



# dayjet

## A Business Traveler's Dream Come True? From Parking Lot to Airborne in 17 Minutes

*By Oscar Garcia*



*Last January, DayJet announced the opening of a DayStop, or outstation in DayJet lingo, at the Miami Opa-locka (KOPF) Airport, and I was invited to experience DayJet, the world's first and only true "On Demand per Seat Air Taxi." I gladly accepted and was determined to find out everything about DayJet and its much touted ultra efficient DayStop network. I was especially interested in determining how quickly and hassle free a passenger could go from "parking to flying" and vice versa. Both turned out to be quicker and easier than I expected.*



Facing page: DayJet Eclipse 500 N126DJ (msn 000002) performs a flyby demonstrating its capabilities at Airventure 2006, Oshkosh Wittman Regional Airport (KOSH) July 28, 2006. (Paul Chandler)

Above: DayJet Captain Ron, seated in the right seat, was already onboard N136DJ and turned to welcome me as I entered the cabin. (Oscar Garcia)

The new DayStop promised to link KOPF with the DayJet network, which consists of seven DayPorts and 38 DayStop destinations in Florida and the southeast, with the already trademarked per seat “flexible depart” and guaranteed arrival times model that have made the news worldwide and have single handedly revolutionized the on-demand air taxi industry. KOPF is a suburban airport conveniently located in the greater Miami-Dade County area, 15 freeway minutes away from downtown Miami where a large percentage of the community business executives and potential “DayJetters” live and work.

Marina Huettel, Executive Assistant to Ed Lacobucci, invited me to attend and experience a “flight to nowhere” departing from and arriving to this newest DayStop. Mr. Lacobucci is the founder and CEO of DayJet. I have met him on several occasions to discuss in detail the DayJet enterprise, and early on

I encouraged him to start service to Miami. I also attended the formal operations launch last October in Tallahassee and Boca Raton where I experienced the Eclipse 500 for the first time. I was excited to be a “test “passenger in the Eclipse 500, now configured as the world’s “smallest airliner” with airline style emergency exits and seatback pocket safety cards. Like millions of others, having suffered enough domestic airport-airline travel hassles, DayJet’s promise of avoiding crowds, lines and security checkpoint mishaps really intrigued me and offered a light at the end of the regional business traveler’s tortuous airline tunnel.

I drove to KOPF and parked my car at FlightLine, the DayStop designated FBO. (By the time this article is printed, the designated FBO at KOPF will be Miami Executive Aviation.) I started timing and walked into the FBO’s lobby which was decorated with a giant airline

style DayJet poster. Katie Edwards, DayJet Marketing Coordinator for the event, greeted and escorted me to the pilot’s lounge where I shook hands with the flight crew, Captains Jeff and Ron (no last names on their name tags), both of whom were extremely friendly and professional. Ron took my briefcase to the plane while Jeff took a quick look at my driver’s license and entered my personal data on a portable tablet computer. Once the information was sent and checked against no fly lists, etc., he asked me to step on a doormat style scale. Jeff looked down and discreetly entered my “post Christmas” weight information — thank goodness I was the only passenger on the flight and no one else was looking.

I found out that the computer tablet contained the required flight plan, weight and balance and performance information and sent it wirelessly to both the company and the FAA. DayJet is truly a paperless, wireless, real time data



DayJet N146DJ (msn 000058) landing at Naples Municipal Airport (APF/KAPF) in Florida on December 20, 2007. (Eric Stamm)



Onboard the Eclipse 500 N136DJ, Captains Jeff and Ron prepare for the flight. (Oscar Garcia)



A closer look at the digital flat panel displays of the Eclipse 500 cockpit. (Oscar Garcia)

operation in and out of the cockpit. In fact, DayJet Services, Inc., is the world's first paperless air carrier.

Ready to go, Jeff asked me to please follow him to the plane. There was no line, no screening — toiletries check, shoes off and on, x-rays. I looked at my watch...not more than six minutes had elapsed since I parked my car! As this was the inaugural flight, Katie, along with Jeff, escorted me to the plane (N136DJ) with a white on blue paint scheme as a video cameraman recorded every detail. (There are several other color schemes including orange and blue, green and blue.) On every DayStop flight, just the pilots would be there. In DayPorts, however, there is always a ground attendant to escort the passengers to the plane and give the pre-departure debriefings.

The atmosphere that day was festive and cheerful with an array of DayJet posters, marketing materials and balloons. There were a few South Florida DayJet sales managers and a few guests who flew before me and were sharing their experiences, reviewing sales materials and watching high tech flat screens with DayJet audio visual shows.

The Eclipse 500 was sitting steps from the door, Ron was on the right seat, and by the time I stepped in the cabin, less than ten minutes had elapsed since I parked my car.

The plane looked good albeit a bit "stubby" in my opinion — the Pratt and Whitney PW615 look impossibly small. Once inside, however, the plane felt much larger than it looked. DayJet planes are all equipped identically inside. The floor plans have three forward looking seats equipped with folding armrests and the distinctive DayJet colorful head mats. Being the only passenger onboard, it felt even more roomy. The two front passenger seats have ample leg room if the right rear seat is not occupied. DayJet's choice of blue airline style leatherette upholstery and trimmings are pleasant and inviting. The seats do not recline, but once seated the pitch, elbow and head room space felt like being in a standard airline commuter aircraft.

It was amusing to read the DayJet Eclipse 500 safety card while Katie and a very friendly DayJet trainee completed the safety briefing. In less than two minutes the door was closed, the engines started, and we taxied toward Runway 9L at Opa-locka — 12 minutes and counting.

Once the door closed, the cabin felt even larger as the door curvature adds noticeably more volume to the front right seat. There is a

large emergency hatch window on the right front seat as well. I surveyed the cabin's appointments and noticed laptop outlets, generous sized individual storage wall pockets, individual passenger service units with lights and air vents and ample storage room in the back to fit three passengers' overnight roller bags and coats. I could barely hear the engines starting and sensed a very low workload and conversation coming from the cockpit. The whole experience had a sense of simplicity, safety, professionalism and yes, fun. It felt as if someone had taken the three seats from a regional jet and built a plane around them. Before I knew it, we were rolling down the runway. My watch read 16.5 minutes from the time I parked my car.

The takeoff and climb out were uneventful. The airplane used about 2,000 feet of runway and rotated at 90 knots, climbing out at 120 knots with 1,500 feet per minute climb rate. The noise level was ultra low throughout, the cabin was smoothly pressurized, and the ride was "large jet aircraft" solid and stable. I was relaxed and the cabin was quite bright thanks to the Eclipse 500's three large windows on each side. The ambiance was perfect to read, write or work on a laptop. I chose to look out the windows and enjoy the view of Biscayne Bay as Jeff made a climbing left turn to return to level off and allow me to experience the plane in cruise flight configuration. I could perfectly predict that the hour flight would feel no different than a flight on a larger business or regional jet.

Ron turned back and kept me well informed of the return maneuver profile to the airport, just as would be done at every destination airport on a normal flight. The pilots were friendly, checking behind them a couple of times and making light conversation. For those new to smaller jets, I think this level of crew-passenger interaction will be very comforting and reassuring.

On approach to land, Ron was flying the aircraft and, once more, the maneuver was extremely stable with little perceptible actions in the cockpit. This was in part due to the "hidden arms" on the aircraft side stick configuration. The aviator in me looked into the "glass" cockpit

screens and saw 100 knots on final. This is the slowest I have ever seen in a jet. The flare was imperceptible and we touched down at 90 knots. The landing was, in pilot's jargon, a "roller," with a quick slow down using brakes as the engines have no reversers.

I started my watch, this time intent on timing how quickly I could get back to my car with my briefcase in hand. Taxi and engine shutdown took three minutes, the door opened and Katie smiled and welcomed me back. I shook hands with Ron and Jeff and reached for my briefcase stepping out to follow Katie back to the FBO and out the lobby to my car. I stepped into my car and was ready to go. Unbelievably, five and a half minutes had elapsed (excluding a short interview in front of DayJet's sponsored video cameraman) since we rolled off the runway. Again, no unending terminals, baggage claims, parking lot shuttles and the like.

I knew this experience would reveal a no hassles, quick in and out airline experience, but the 17 minutes in and 5.5 minutes out were less than half of what I expected. Not to mention the smooth, professional, jovial and safe

operation I experienced being around the DayJet staff.

If I had to fly to three destinations in one day, the total "non flying time" would barely exceed an hour. As we all know, this would be unthinkable using the airlines, whether mainline or regional. Given today's airport issues, crowds and security hassles, one has to be at the airport at least 60 to 90 minutes before departure time, and it is not uncommon to take 30 to 60 minutes to taxi, deplane and reach the airport's congested taxi lines and parking lots. Not to mention longer and longer in and out taxi times out of main hubs, takeoff waits and the occasional "gate occupied" delays.

The final score from wings to wheels is: DayJet 23 minutes (17 in and 5.5 out) versus airlines: 120 minutes (75 in and 45 out). Overall, my DayJet service in and out of the new Miami Opa-locka DayStop might as well be called the TimeJet.

I look forward to experiencing and reporting on the DayPort (mini hub) to DayStop experience in a future article. ✈️

DayJet N126DJ (msn 000002) banks left as it completes its flyby demonstration at Oshkosh 2006. (Paul Chandler)

