

The new generation of private jet travellers

Sarah Edworthy meets **Clive Jackson**, founder of Victor, the new marketplace that makes private jet travel more accessible and affordable

The world of private aviation is undergoing a revolution. Just as mainstream airlines have seen their business models disrupted, forcing them to offer lower prices, more tailored services and new routes to new audiences, something similar is happening in the rarefied world of private jets with the arrival of Victor.

If you already charter jets, then you should be switching to Victor. And if you thought the luxury of private jet travel was beyond your means, think again, because with Victor you can buy a seat on a private aircraft and it will cost you the equivalent of a business-class seat but without the hassle of airport check-in queues.

The idea is the brainchild of entrepreneur Clive Jackson. When BMI ended its regular flights to Mallorca where Jackson has a home, he asked a group of fellow passengers in business class what they should do about it. Hiring a private jet was one option. "The problem was, though, that we'd all have to be travelling at the same time and with just the seven of us that just wasn't realistic," he says. After considerable research, Jackson, who is one of the UK's longest-serving digital marketing gurus, came up with Victor.

"I left that BMI flight with seven business cards in my pocket and the light-hearted promise from my fellow passengers that if I could organise a private jet at a time and date that suited them, at a price that they could afford, I could count them in," says Jackson.

On August 14 last year, Victor, the world's first marketplace for private jet charters and pay-per-seat bookings, was launched. Those seven fellow passengers became the founding members. Since then, more than 1,000 like-minded travellers have joined the online community www.flyvictor.com and

together they've formed the first luxury internet brand born of social media. Victor works by targeting two different clients: the jet charterers and the individual seat buyers. The charterers already charter jets but are switching to Victor to get a more competitive price in a transparent transaction.

The clever element is that they can also take up a discretionary option to sell spare seats on their flight and on the positioning leg. This can reduce costs by up to 50 per cent.

By making private jets available by the seat, Victor creates a much bigger marketplace and widely extends the benefits of this aspirational form of travel. Membership of Victor is free, and individuals can buy seats on another member's flight.

Jackson's research showed that, on average, 40 per cent of private jets flying across Europe are empty and that the average number of passengers on a private jet flight is 2.2.

"That's a huge amount of waste and inefficiency. Selling spare seats is not cheapening the product. It is just being smart about how you fly. And 87 per cent of our charterers, even famous people, sell their spare seats. It has blown a myth that people who fly private won't want to share. "Knocking £4,000 off an £8,000 flight is an extremely compelling motivation and, after all, they will share their jet with like-minded people."

In response to where its members have signalled they want to fly, Victor is launching a seat "schedule" across peak holiday dates to three popular European destinations – Mallorca, Ibiza and Nice – opening up the world of stress-free, private-jet travel to those prepared to pay the equivalent of a business-class fare.

For many time-pressed individuals, it



makes a second home or yacht viable and their holiday becomes more relaxing. "We all know what it's like to catch an 8am flight from Gatwick, having arrived at 6am, having left home at 4.30am, having not slept in case the alarm doesn't go off, with the kids in tow, and someone telling your wife to throw away her Chanel scent or re-pack it to put it in the hold with 150 people standing behind you," says Jackson.

"All of that goes out of the window on a private plane. I can't emphasise enough the pleasure of travelling when that stress has been removed. It is quite uplifting." The flights to Ibiza, Mallorca and Nice will leave from five different European departure points: Biggin Hill, Farnborough, Luton, Zurich and Munich.

There are hundreds of thousands of business and first-class travellers who assume they can't afford private aviation but now, with Victor, yes they can' says Jackson

Stress free: travelling by private jet lets you step straight into your holiday, perhaps on the deck of a Burgess yacht, right

"We've used the smart software to map where we've seen the demand building so far and made aircraft available on a per-seat basis for those dates and destinations. The seats are priced from £995, the equivalent of a business-class fare on a commercial airline – if you can find one.

"It's not strictly a schedule; the plane only flies once two seats are booked. But they are our three most popular destinations on the most popularly requested dates."

The summer "schedule" launches in partnership with upmarket hotels, resorts, yacht brands, Michelin-starred restaurants, country clubs and property companies. If you are taking a seven-day break at the five-star hotel



Why fly with Victor?

- Victor is the world's first marketplace for private jet charters and per-seat bookings.
- Private jet seats are available at business class fares.
- You can travel by private jet from £995 per person, one way.
- Membership is free and there are no upfront fees.
- Join today at flyvictor.com

La Residencia in Deia, Mallorca, for example, or you have chartered a Burgess yacht to take the family along the Côte d'Azur, you will want to dine and shop in the very best places.

As well as private jet travel, Victor offers members access to some of the most exclusive properties and experiences. And when members wish to stay with one of Victor's partners, Jackson will speak to the general manager personally to ensure an extra-special stay.

In its innovative approach, Victor is demystifying private-jet travel. "We found clients were struggling to get to various destinations and to wonderful hotels or yachts. People had to be pretty wedded to the idea of a holiday in a particular place

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Victor's summer 2012 flights

This summer, Victor is launching a seat schedule across peak holiday dates to Mallorca, Ibiza and Nice – only six seats per flight.

Farnborough to Palma/ Palma to Farnborough
Learnjet 40 – £1,250 per seat
 Saturday departures on June 30, July 7, July 14, July 21, July 28, August 4, August 11, August 18; also Friday, August 24; Monday, August 27; Sunday, September 2

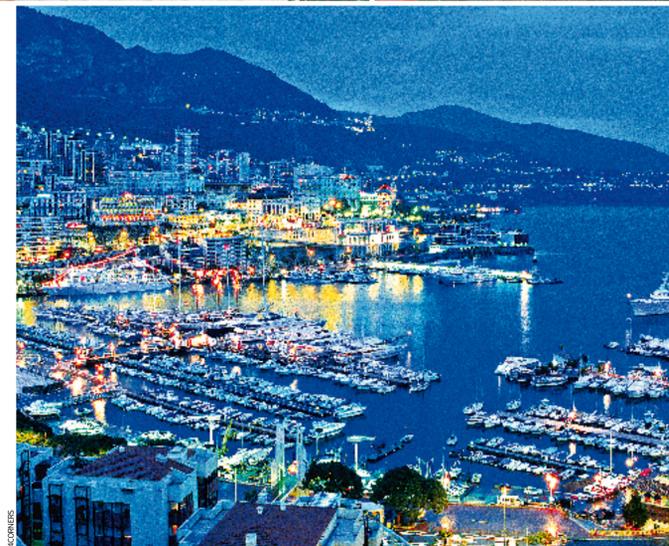
Biggin Hill to Palma/ Palma to Biggin Hill
Citation CJ2 – £1,250 per seat
 Saturday departures on June 30, July 14, July 28, August 11; also Monday, August 27; Sunday, September 2

Luton to Nice
Citation CJ2 – £995 per seat
 Friday evening departures on June 1, June 8, June 15, June 22, June 29, July 6, July 13, July 20, July 27, August 3

Nice to Luton
Citation CJ2 – £995 per seat
 Sunday evening departures on June 3, June 10, June 17, June 24, July 1, July 8, July 15, July 22, July 29, August 5

Biggin Hill to Ibiza/ Ibiza to Biggin Hill
Citation Excel – £1,250 per seat
 Saturday departures on June 30, July 7, July 14, July 21, July 28

© You must be a Victor member to book via the Victor website. Membership is free. All fares shown are inclusive of fees, taxes and charges. Payment by card will incur an additional charge of 2.5 per cent. Check terms and conditions at flyvictor.com before booking.



Summer specials: clockwise from top, backstreets of Palma Mallorca; Tagamago Island; Hotel La Residencia, Mallorca; Monte Carlo

to put up with the low-cost flight experience at the height of summer. In the low season, a Victor flight may be the only way to get there."

Once installed on a luxury yacht or in gorgeous resorts such as Gran Hotel Son Net or the Son Brull boutique hotel in Mallorca, Tagamago Island (a private island half a mile off the coast of Ibiza) or Hacienda Xa Namena Spa Hotel in the pine woods of Ibiza, Victor members will enjoy the reciprocal door-opening, personally tailored service that comes with being part of an exclusive club.

This appeals to Victor members who, by nature, are entrepreneurial types who like to set the agenda, treat time as a premium and appreciate the networking opportunities afforded in the air.

An increasing number of Victor travellers have four legs. "One reason why people fly private is because they want to take their pet, literally in the cabin," says Jackson. He adds that the alternative – air freight charges and the

'When members wish to stay with one of Victor's partners, Jackson will speak personally with the general manager to ensure an extra-special stay'

emotional trauma of putting a dog in the hold on a commercial airline – is a reason why people choose not to fly. "We mark flights as dog-friendly and the dog has to buy its own seat unless it's small enough to fit in a handbag."

The business trajectory of Victor is more akin to a rocket launch than the gentle ascent of a plane's take-off. Jackson has created a dynamic brand driven by a consumer need (other attempts to make private jet travel more accessible have been attempted by operators, not consumers).

Using the internet as both meeting place and marketplace, his online private jet booking system allows the charterer to instantly obtain and compare quotations for flights, then book and pay online.

"It's where smart money is moving because Victor connects the consumer directly with the supplier," he says. "An internet marketplace squeezes out the middle-men and their undeclared margins.

"We provide an alternative way of reaching some of Europe's most attractive destinations which hitherto have been served only by low-cost airlines.

"It must be said, though, that with a maximum of six seats per aircraft, we have to operate on a first come, first served basis."

To become a Victor member and for further information, call **020 7384 8550** or visit flyvictor.com

VICTOR
 THE PRIVATE JETSHARE COMMUNITY