

Airshare Newsletter

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AIR SHARE CASE STUDY BARRY FEHLER

I have worked hard all my life in building up my own business which has, thankfully, been successful. My business interests have been quite extensive and include both insurance and leisure. Like so many Brits, my family and I enjoy leaving the unpredictable UK weather for warmer climates. We have found Southern Spain just right for us in terms of climate and way of life. The trouble is getting there. I travel regularly on the airlines for business and my family and I usually visit our home in Malaga once a month. Of course, there is no shortage of relatively cheap air travel options to Malaga and elsewhere. The problem was that we found the very advanced check-in times, the M25 journey to the airport, lengthy security and the almost “cattle” like treatment at large overcrowded airports was spoiling things for us.



We used to be able to deal with the airline travel part but not anymore. In fact, it had got to a point where we were actually avoiding going to Spain because of the awful airport experience and things have further deteriorated with the recent sale of GB Airways, reducing business class availability to either Malaga or Gibraltar.

In the summer of 2006 I noticed a new scheme being introduced by Atlantic Bridge Aviation Limited (ABA) based at London Ashford Airport in Kent. Its plan was to provide a low cost time-share in executive aircraft and operate this under the name Air Share. The aircraft were to be professionally flown to the UK's rigid airline standards by LyddAir, a wholly owned subsidiary of ABA. The scheme attracted me because it appeared to deliver a very affordable entry into owning and operating an executive aircraft with absolutely no hassle.

I contacted ABA and spoke with Jonathan Gordon, the Managing Director of the ABA Group. He explained the way Air Share worked. Basically, the various aircraft are sold in 1/8th shares and you can buy between one and six shares, with Air Share retaining the other two. A 1/8th share (or 12.5%) costs between £20,000 and £30,000 (depends on the aircraft) and each share entitles the owner to 40 days exclusive use of the aircraft per year.

You keep your share for five years after which you can sell it at fair market value, retain it for another five years, or ABA will buy it back at a guaranteed 60% of original value. For each 1/8th share you own, you pay £1,000 per month management fee. When you fly the aircraft you pay direct costs of operations + 15% and all the costs are transparent. Consequently you get the benefits of a professionally “chauffer” piloted private aircraft at a cost which I believe is as low as possible. There are also early get-out clauses in the event you really don’t like it.



I thought this is a really low cost and low risk way of seeing if this will work for us. I took the family down to Lydd and we met with Mr Gordon. He

showed us the aeroplanes and, in fact, we had the benefit of being able to fly in the very one we were interested in. This aircraft is laid out in three parts – the flight deck, main cabin, and aft cabin. In the main cabin the seats are laid out in a “Club Four” configuration meaning that four people sit opposite each other and with plenty of room and large fold out tables. The rear cabin provides the entrance, baggage area (accessible in flight) plus toilet and vanity unit.

We decided to invest in one share to start with and see how things went. In November 2006 we had our first flight to Malaga and stopped for lunch in Pamplona on the way. It occurred to me that we could, in fact, plan to stop in a variety of places including some notable French Châteaux’s equipped with their own landing strips! The aircraft did not, initially, have the range to make Malaga directly from the UK. However, Mr Gordon said there was a long range tank option which he



PA-31-350 Chieftain interior

was prepared to have fitted and this was completed by April of 2007. The flight time direct to Malaga is around 5 hours which is, of course, longer than an airline. However, we arrive at the airport and are on board our aircraft with the engines started 10 minutes after getting to the airport! Can you believe it, a VIP escort to the aircraft and away in less time than it normally

takes just to find the car park at a larger airport. There is no security because it is our private aircraft.

The large and airy cabin (big windows with curtains) is great for relaxing in. There's plenty of storage space and we found by experience that we would start with morning coffee, watch a DVD, about half way through the DVD open a bottle of chilled wine followed by a leisurely lunch and we were there. There are no annoying announcements, no noisy babies or unruly passengers, no one coughing or sneezing next to you (how many times have I caught a cold in-flight?) and you can have the cabin at just the temperature that suits you.



B200 interior 4 club seats

We found that by the time you would normally be sitting on a cramped airliner at Gatwick with the captain announcing “we have a 25 minute delay due to traffic congestion” we were already over the North coast of Spain.

And arrival, even at a busy airport such as Malaga, is fantastic. The engines are shut down and within (literally) two minutes we are in our private air conditioned people carrier being taken to the VIP terminal where we are simply escorted through and are leaving the airport in our pick-up car less than five minutes after leaving the aircraft. This VIP treatment is par for the course in your own private aircraft; I travel to Manchester on business and get just the same treatment. And it is not all that expensive either – certainly worth the money as far as we are concerned.

Air Share worked so well for us that during 2007 we increased our share holding from one share, to two and then three. What the experience had shown us was that our quality of life and enjoyment of our Spanish home was much improved. Of course it costs considerably more money than a low cost airline option but it was worth it. I think it's worth spending the extra on certain things and this was one of them.

We enjoyed the experience so much that in late summer 2007 I asked Jonathan Gordon (who personally looked after us much of the time) if there was a cost effective solution to us buying, maybe, a light jet and for ABA to operate it. Jonathan offered to look into this and a fortnight later he presented me with a professional feasibility study on what would be best aircraft type to fit our budget which we had set at around £1.2m.

He also showed how, by his company leasing back the aircraft, he could bring me revenue on my asset. While this would not end up covering all my own costs of flying, it would go a long way towards it and makes the whole venture very interesting. With my own involvement in the leisure business I'm helping with the marketing. Mr Gordon presented me with a very flexible package in order that we could both make an acceptable margin while keeping the charter prices competitive.

The aircraft recommended by ABA, a Beech Super King Air is perfect. It is in a three cabin layout with a club four seating arrangement, a two place couch and a further seat in the main cabin. Again there are fold out tables and hot coffee/ice box in the forward cabinetry. The cabin is large and quiet with big windows. The seats are luxury leather and the finishing all round is perfect. Entry is via a large door and this takes you into the rear cabin where there is a flushing toilet and a large baggage area – you cannot take too much baggage, it all fits and is accessible in flight.

It is certainly worth mentioning how the purchase was completed. Having recommended the aircraft type, ABA checked the world market thoroughly and eventually recommended the aircraft I now own.



N983AJ in USA prior to ferry trip home

This aircraft was being refurbished to like-new condition which is the way it looks and was also having state-of-the art radio and navigation system upgrades. It was important that the aircraft could be UK certified and this

was carefully checked all the way through. Mr Gordon spent days out in the USA ensuring everything was completed and looking after my interests.

From instructing ABA in September the aircraft was delivered by Mr Gordon in a like-new condition in the first week of November. All parts of the transaction were entirely transparent and I was kept fully informed and knew where I stood throughout.

My family and I have enjoyed the delights of this aircraft which travels at jet like speeds in a quiet pressurised cabin. The aircraft is very versatile and can operate onto short runways at small airports, or, into major hub airports requiring advanced navigation equipment. This gives great flexibility when choosing where you wish to fly.

The whole Air Share experience is one I would thoroughly recommend, particularly for those who want a low cost/low exposure way of finding out if a private aircraft can work for them. It worked so well that now I have a



superb luxury prop-jet that, with the co-operation of ABA and LyddAir, will earn money for me when I am not flying in it myself. And even when I am flying in it, the management contract I have with ABA means that my flying is very affordable and I know that both my family and I are in safe hands.

My aircraft is now available for charter at very competitive rates. Call +44 1797 322207 24/7

Evaluating your travel patterns

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From the people that brought you LyddAir Kent's favourite airline

With a ten year history at Lydd Airport Atlantic Bridge Aviation is the parent company of LyddAir and Airshare. Formed in 1989 Atlantic Bridge specialises in the import of "best" value aircraft from the USA, the major market for these types. With the Dollar at a ten year low against the Pound using our services to acquire and operate has never made more sense. Call 01797 322207 now to learn more.



Club class luxury leather interior on the B200 seats up to nine passengers