



USA TODAY

ROAD WARRIOR VOICES

When is private jet travel worth the splurge?



When you fly private you don't need to worry about security lines, getting to the airport super early or keeping liquids under a certain allowance. *(Photo: Comstock Images, Getty Images)*

Private jet travel is something most travelers fantasize about, with a select few lucky enough to actually experience it. While the high prices may seem like a splurge — Private Fly recently found fliers chartering a long-range jet in this growing market [costs about \\$76,500 on average](#) — are there times when booking a private plane is actually worth it? We asked the experts to find out.

Worth it

1. When a destination has limited/no airline service. There are times when commercial flights just don't work, or are quite inconvenient. Michael Holtz, CEO of [SmartFlyer](#), cites Amangiri in Utah as a common example. "It's very difficult to get there. Travelers can either fly to Vegas or Phoenix and drive five hours, or take a very small regional connection, so SmartFlyer can use a mid-range (jet) to get them to Page, Ariz., airport, just a short 20-minute drive from the resort."

2. When loss of time costs money. Denise Wilson, president and CEO of [Desert Jet](#), adds that for companies and groups, it often makes sense financially when factoring in loss of work time. She gives the example of flying from Palm Springs to Fresno, a seven-hour journey by commercial flights (factoring in the commute, airplane transfers and wait time), a six-hour drive, or a 45-minute flight on a private jet.

"We have many small companies that find this type of travel affordable when calculating one day out of the office versus two with hotel rooms. In this example, seven people can fly this trip for \$6,000 round-trip, and get there and back in the same day."

3. When it's comparable to commercial first class. Going back to Wilson's example, when I priced out the same itinerary for July 4 to July 8, for six people — the max most commercial airline sites allow you to book online— the cost was \$5,915 round-trip on Linear Air. In this instance you may actually save money on the private jet and have a more luxurious experience.

4. When you have multiple stops and a short timeframe. One of the biggest advantages of flying with a private jet is it saves you time and hassle, especially important when you have multiple cities to visit in a short timeframe. Holtz gives the example of flying New York - Green Bay - Rockford - New York in one day, which would cost about \$30,000 for a group of four on a private plane. When you factor in the salaries of four employees and their hotel stays in each city — because this wouldn't be possible in one day flying commercial — it makes sense.

Jet Edge International also provided the example of New York - Boston - Pontiac (Mich.) - Philadelphia in one day, an example costing their clients \$44,000. The hassle alone of organizing each leg and having to plan business meetings would make the private flights worth it (not to mention Boston to Pontiac yielded no results on a fare search on Hipmunk).

Bonus: You can conduct meetings on the jet in an office-like manner. When you factor in time and the value of an employee — i.e., the CEO is losing money when employees are idle — then the private jet makes more sense.

5. If you really hate airport hassles. When you fly private you don't need to worry about security lines, getting to the airport super early or keeping liquids under a certain allowance. You

simply show up, park near the plane, show your ID and get on. Even if you're flying international, the customs process is much smoother.

Explains [ExpertJet](#) founder Andrew Flaxman, "International customs clearance is much more convenient when traveling on a private jet, because usually the travel manager assigned by the private jet broker will send information and paperwork ahead of arrival. Once passengers are at the destination, immigration and customs agents briefly board the plane to check passports and send travelers on their way."

Not worth it

1. When it's just one person or a small group flying. Bill Papariella, president and CEO of [Jet Edge International](#), states their plane owners don't really see the value in flying privately when a route is high-volume and they're alone. Take, for example, Los Angeles to New York, which he says is "... highly served with good first-class seating. In the case where it's just one person traveling, it's tough to justify flying a flight that costs \$50k."

Notes Flaxman, "International flights for a group of 10 or less can be very costly and well above the price of a full-fare first-class ticket, since you need a plane that is large enough to go long-distance, but will not fill it up. Larger groups of 25 or more are more cost-effective."

2. When flying a well-served route, even international. If a route is popular you'll typically find many commercial options, and private service may not be worth the splurge. For instance, Holtz notes four people flying from New York to London for two nights would be about \$90,000 round-trip, with each leg being about six hours and 30 minutes. A Business Class ticket for the same flight for four people on United Airlines would set you back about \$28,231.44 total round-trip, \$41,051.44 on Delta Business Class or \$64,984 on American Airlines' First Class, with about the same length of time for each leg (no more than seven and a half hours).

They also priced out Los Angeles to Nice, France, which would require a fuel stop in each direction. This would be about \$150,000 round-trip and 13 hours. When pricing out a commercial flight, Air France had options with similar flying times for \$38,951 for four people round-trip in Business Class. Note that some airlines on this route had layovers close to five hours.

3. When the time saved doesn't compare to the splurge. Yes, private jet flying is typically more direct and luxurious, but compare routes and flying times as many domestic non-stops take around the same amount of time on popular routes. As noted above, you'll still save a bunch of time on departure and arrival flying private.