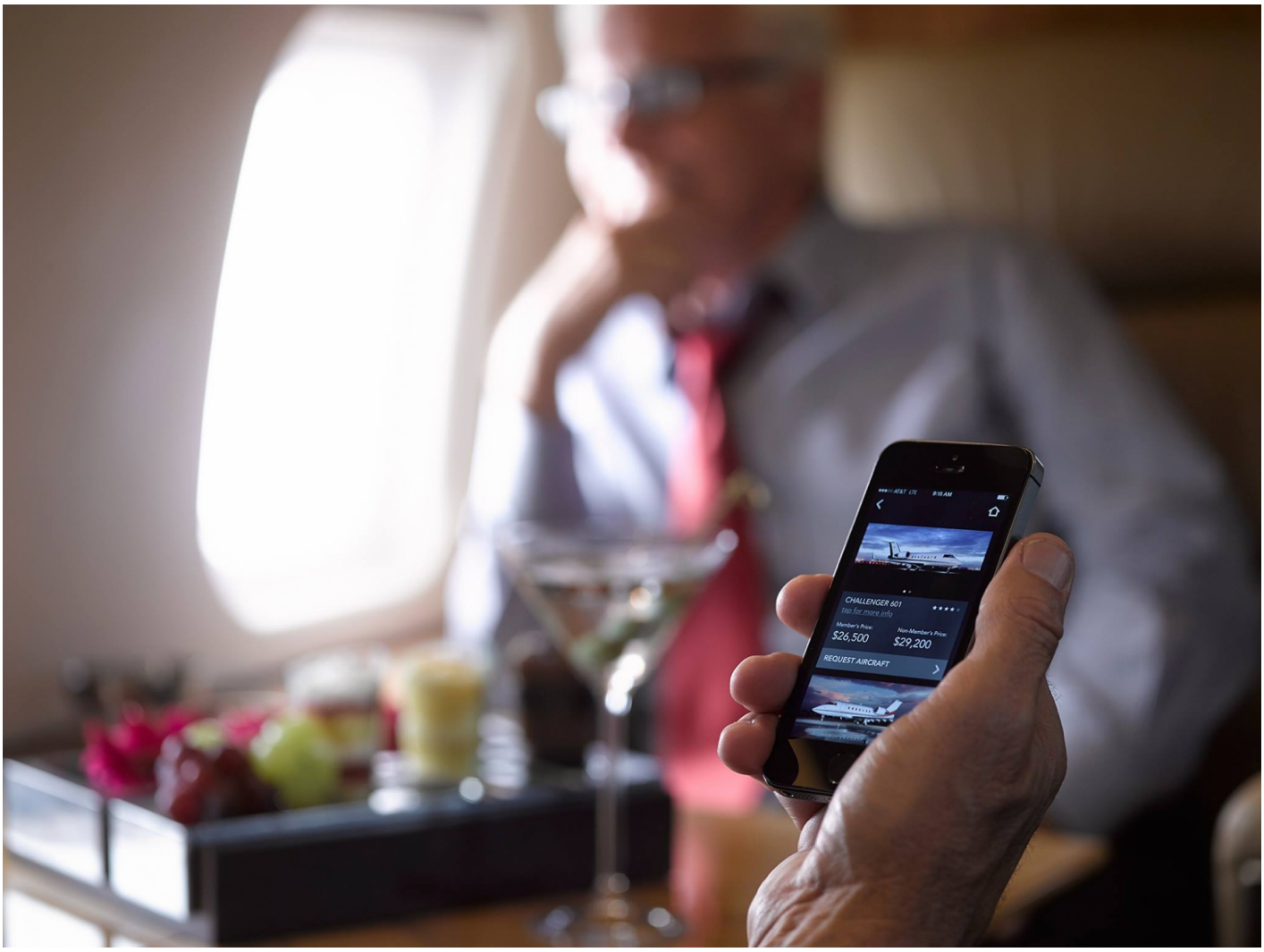
JETSMARTER MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM EXPANDS 'FREE' EMPTY LEGS

News / Business aviation



Private aviation membership program JetSmarter is expanding its flight capacity through an agreement with charter operator Jet Edge International to buy all its empty-leg hours and make them available to JetSmarter members at no additional charge above their annual membership fee of $9,000. JetSmarter has agreed to pay up to $350 million over the next seven years to purchase up to 35,000 flight hours from U.S.-based Jet Edge, which has a fleet including a mix of Gulfstream G650, G200, G550 and GIVSP jets, as well as some Bombardier Global 6000s. For the first time, it will offer intercontinental flights.

Under its JetDeals program, JetSmarter members can book between two and five free seats on an unlimited number of empty-leg flights, which are posted at short notice on the program's app. The company pledges that over 100,000 free seats will be made available annually to an unspecified number of members that it says is growing at a rate of 30 percent.

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Another membership service is Jet Shuttle, which offers scheduled charter flights flown by Part 135 partner operators under Part 380 rules. Members can choose from the published list of scheduled services or can even request new shuttle services. For example, its New York to Miami flights are operated with a Bombardier Challenger 850 and a Learjet 45. Each member is entitled to one free seat on an unlimited number of shuttle flights and can also purchase seats for non-members.

JetSmarter members can also book ad hoc charter flights at what the company says are wholesale flight hour rates. Non-members also can book charters, but at higher rates.

To fund the expansion of its charter capacity, JetSmarter has raised $52 million through three capitalization offerings since July 2015. The Delaware-based company is owned by a group of unnamed private investors. The provisional $350 million agreement with JetEdge constitutes its largest ever commitment to an operator. Although, it would not confirm the agreed flight-hour pricing for JetEdge's empty legs, the numbers involved imply an average rate of just $1,000 per hour.

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