

Gulfstream G350

Transcontinental range, large cabin capabilities and unsurpassed product support

By Fred George

The G350 offers the lowest price of admission to Gulfstream's large cabin, current production aircraft family. New, it retails for \$32 million, according to *Business & Commercial Aviation's 2009 Purchase Planning Handbook*. Used G350s — they're rare — might command half that in today's depressed market.

The G350 appeared in 2005 to fill a gap in Gulfstream's product line between the 3,300-nm, super-midsize G200 and the 4,350-nm, large-cabin G450. Gulfstream faced stiff competition in the segment from Bombardier's Challenger 604 and Dassault's Falcon 2000EX. Rather than develop a clean-sheet model, Gulfstream opted to build a version of the 2004 G450 having 3,474 pounds less fuel capacity and a price \$5 million lower. With just 11 delivered so far, it would seem the market questions that decision.

The G350 can fly three crew and eight passengers 3,800 nm at 0.80 Mach and land with NBAA IFR reserves. Slow to 0.77 Mach and it can fly 3,900 nm. It can carry eight passengers nonstop between Western Europe and Eastern U.S.

The aircraft has the G450's improved efficiency, 12,000-hour TBO Tay 611-8C turbofans, four-screen PlaneView cockpit, lower roll control effort ailerons and GV electrical system, plus its improved environmental system and higher capacity, quieter APU, among other features. To help keep the price down, Gulfstream's HUD/EVS package was made a \$1.2 million option rather than standard equipment. Similarly, some standard G450 cabin amenities became options on the G350. Gulfstream's synthetic vision system (SVS) is available as an upgrade.

G350's PlaneView suite offers more capabilities than the avionics on Challenger 604/605 or Falcon 2000EX/LX. However, an SVS upgrade for the latter's EASY cockpit versions is coming.



With the most powerful engines and the best weight-to-thrust ratio, G350 has best-in-class takeoff performance, especially at hot-and-high airports. It also has a faster long-range cruise speed.

The G350's other assets include a 1,525-cubic-foot cabin and unmatched factory support, according to Jay Mesinger, president of a Boulder, Colo.-based business jet sales firm bearing his name.

The 37-foot-long cabin can accommodate up to 16 passengers in three zones, and features a dozen wide-oval cabin windows and a 169-cubic-foot, internally accessible aft baggage compartment that's 29 percent greater than the Falcon 2000EX's and 47 percent larger than Challenger 604/605's. Max cabin altitude is 6,000 feet. Three cabin layouts have forward galleys and three have aft galleys; all have aft lavs. While the G350's fuselage has a smaller diameter than the Challenger 604/605 or Falcon 2000EX/LX, the main cabin is 10.7 to 11.5 feet longer.

The G350's most obvious shortcoming is its fuel consumption, burning up to 50 percent more than its lighter, smaller competitors, and a prime reason for its higher operating costs.

Perhaps the greatest unknown is resale value. "With only 11 aircraft in the fleet and very few resale transactions, the G350 hasn't been able to create a historical remarketing pattern," Mesinger said.

In contrast, there's been plenty of resale activity in the Challenger 604 and Falcon 2000EX fleets. Wholesale and retail values for a 2004 Challenger 604, for instance, range from \$15 to \$17 million. Low and high *Blue Book* values for a 2004 Falcon 2000EX are \$17.7 to \$20 million.

Mesinger said the low and high book values for a G350 are \$15.9 and \$18 million. According to registration records, GM leased five G350s. After closing its flight department, it turned down offers in the mid- to high-teens for two of the aircraft, according to a source close to the company. No new G350s have been delivered since 2007 and no used aircraft have sold as of mid June, Mesinger noted.

"The GM flight department liquidation could be a defining reality for this market," Mesinger asserted. That's because a G350 would command \$23 to 24 million in normal times, especially with an established resale record. But now just might be had at a 10- to 20-percent discount. ■