.B. Why not. Maybe there are other types of solutions. Maybe better technologies to make parkings like more profitable, make better management for the slot allocation. Because now it's a system, but it's a bit of manual stuff. So, it's complicated to be super efficient. Sometimes we see that some parkings or some slots are left without use. Maybe they could promote something to fly more at night, because at night you can go, you have slots at night to enter to Ibiza. And some customers take advantage of this. They say, OK, I fly at night, I don't have any problem. But of course, if you fly from Paris to Ibiza to arrive at 2 in the morning, it doesn't make a lot of sense unless you are a DJ. We think of building a new airport is nearly impossible, it's complicated. There is a lot of geological, historic sites. So, everywhere you touch you have to be very careful. The airport would love to do it. Ibiza would say, okay, if it was for my decision, I would have three airports because I would fill them up in summer. In winter is the problem that you have like the diminishing of the work of 80%. That's the problem. That winter we are all looking at the sky, like saying, please, somebody land here.

T.O. Last question. A lot of people will be getting ready to plan vacation. July, August. It's not going to be easy for General Aviation Service, because everyone will come at the same time. Best destinations to come to Spain?

L.H.B. Well, in terms of customers, it's always Mediterranean in terms of number of flights in summer. But I would say that Malaga, that has a lot of capacity. It's a beautiful area. I have to say that this is one of my favorites now. And the same for Valencia. Valencia is amazing. The airport is

really working in providing space. It's true that they don't have a lot and they have a lot of diversions from other airports, but they do whatever is possible in their hands to confirm our operations. And also I would recommend Barcelona, of course, all the events this summer especially, it's going to be crazy. And well, we have a bit of a heat wave now in Spain, but hopefully we'll get out very soon and we'll get back to normal. Just boiling hot.

T.O. As long as we have electricity, everything is fine.

L.H.B. Yeah, that's a good point. That's a good point. There was some explanations on why it happened. But we still don't know what happened.

T.O. I mean as long as there is electricity in Spain, we fly wherever you want. My preferred point still Sevilla. For me the choice is made. I mean if I will have less concurrence flying to that city, I will be happy. It will be easier to arrange.

L.H.B. Amazing city. Sevilla is and was and always been one of the treasures of Spain. I have to say. This is without a doubt a beautiful city. And there is so much of music going on, different concerts and shows. This, this summer is very special.

T.O. I will definitely reach out to you at the end of summer to see how it was. I have an impression that you are getting bigger and bigger in terms of traffic in Spain. And it's a never ending story which is good for business aviation in Spain.

L.H.B. Yeah, we can't complain. We might surprise as well this summer. We had to change our forecast. Based on that we're planning allocation of staff in the islands and in Madrid too. Traffic is getting up even faster than we expected. We're trying to sign some last minute contracts before the summer. And we will let you know because right now we are behind something very big. So, very happy.

T.O. Thank you very much and I'm looking forward to get that big announcement.

L.H.B. Yeah, we will. No worries. You will know. Everybody will know.

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