

SATSair taxis on-demand passengers across South Carolina and Southeast



The Greenville-base on-demand airline has been thriving amid cutbacks from larger carriers. Since 2004, SATSair has grown to a fleet of 26 aircraft and has taxied 25,000 passengers around the Southeast, including to and from 43 of South Carolina's 60 airports.

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Published March 18, 2009

[SATSair](#), an air taxi service that started in Greenville in 2004 with just one aircraft, enjoyed its best year yet in 2008 after logging 11 million paying passenger miles, 14,000 flights and carrying about 25,000 passengers since it began operations five years ago.

President and CEO Steve Hanvey said the company's aircraft landed at 500 airports in 24 states during 2008.

From one airplane five years ago, SATSair has grown to 26 aircraft that last year delivered passengers to or picked them up from 43 of South Carolina's approximately 60 airports, including Charleston. In addition, SATSair carries passengers to and from destinations throughout the Southeast.



SATSair President and CEO Steve Hanvey

“Cancellation of airline operations into regional hubs and reduced use of personally-owned aircraft all contributed to increased use of SATSair’s personal on-demand service by air travelers in 2008,” said Phil Quist, vice president of business systems for SATSair.

“We’ve seen a growing number of new customers using our point-to-point air cab operation as a solution to their frustration with hub-and-spoke airlines, enjoying decreased door-to-door travel times. This is particularly significant in that air cab service has been seen more as a remedy for multi-hour driving trips, not as a replacement for other forms of air travel,” Quist said.

Quist said the company posted record revenue for the year. But it is a closely held private company, and Quist said it would not release specific financial data.

The typical cost for a flight is about \$695 per hour for the use of the airplane, which usually can carry two passengers and their luggage.

“The meter is running,” Quist said, from the time the passenger gets in the plane until he or she exits the plane. Flights are scheduled as soon as a plane becomes available following the reservation.

The air taxi service operates the [Cirrus SR22 aircraft](#), a relatively new design of propeller-driven airplane that has fixed landing gear, state-of-the-art electronics, and a one-of-a-kind, built-in parachute that can lower the plane slowly to the ground in case of an engine failure or other emergency.

The aircraft is capable of cruising at about 200 miles per hour, Quist said, putting the South Carolina coast within about a one-hour trip from the Upstate.

Quist said the cost of such a flight, at \$695 per hour, compares very favorably with the \$4,000 to \$5,000 per hour to operate a jet aircraft.

“Our door-to-door time is very quick,” Quist said. “And we can take someone from Oconee airport to North Myrtle Beach directly, which no commercial airline can do.”

SATSair’s maintenance facility and flying base is at the Greenville downtown airport, which is also home base for its 45 pilots, maintenance and other staff.

SATSair officials said they expect 2009 to be good to the company.

“Even as fourth quarter growth flattened in response to the global economic doldrums, SATSAir maintained flight levels during the quarter at a pace equal to 2007,” Hanvey said.

Quist said results for 2009 are expected to be flat compared with year-earlier figures.

“We have no plans to buy additional aircraft this year,” he said. “I wish I had a crystal ball for what’s happening in this economy. Right now, we are trying to ensure we maintain our business at the levels of service we had in 2008.”

SATSAir flies an average of three flights daily into all of the state’s major economic centers including Greenville/Anderson/Spartanburg, Charleston/Beaufort/Hilton Head, Columbia and Myrtle Beach.

Last month, SATSAir announced a new program called “Business Day-Travelers” out of Atlanta, to allow business professionals in the Atlanta market to improve their productivity by doing more business throughout the Southeast in less time. The trips will

be offered at \$495 per hour and will operate from the fixed based operator Signature Flight Support at the Dekalb-Peachtree Executive Airport in Atlanta.