



REPATRIATION FLIGHT - KLASJET FLEW LION CUB AND LEOPARD FROM RUSSIA TO TANZANIA

News / Business aviation



On October 26th a private plane took off from the Russian city of Chelyabinsk having filed a flight plan to its final destination, the Tanzanian city of Moshi, in Northern Tanzania, on the African east coast. The unusual passengers onboard this prestigious KlasJet private aircraft are a lion and a leopard who are being repatriated to more familiar territories following a long and complex rehabilitation process.

Both of the animals, Simba the Lion cub, and Eva the Leopard will be flown from the city of Chelyabinsk, where they have been carefully rehabilitated by Russian veterinarian Karen Dallakyan, to their new home in the care of the animal welfare foundation, Kilimanjaro Animal CREW – the Tanzanian Centre for Rescue, Education, and Wildlife – located near Moshi on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro.



In another unique operation for KlasJet, the whole project will come as the culmination of a long and complex process involving stringent logistical planning, the sourcing and provision of complicated permits and permissions, and the cooperation of multiple agencies and organisations. The whole process would also have been impossible without the assistance of the Transport Competence Agency in Lithuania who gave unlimited time and assistance for the successful outcome of the project.

Simba the lion cub's rescue mission in March 2020 was led by Yulia Agaeva, the founder of SO.TRAVEL and Friends Of My Heart community of animal rights activists, who also was an integral part of this repatriation project. The little lion was saved from horrific abuse at the hands of a beach photographer who used the cub for portraits with holidaymakers. In an act of gross brutality, the cub's legs had been broken to prevent the animal from escaping. Thankfully, after the rescue, the lion cub was put into the care of Dr Dallakyan and was taken to a shelter for wild animals, 'Save Me' where the rehabilitation process began.



In contrast to Simba, Eva the leopard had an easier upbringing having been rejected by its mother at birth and not suffered at the hands of man, Dr. Dallakyan once again stepped in to ensure the animal would be treated humanely and taken care of until such a time that she could be repatriated.

In usual circumstances, animals are transported by cargo aircraft. However, in this situation and to ensure that the animals' handlers, vets, and the entire repatriation team could travel together, the KlasJet private passenger jet was reconfigured to accommodate their cages by removing a section of the seating normally reserved for humans.



While at a glance reconfiguration can look like a simple change, in reality, this was a long and intricate process that required meticulous planning. A project for the aircraft modification was prepared. A step-by-step guide detailed the preparation process from what materials will be used for cages, how they'll be assembled and fastened to the aircraft, to special seating plans that clarified what seating will be removed and how the rest of the seats will be allocated to the passengers to ensure distance and safety requirements according to the aircraft performance limitations. These plans explained in thorough detail the whole process of working with animals, loading and unloading the cats, changed procedures in case of emergency. Only with careful and thorough preparation, the success of a project of such magnitude was possible.

According to Rita Domkute, KlasJet CEO, "At KlasJet, complex and unique requests are nothing new to us, finding solutions for those requests is what makes us stand out from our competitors. Over the years we have carried individual sports stars and entire teams while managing to cater for their specialised diets with individually created menus. We have catered for entertainers, celebrities, high-net-worth individuals, business leaders, and heads of state, so, having the King of the Jungle onboard is just more opportunity to demonstrate our flexibility and attention to detail."



Giving further examples of KlasJet's flexibility, the CEO went on to say, "As part of our response to the most unique private jet requests, we have transported precious goods and antiquities which involved meticulous planning and had to adhere to all additional safeguarding procedures. We have also trained our staff and crew to cater for both the religious and cultural differences we may encounter to provide the highest level of service and excellence. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have operated safely and successfully, even while repatriating infected passengers. Additionally, we have been called upon in a range of other medical emergencies, natural disasters, and in the provision of assistance to NGOs and other organisations."

Regarding the difficulties involved in the task of repatriating the animals to Tanzania, the CEO said, "The whole operation was a long and complex one, with many hurdles to be crossed and obstacles to be overcome. The logistics involved, and the reconfiguration of the aircraft required the attention of specialists. Additionally, even the best-planned flights can sometimes face unforeseen situations and delays due to external factors. In such situations professionalism, quick thinking and creativity enable us to make effective decisions to divert the situation back on track. For example, for this flight, the unrest in Sudan and Covid-19 border restrictions have prompted us to make alterations to our route. Thankfully, at KlasJet we have a team of hugely experienced aviation professionals who know and understand the compliance with and implementation of all legal requirements in an operation such as this."

Rita Domkute also added, "Projects of such magnitude and difficulty can seem impossible at first, yet where there's a will there's a way. Our team is always eager to undertake social projects and to use their experience, knowledge and determination to make the impossible a reality. Our team at KlasJet follows one golden rule: if at least one member of our team believe in a project and trusts it is possible, we are going all the way and will do our best to make it happen. And I am very proud to be a part of such a team."



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