Around the World in Thirty Days

Luxury travel providers offer private jet journeys that allow clients to tailor itineraries to their particular interests or to take a multi-week tour around the entire globe.

By Sarah Binder

It’s lunchtime at 30,000 feet. You sip a glass of Dom Pérignon while gazing out the jet’s windows and chatting with the co-captain. Yesterday you were cruising the Chao Phraya River in Thailand on a private longboat; today you will browse the energetic Grand Bazaar in Istanbul. In this moment, you have it all. In the travel industry, nothing is more suited to today’s have-it-all, on-demand lifestyle than around-the-world private jet tours, which whisk travelers from one bucket-list destination to another in ultimate luxury.

This epitome of travel began in the early 1990s. Before then, private jet tours focused on one area in depth, such as South America or Africa, immersing guests in several destinations within the region, explains Heidi Lakani, founder and owner of Lakani World Tours. Over the years, a new clientele emerged to alter the landscape — highly seasoned travelers, and ambitious young people who had the financial means and desire to see the world, but not the time. The demand from both demographics to experience the highlights of the globe in luxury and convenience led to the creation of around-the-world itineraries.

“These itineraries developed into a discovery trip for people; they would go somewhere briefly, love it, and then we would design a follow-up tour for them to go back,” says Lakani. “The industry evolved from ‘in depth to highlights,’ and then ‘highlights to in depth.’” Avoiding commercial flying restrictions and limiting tour sizes allows providers to pamper guests on board carefully customized aircraft, while flying direct to hard-to-reach destinations.

“Our classic Around the World itinerary hits nine ‘world wonders’ in one trip, from Easter Island, Chile, to the ‘Lost City’ of Petra, Jordan,” says Andrew Lorence, account and marketing services manager for TCS World Travel.

When an itinerary includes more than a dozen flights across just a few weeks (most trips are approximately 24 days in length), globetrotters understandably seek the most high-end and efficient flying experience possible. TCS World Travel’s expeditions feature a “newly reconfigured Boeing 757, which features comfy, flatbed leather seats with plenty of legroom, global Wi-Fi, amenities such as iPads and Bose noise-cancelling headphones, and an executive chef on board,” says Lorence. Lakani World Tours is known for its daytime-only flights; the lack of sleeper seats allows for a Sky Lounge where guests can socialize and have lunch with the captain and crew, explains Lakani.

In addition to TCS and Lakani, the number of key players in the realm of worldwide travel has grown over the years. The number of key players in the realm of worldwide travel has grown over the years. The number of key players in the realm of worldwide travel has grown over the years.
private jet travel is small, yet distinguishable, from the Four Seasons Private Jet Experience, hosting guests in deluxe Four Seasons accommodations, to programs with in-depth experiential and cultural frameworks, such as Smithsonian Journeys, National Geographic Expeditions, and Abercrombie & Kent. Each provider operates just a few around-the-world-style itineraries per year, with most trips selling out far in advance. For example, all of Lakani’s 2019 tours are already sold out.

No matter the tour operator, it goes without saying that an around-the-world trip offers something for everyone. Marveling at the Taj Mahal may be the ultimate bucket list item for a husband, while his wife highly values the intellectual overlay, it’s a great way to learn about a culture and regions; clients can then work with the team to customize their private journey to the destinations of their dreams. The landscape of private jet travel will continue to ebb and flow. While the around-the-world journeys are highly popular right now, Ledwin predicts that as more and more travelers are introduced to them, the tide will turn. Trips may become more thematic, centered on a specific region, and offered via smaller planes. In order to keep its most experienced travelers coming back for more, TCS designs a trip just for them. “In 2017, our Kingdoms and Cultures of Eurasia itinerary is taking guests to truly off-the-beaten-path places like Iran, Kyrgyzstan and Romania,” says Lorence. “People sometimes have sticker shock when they see the price tag of a private jet trip,” says Ledwin. “If you were to take all of the air tickets you would need to make all of these stops, and put together all of these experiences with a high level of customer service and the intellectual overlay, it’s a great value, especially for people who are trying to make up time with their travel.”