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**ROAD WARRIOR VOICES**

## First trip on a private jet? Here's what you need to know



Think flying in a private jet is only for the rich and famous? Think again! Enjoy the luxury, but don't get too carried away, with these tips. USA TODAY

**Jessica Festa, Special for USA TODAY** 4:34 p.m. EDT May 20, 2016

As private jet travel becomes more affordable to the masses with subscription-based and Uber-style on-demand services — not to mention private jet companies offering [jet-like public](#)

[charters](#) — many fliers are pondering a switch from commercial service. With more first-time private plane fliers heading into the skies, it's important for travelers to know what to expect — and how to behave — on a private plane. We asked industry experts to share their top tips.

### **1. Understand parking etiquette.**

When chartering a private jet you can typically drive right up to the aircraft to easily load your luggage and board, with your car being parked or stored until your return. Denise Wilson, founder, president and CEO of [Desert Jet](#), notes however that there is certain etiquette to follow:

"Set your wheels opposite the aircraft, set the car in park and set the parking brake to prevent it from rolling into the airplane. I've personally witnessed, more than once, a driver exit the car and the car start rolling slowly towards the aircraft!"

### **2. Limit your luggage**

You may think that when you're spending more for your flight experience you can bring more, but this isn't the case. Wilson explains many jets have luggage limits due to the size of the luggage compartment door, or weight restrictions based on how many people or how much fuel is required for the flight. According to Wilson, most small jets fit about seven roll-aboard suitcases similar to a commercial airline's carry-on bags. If there's just one person flying there won't be an issue, but if you have a full group it can become one.

Nick Tarascio, CEO of [Ventura Air Services](#), adds it's helpful to bring soft bags to help alleviate issues with the odd shapes of aircraft baggage compartments. "If you show up with rigid bags, you set the pilots and ground staff up for a game of Tetris as they try to figure out how to fit your bags into less-than-ideal cabinets and baggage compartments. Soft bags will give you the best chance of preventing any of your bags from having to be shipped to your destination."

### **3. Avoid the red wine.**

There's no need to sneak alcohol onto a private jet, as it's legal to bring your own booze on board. The FAA rule states only that alcohol must be served by the flight crew.

Advises Wilson, "Let your crew place your alcohol on ice and stop sneaking it onboard. Just remember that red wine is to be avoided on most private jets due to possible spills during turbulence and the high cost to replace interior components that become stained."

Speaking of wine, Andrew Collins, president and CEO of [Sentient Jet](#), advises fliers to think of getting invited on a private jet as akin to receiving a dinner party invitation — meaning it's nice to bring a gift, such as a bottle of wine, as a thank you gesture.

#### **4. You still need identification.**

One perk of flying private is you won't need to wait in a TSA security line or adhere to liquid restrictions. That being said, Greg Richman of [Skyjet](#) notes you'll still need your ID to board. A driver's license works for domestic, and a passport for international.

#### **5. Know there is one assigned seat.**

Richman also explains that, while private jet fliers don't have assigned seats, they can't completely sit wherever they want. He says, "The only assigned seat on a private jet is that of the owner or the person paying for the trip. Guests should wait for the owner or leader of the group to choose his/her seat first."

#### **6. It's courteous to tip your pilot.**

There are many differences between a commercial airline pilot and a private jet pilot. According to Tarascio, many jet pilots don't earn as much as you may think, not to mention that along with flying they also load the bags, clean the plane and spend considerable time planning all aspects of the flight. If you're happy with your service, offering a tip — he's seen anywhere from \$20 to \$1,000 — is a nice gesture.

#### **7. Your departure time is flexible.**

Running late? While you shouldn't change your departure time if you don't have to — the pilots are waiting at the airport for you, after all — if an issue arises you typically can change it. Tarascio explains that many companies begin preparing the aircraft an hour in advance, so you can often leave early, as well.

He advises fliers to "notify the company of your time changes, if more than 15 minutes, instead of showing up early or late without giving any heads up. The staff will appreciate that greatly and you'll have a better departure experience."

But be advised that while private flying is more flexible with departure times than commercial airlines, some companies have an automatic cancellation policy if you're over an hour late, while others will be okay with waiting around for a few hours, so review your contract terms to be sure.

#### **8. It's best to book in advance.**

Yes, most private jets can be booked the same day; however, this doesn't guarantee you'll get the jet you want. Danielle Talbott, regional vice president of sales at [XOJET](#), notes that while

their clients can book within 12 hours of their desired departure time, giving the company more time to work with means more choice in aircraft, an important part of the experience.

She explains, "Choosing the right aircraft for the right purpose depends on several factors. For business travelers, clients are seeking to maximize their workday and minimize travel time. This might mean a specific aircraft type with short-runway performance that can operate at a small airport close to the location of an important meeting. Or it could mean an aircraft with Wi-Fi to continue working onboard. For many Xojet clients flying coast-to-coast across the country, the speed of the Citation X ... cuts off 30 minutes or more in flight time. Again, it comes down to convenience and efficiency. For personal and family travel, it's really a matter of personal preferences but factors like pets and luggage can come into play in addition to general considerations like size and comfort of the cabin."

#### **9. Dress appropriately.**

While there isn't a formal dress code for private flying, Collins advises keeping in mind you're representing your host in a certain way as a guest, and should dress accordingly. He suggests business or business casual attire, though specific recommended attire is situational.

"If you are flying private on your own flight or flying as the guest of a friend or relative, you still want to make sure to dress neatly, but nice jeans are likely fine," explains Collins. "If you are traveling with a client or business associate, however, you may want to dress a bit more formally depending on the individual. For families, more casual attire also acceptable, though children and young adults should still avoid overly casual dress such as sweatpants or gym clothes."