



XJet

the world's best FBOs

Our survey of ground-support facilities turns up the top performers.

by Curt Epstein

FIXED-BASE OPERATIONS, commonly known as FBOs, have come a long way since their beginnings as nondescript trailers and shacks alongside airport taxiways. Many have morphed into well-equipped, stylishly decorated facilities that, for passengers on corporate



and private aircraft, often offer a first impression of a town or city.

While many airports have just one FBO, some have several, providing airplane operators with a choice. The vast majority of the several thousand or so FBOs in the U.S. are single-location businesses but some chains—such as Signature Flight Support, Landmark Aviation, Atlantic Aviation and Million Air—operate facilities at dozens of airports across the country or even abroad.

FBOs provide shelter for aircraft and such services as fueling and deicing. Some also offer a gamut of amenities for passengers, including concierges, audiovisual-equipped conference rooms and business centers with wireless printers; for pilots there are often flight-planning facilities, “snooze rooms” and courtesy cars.

To determine which locations deliver the

best customer experience, **BJT**’s sister publication, *Aviation International News*, annually asks readers to rate FBOs they’ve used over the previous 12 months. This year, *AIN* received nearly 12,000 evaluations from subscribers who collectively deal with FBOs in 91 countries.

These readers rated the facilities from 1 to 10 in five categories:

Line service—the competence of the workers who meet the airplane on the ramp and service it.

Passenger amenities—the quality of lounges and conference rooms as well as availability of ground transportation.

Pilot amenities—the quality and availability of pilots’ lounges, flight-planning facilities, snooze rooms, crew showers, entertainment and recreation possibilities and complimentary crew cars.

Facilities—cleanliness, comfort, upkeep and convenience of the location in general.



AirFlite, Long Beach



Fargo Jet Center

What are the most important factors you look for when choosing an FBO? (Respondents were asked to choose three)

| | |
|---|-----|
| Excellent customer service | 86% |
| Fuel pricing | 65% |
| Passenger amenities | 40% |
| Cleanliness | 33% |
| Pilot amenities | 25% |
| FBO infrastructure/decor | 17% |
| Line service training program participation | 17% |
| Loyalty/rewards program | 6% |
| Fuel brand | 1% |



J.A. Air Center



Tampa Jet Center



Banyan Air Service



National Jets

Top-rated FBOs in the Americas

| | FBO | Location | Airport | Overall Avg. | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------------|-----|
| TOP 5% | AirFlite Aviation Services | Long Beach, California | Long Beach/Daugherty Field | 9.6 | |
| | J.A. Air Center | Sugar Grove, Illinois | Aurora Municipal | 9.5 | |
| | Tampa Int'l Jet Center | Tampa, Florida | Tampa International | 9.5 | |
| | XJet | Denver, Colorado | Centennial | 9.4 | |
| TOP 10% | Banyan Air Service | Fort Lauderdale, Florida | Fort Lauderdale Executive | 9.1 | |
| | Business Jet Center | Dallas, Texas | Dallas Love Field | 9.1 | |
| | Destin Jet | Destin, Florida | Destin-Fort Walton Beach | 9.1 | |
| | Fargo Jet Center | Fargo, North Dakota | Hector International | 9.1 | |
| | Hangar Ten (now Atlantic Aviation) | Kansas City, Kansas | Charles B. Wheeler Downtown | 9.1 | |
| | Monterey Jet Center | Monterey, California | Monterey Peninsula | 9.1 | |
| | National Jets | Fort Lauderdale, Florida | Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood Int'l | 9.1 | |
| | Pentastar Aviation | Waterford, Michigan | Oakland County International | 9.1 | |
| | Signature Flight Support | St. Paul, Minnesota | St. Paul Downtown Holman Field | 9.1 | |
| | Stuart Jet Center | Stuart, Florida | Witham Field | 9.1 | |
| TOP 20% | Global Select | Sugar Land, Texas | Sugar Land Regional | 9.0 | |
| | Jet Aviation | West Palm Beach, Florida | Palm Beach International | 9.0 | |
| | Meridian | Teterboro, New Jersey | Teterboro | 9.0 | |
| | Million Air San Antonio | San Antonio, Texas | San Antonio International | 9.0 | |
| | Premier Jet | Carlsbad, California | McClellan-Palomar | 9.0 | |
| | Signature Flight Support | Minneapolis, Minnesota | Minneapolis-St. Paul Int'l/Wold-Chamberlain | 9.0 | |
| | Skyservice | Toronto, Ontario, Canada | Lester B. Pearson International | 9.0 | |
| | Texas Jet | Fort Worth, Texas | Fort Worth Meacham Int'l | 9.0 | |
| | Vail Valley Jet Center | Eagle, Colorado | Eagle County Regional | 9.0 | |
| | Wilson Air Center Charlotte | Charlotte, North Carolina | Charlotte/Douglas International | 9.0 | |
| | Wilson Air Center Memphis | Memphis, Tennessee | Memphis International | 9.0 | |
| | TOP 30% | Base Ops at Paige Field | Fort Myers, Florida | Paige Field | 8.9 |
| | | Million Air Dallas | Dallas, Texas | Addison | 8.9 |
| | | Scottsdale Air Center | Scottsdale, Arizona | Scottsdale | 8.9 |
| | | Del Monte Aviation | Monterey, California | Monterey Peninsula | 8.8 |
| | | Million Air Indianapolis | Indianapolis, Indiana | Indianapolis International | 8.8 |
| Tac Air | | Salt Lake City, Utah | Salt Lake City International | 8.8 | |
| Denver Jet Center | | Denver, Colorado | Centennial | 8.7 | |
| Galaxy Aviation | | Orlando, Florida | Orlando International | 8.7 | |
| Jet Systems | | White Plains, New York | Westchester County | 8.7 | |
| Million Air Burbank | | Burbank, California | Bob Hope | 8.7 | |
| Million Air Houston | | Houston, Texas | William P. Hobby | 8.7 | |
| Million Air Anchorage | | Anchorage, Alaska | Ted Stevens Anchorage In | 8.7 | |
| Rectrix Aerodrome Centers | | Sarasota, Florida | Sarasota/Bradenton International | 8.7 | |
| Showalter Flying Service | | Orlando, Florida | Orlando Executive | 8.7 | |
| SkyService | | Dorval, Quebec, Canada | Pierre Elliott Trudeau Int'l | 8.7 | |
| SkyService | | Calgary, Alberta, Canada | Calgary International | 8.7 | |
| Swift Aviation Services | | Phoenix, Arizona | Phoenix Sky Harbor International | 8.7 | |
| Tac Air | | Lexington, Kentucky | Blue Grass | 8.7 | |
| Wilson Air Center Chattanooga | Chattanooga, Tennessee | Lovell Field | 8.7 | | |

Source: AIN 2014 FBO Survey. *Ties are listed alphabetically.

The world's best FBOs

Top-rated FBOs in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa

| FBO | Location | Airport | Overall Average |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| TAG Farnborough Airport | Farnborough, UK | Farnborough | 9.1 |
| Jet Aviation | Geneva, Switzerland | Geneva International | 8.5 |
| TAG Aviation | Geneva, Switzerland | Geneva International | 8.4 |
| Harrods Aviation | London, UK | London Luton | 8.2 |
| Landmark Aviation | Nice, France | Nice Côte d'Azur International | 8.2 |
| Universal Aviation | Paris, France | Paris Le Bourget | 8.2 |
| Dassault Falcon Service | Paris, France | Paris Le Bourget | 8.0 |
| ExecuJet Middle East | Dubai, United Arab Emirates | Dubai International | 8.0 |
| Landmark Aviation | Paris, France | Paris Le Bourget | 8.0 |
| Hawker Pacific Flight Centre | Sydney, Australia | Sydney Kingsford Smith | 7.9 |
| Hong Kong Business Aviation Centre | Hong Kong, China | Hong Kong International | 7.9 |
| Jet Aviation | Dubai, United Arab Emirates | Dubai International | 7.7 |
| ExecuJet Europe | Zurich, Switzerland | Zurich | 7.5 |
| Jet Aviation | Zurich, Switzerland | Zurich | 7.5 |
| Signature Flight Support | Paris, France | Paris Le Bourget | 7.5 |
| Swissport Executive | Nice, France | Nice Côte d'Azur International | 7.5 |
| Jetex Paris FBO | Paris, France | Paris Le Bourget | 7.4 |
| Signature Flight Support | London, UK | London Luton | 7.4 |
| VIPPort Vnukovo-3 | Moscow, Russia | Moscow/Vnukovo | 6.1 |

Source: AIN 2014 FBO Survey. Ties are listed alphabetically. Highlighted text indicates an overall average of 8.0 or greater.

Dassault Falcon Service, Le Bourget



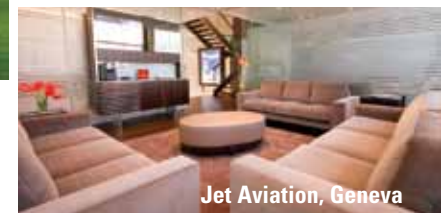
ExecuJet, Dubai



TAG, Farnborough



Harrods Aviation, London Luton



Jet Aviation, Geneva

Customer service—friendliness and professionalism of the customer reps, their familiarity with the local area and their assistance with reservations and catering.

The 25 locations that constituted the top 20 percent in the 2014 survey all scored at least 9.0 overall, while those in the top 5 percent earned a 9.4 or better.

This year's No. 1 FBO in the Americas is AirFlite Aviation Services at Southern California's Long Beach Airport. Owned by Toyota and home to the automaker's North American flight department, AirFlite perennially garners high scores from AIN readers for its passenger amenities and meticulously maintained facilities. The FBO has occupied the same building for 22 years and "it's a continual remodeling cycle," says general manager John Tary. Last year's projects included updating and remodeling the location's two conference rooms, which seat 12 and 25 people, respectively. On tap is a \$100,000 redesign of the customer-service desk.

European businesses once again dominate the list

of high-scoring FBOs outside the Americas, and as in the past several years, the FBO at London-area Farnborough Airport occupies the No. 1 position. Owned and operated by worldwide aviation-services provider Tag Aviation, it is home to 65 business jets ranging from a Beechcraft Premier to an Airbus ACJ319, which are sheltered in 240,000 square feet of hangar space. The airport, also owned and operated by Tag, is one of only a few in Europe that are dedicated to business aviation, and it's poised for growth: it handles approximately 24,000 takeoffs and landings a year and recently received government approval to double that number.

Occupying the next two spots on the list are competing locations at Geneva International Airport in Switzerland. France's Paris Le Bourget Airport is also well represented with three FBOs in the top 10.

Curt Epstein (cepstein@ainonline.com) is a staff editor at Aviation International News.

What do some FBOs do that make you avoid them?

(Respondents were asked to choose three)

| | |
|--|-----|
| Poor customer service for passengers | 71% |
| Unprofessional/improperly trained CSRs | 47% |
| Rundown/unclean facility | 47% |
| Poor care of aircraft | 38% |
| Ramp fees | 27% |
| Charging separately for services such as coffee, ice, newspapers, etc. | 26% |
| Lack of proper ground-handling equipment | 17% |
| Adding a fee for handling of catering | 8% |
| Billing errors | 5% |
| Spilling fuel on my aircraft | 3% |