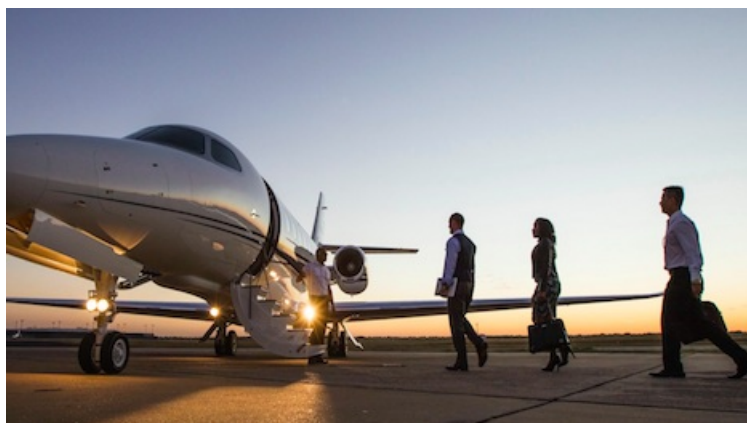TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Private aviation competes for customers at The Masters

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One of Magellan's private jets

By DANNY PARISI

The Masters Tournament this year is providing private jet companies with a big boost in customers, with a projected 45 percent increase in air traffic to Augusta, GA this year for the event.

Companies such as Wheels Up, NetJets and Magellan Jets are offering their own special deals and promotions as they jockey for the patronage of affluent golf fans flying in to see the tournament. Events such as this can offer a significant opportunity for private airlines to take advantage of increased air traffic.

"We pride ourselves on consistently bringing elite, high-touch service to our members, and The Masters gives us an opportunity to present new customers with an experience unlike any other," said Joshua Hebert, CEO of Magellan Jets, Quincy, Massachusetts.

Private aviation
With The Masters kicking off, today marks one of the biggest draws for private aviation as affluent golf fans are drawn from around the world to converge on Augusta.

Many private airlines are taking advantage of this increase in air traffic and expected to see their numbers soar in the days leading up to the event.

Wheels Up, a private airline, projected a 45 percent increase in flights to Augusta ahead of the event. NetJets, another private airline, is expecting to field 350 jets in and out of the city during the course of the tournament.

And other airlines, though not putting out their own data, are clearly banking on an increase in traffic if their special offers related to the event are any indication.

Inside a Wheels Up private jet

For example, Magellan Jets is offering a full package that includes a private flight to the event roundtrip, four nights in a hotel, VIP passes to the tournament and more.

Similarly, NetJets is hosting its own premium events at the tournament for owners of its private jets, with dinner and a Q&A featuring sportscasters and pros as well as a private concert.

Not to be outdone, Wheels Up also is offering premium events and coverage of the tournament for its customers with a Wheels Up Hospitality House that serves breakfast, lunch and cocktails during the event and a private party for customers to mingle with pros and other golf fans.

The Masters

The trend of private aviation companies offering exclusive packages related to the Masters shows how high-profile international events such as this can present a golden opportunity for travel brands.

With affluent customers flying in from around the world, and enough capital that choosing between private jets based on price is not an issue, those private airlines are left to compete based on what additional value they can offer to customers along with their flight.

Clearly, all three of these brands are interested in capturing customers' attention thanks to the addition of premium content hosted by them outside of just the travel experience.

NetJets will field 350 flights to and from Augusta

This is the mirror image of another recent trend where non-airline brands have been offering exclusive experiences in the private aviation setting, such as a recent culinary tour offered by Four Seasons through private jet.

As part of the Four Seasons Jet Experience, the Culinary Discoveries journey appealed to the foodie, spanning nine locations in 19 days. The $135,000 per person trip included a variety of encounters having to do with food that guests are not be able to experience anywhere else (see story).

Now that private aviation companies are competing in terms of what experiences they can offer outside of the flight, consumers have even more reason to browse carefully when picking a private jet.

"With this package, our travelers can sit back, relax and focus on who will be wearing the green jacket come April 9," Mr. Hebert said.

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