



Fargo Jet Center, Fargo North Dakota

The World's top-rated FBOs

Our exclusive survey of ground-support facilities identifies the best performers.

by Curt Epstein

THE GROUND-SUPPORT FACILITIES commonly known as FBOs (for fixed-base operations) represent a critical link in the private aviation chain. They provide aircraft fueling, hangars and parking tie-downs, cleaning and water replenishment, meeting spaces, catering facilities and, at some locations, maintenance services. For passengers on corporate and private aircraft, they often offer the first impression of an airport.

While small airports may have but one provider, large airports often have several. Some are owned by the airports, but most are privately operated. Several chains—such as Signature Flight Support, Landmark Aviation, Atlantic Aviation and Million Air—boast dozens of locations throughout the U.S. or even internationally. Amenities vary but can include elegantly appointed waiting areas, well-equipped conference

rooms, business centers, refreshment bars and concierge services for passengers. Crews might expect pilot lounges, “snooze” and exercise rooms and complimentary use of cars.

To determine which providers offer the best customer experience, **BJT** sister publication *Aviation International News* annually tasks its readers with rating the FBOs they have used over the past 12 months. For this year’s report, *AIN* tallied more than 12,000 reviews for facilities in 89 countries from upwards of 2,100 respondents who deal with FBOs on a daily basis.

AIN asked its subscribers to consider four criteria: line service, passenger amenities, pilot amenities and facilities. For each of these, readers scored FBOs from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest. *AIN* then compiled those scores to calculate an average for each location that received 20 or more individual ratings.



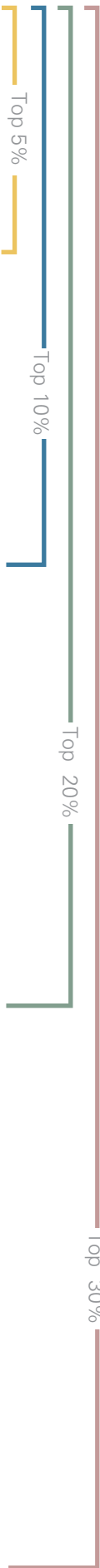
Tampa International Jet Center, Tampa, Florida



J.A. Air Center, Sugar Grove, Illinois



Top-rated FBOs in the Americas (by overall average)			
FBO	Location	Airport	Overall Average
J.A. Air Center	Sugar Grove, Illinois	Aurora Municipal	9.5
AirFlite	Long Beach, California	Long Beach/Daugherty Field	9.4
Fargo Jet Center	Fargo, North Dakota	Hector International	9.4
Global Select	Sugarland, Texas	Sugar Land Regional	9.4
Tampa Intl Jet Center	Tampa, Florida	Tampa International	9.4
XJet	Denver, Colorado	Centennial	9.4
Banyan Air Service	Fort Lauderdale, Florida	Fort Lauderdale Executive	9.3
Wilson Air Center	Memphis, Tennessee	Memphis International	9.3
Hangar Ten	Kansas City, Kansas	Charles B. Wheeler Downtown	9.2
Pentastar Aviation	Waterford, Michigan	Oakland County International	9.2
Texas Jet	Fort Worth, Texas	Fort Worth Meacham International	9.2
Destin Jet	Destin, Florida	Destin-Fort Walton Beach	9.1
Jet Aviation	West Palm Beach, Florida	Palm Beach International	9.1
Meridian	Teterboro, New Jersey	Teterboro	9.1
Monterey Jet Center	Monterey, California	Monterey Peninsula	9.1
Scottsdale AirCenter	Scottsdale, Arizona	Scottsdale	9.1
Vail Valley Jet Center	Eagle, Colorado	Eagle County Regional	9.1
Yellowstone Jet Center	Bozeman, Montana	Bozeman Yellowstone	9.1
Business Jet Center	Dallas, Texas	Dallas Love Field	9.0
Del Monte Aviation	Monterey, California	Monterey Peninsula	9.0
Million Air	Dallas, Texas	Addison	9.0
Skyservice	Toronto, Canada	Lester B. Pearson International	9.0
Jet Aviation	Houston, Texas	William P. Hobby	8.9
Million Air	Indianapolis, Indiana	Indianapolis International	8.9
Premier Jet	Carlsbad, California	McClellan-Palomar	8.9
Rectrix Aerodrome Center	Sarasota, Florida	Sarasota/Bradenton International	8.9
Swift Aviation Services	Phoenix, Arizona	Phoenix Sky Harbor International	8.9
Wilson Air Center	Charlotte, North Carolina	Charlotte/Douglas International	8.9
Atlantic Aviation	Hailey, Idaho	Friedman Memorial	8.8
Jet Systems	White Plains, New York	Westchester County	8.8
Preferred Jet Center	Atlanta, Georgia	Cobb County-McCollum Field	8.8
Signature Flight Support	Denver, Colorado	Denver International	8.8
Boca Aviation	Boca Raton, Florida	Boca Raton	8.7
National Jets	Fort Lauderdale, Florida	Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International	8.7
Signature Flight Support	Minneapolis, Minnesota	Minneapolis-St. Paul/Wold-Chamberlain	8.7
Stuart Jet Center	Stuart, Florida	Witham Field	8.7
Base Ops At Page Field	Fort Myers, Florida	Page Field	8.6
Cutter Aviation	Phoenix, Arizona	Phoenix Sky Harbor International	8.6
Galaxy Aviation	Orlando, Florida	Orlando International	8.6
Galaxy Aviation	Stuart, Florida	Witham Field	8.6
Galaxy Aviation	W. Palm Beach, Florida	Palm Beach International	8.6
Jet Aviation	Teterboro, New Jersey	Teterboro	8.6
Landmark Aviation	Charleston, South Carolina	Charleston International	8.6
Landmark Aviation	Chicago, Illinois	Waukegan Regional	8.6
Landmark Aviation	White Plains, New York	Westchester County	8.6
Million Air	San Antonio, Texas	San Antonio International	8.6
Million Air	Albany, New York	Albany International	8.6
Sheltair	Fort Lauderdale, Florida	Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International	8.6
Tac Air	Omaha, Nebraska	Eppley Airfield	8.6
West Star Aviation	Grand Junction, Colorado	Grand Junction Regional	8.6



Excellent service can be found from coast to coast in North America. The 18 FBOs on the continent that ranked in the top 10 percent of this year's survey all scored 9.1 or higher.

The top-scoring FBO in the Americas was J.A. Air Center at Aurora Municipal Airport near Chicago with an overall 9.5 rating. In operation for little more than four years, this FBO has earned top-five rankings in the last three, and it garnered the highest individual-category rating (9.8) in this year's report for its modern, upscale facilities. Outside the 12,000-square-foot structure, aircraft up to the size of a Gulfstream G650 can park underneath a massive canopy, allowing passengers to disembark directly into the terminal. The full-service FBO offers aircraft charter and management services, maintenance, one of the country's biggest avionics shops and a recently added interiors-completion division.

What makes you avoid some FBOs? <i>(respondents were asked to choose three)</i>	
Poor customer service	71%
Rundown or unclean facility	52%
Unprofessional or improperly trained CSRs	47%
Poor care of aircraft	34%
Ramp fees	29%
Charging separately for services, such as coffee	23%
Lack of proper ground-handling equipment	17%
Adding a fee for handling of catering	8%
Billing errors	4%
Spilling fuel on aircraft	3%

What are the most important factors you look for when choosing an FBO? <i>(respondents were asked to choose three)</i>	
Excellent customer service	85%
Fuel pricing	68%
Passenger amenities	37%
Cleanliness	31%
Pilot amenities	28%
Line service training program participation	17%
FBO infrastructure and décor	15%
Loyalty and rewards programs	8%
Fuel brand	1%

Notes: FBOs with the same overall average are listed alphabetically. FBO information provided by Ac-U-Kwik. Users were asked to rate FBOs based on line service, passenger amenities, pilot services and facilities on a scale of 1 to 10.



Wilson Air Center, Memphis, Tennessee



Banyan Air Service, Fort Lauderdale, Florida



Hong Kong Business Aviation Center, Hong Kong, China

Asked to describe the focus that makes his FBO successful, operations manager Randy Fank said, "It's not hard. Take care of the guy in the back of the airplane, get him on his way, so you've actually accomplished what the pilots want done, then take care of the pilots."

AIN's questionnaire also asked readers to rank the factors that prompt them to select an FBO as well as those that may have driven them to seek other options. Those results remained largely unchanged from last year. By an overwhelming margin, excellent customer service was again the key factor in selecting an FBO, followed by fuel pricing and passenger amenities. Poor customer service, rundown or unclean facilities and unprofessional staff ranked as the biggest reasons for avoiding one.

Outside North America, the top 10 FBOs this year

are all in Europe. These include TAG Aviation at Farnborough Airport, an hour outside London, which had the highest overall score among international locations. The company this year is celebrating a decade of operating the airport (one of the few in Europe dedicated to business aviation), which it took over from the UK Ministry of Defence in 2003. Easily identified by its pair of visually striking three-bay hangars providing 240,000 square feet of aircraft storage, maintenance facilities and offices, the FBO offers dedicated concierge service as well as onsite customs and immigration facilities. Customers are permitted to drive directly to their aircraft, if they wish to bypass the well-appointed terminal, which includes passenger and crew lounges and multimedia-equipped conference rooms.



AirFlite, Long Beach/Daugherty Field, Long Beach, California

Top-rated FBOs in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa			
FBO	Location	Airport	Overall Average
TAG Farnborough	Farnborough, UK	Farnborough	8.9
TAG Aviation	Geneva, Switzerland	Geneva International	8.4
KLM Jet Center	Amsterdam, the Netherlands	Amsterdam Schipol	8.3
Signature Flight Support	Paris, France	Paris Le Bourget	8.3
Dassault Falcon Service	Paris, France	Paris Le Bourget	8.2
Harrods Aviation	London, UK	London Luton	8.2
Signature/AviaPartner	Nice, France	Nice Côte d'Azur International	8.0
Swissport Executive	Nice, France	Nice Côte d'Azur International	8.0
Jet Aviation	Geneva, Switzerland	Geneva International	7.9
Universal Aviation	Paris, France	Paris Le Bourget	7.8
Hong Kong Business Aviation Center	Hong Kong, China	Hong Kong International	7.7
Abelag Aviation	Brussels, Belgium	Brussels National	7.6
ExecuJet Middle East	Dubai, United Arab Emirates	Dubai International	7.6
Signature Flight Support	London, UK	London Luton	7.6
Landmark Aviation	Paris, France	Paris Le Bourget	7.5
Jet Aviation	Dubai, United Arab Emirates	Dubai International	7.1
Jet Aviation	Zurich, Switzerland	Zurich	6.5
VipPort Vnukovo	Moscow, Russia	Moscow/Vnukovo	6.0



Signature, Le Bourget, Paris, France