WHEN YOU SHOULD CHOOSE A HELICOPTER FOR YOUR FLIGHT

News / Business aviation

Helicopters are becoming more modern and comfortable, being the main trend in the market today the so-called light helicopters. And for the versatility and practicality they provide, their extended use is anticipating new trends, such as urban air mobility. Welojets broker in Europe, Eric Bailleul, subject-matter expert in helicopters and private aviation, shares his insight.

By Eric Bailleul, Welojets Europe broker

In the global helicopter market, there are six major players that manufacture helicopters, Airbus Helicopters, Leonardo, MD, Sikorsky, Robinson, and Bell with each brand specializing in a specific segment, whether it is civil or military helicopters, ambulance, police, or VIP. The main trend in the market today are the so-called light helicopters, and where its production and market penetration are planned to grow until 2027 at levels never seen before.

The civilian helicopter market has always been marked by the trend of helicopters for oil and gas rigs while, not too long ago, VIP helicopters were medium sized aircraft with the capability of only

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flying few passengers in great comfort. They were exclusive helicopters and, above all, very expensive to purchase and operate.

For several years now, producers have opted for light helicopters that have more range to fly distances of over 700 kilometers without refueling and with a capacity of 7 to 10 passengers, which has made them not only a profitable option but also a very attractive one for charter operators. Furthermore, even companies that exclusively operated airplanes have decided to complement their services by using helicopters due to the versatility that these aircraft provide.

Furthermore, the sector is in sustained growth and only in North America, according to an industry report, the helicopter market size was a whopping US$16.76 billion in 2019. Although pre pandemic figures, these are still impressive, and the flexibility and versatility of this market will continue to prevail.

The perfect partnership for private aviation

The exact point where the universe of jets and helicopters converge is precisely in VIP private aviation, since many operators need to bring their passengers by helicopter to the airport where their planes will take off, either because of the distance from the cities in the case of Europe or because of the complexity of traffic in many cities like São Paulo, where helicopters predominate.

In Europe, this trend has grown throughout the region, especially where executive aviation has its most frequent users, Monaco and the South of France, where the helicopter has become one of the most popular tools for transporting VIP passengers, either to land in the multiple *Relais Chateux* or luxury mansions in Saint-Tropez, or landing on yachts, and during the winter taking passengers to the nearby ski resorts in just 30 minutes; a mission that only a helicopter can achieve.

The previous showcases the complementary nature of jets and helicopters in the private aviation realm, with helicopters being the perfect option for shorter trips. Furthermore, helicopters are also in a prime position to contribute to the air mobility ecosystem, which seeks to improve the overall efficiency of urban transportation. Essentially, helicopters already provide that flexibility with flights within cities and possess the needed infrastructure for a swift transition to the air mobility environment.

In a nutshell

With the announced increase in the production of helicopters in the coming years, the market will have more supply and the number of helicopter operators will continue to increase and this service will become gradually common as an option to transport travelers either for pleasure or business, complementing the potential gaps that can’t be covered by larger aircraft.

It is not unusual to see that some of our private aviation clients ask to mix their transfer experiences between VIP planes and helicopters given the efficiency of combining these two types of aircraft to reach their destination.

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