

CLASSIC DRIVER

Pilatus: (Air)born in the Swiss Alps

Lead

Proving that there's more to Switzerland than watches, banks and chocolate, Pilatus Aircraft Ltd. has been making innovative executive and utility planes since 1939. But a stereotype is never far away, as we reveal that Pierce Brosnan's 007 was rescued by a Pilatus in 'Goldeneye'.

Oh well, that's the Bond bit done, let's find out more about the makers of some of the most unusual small aircraft in the world. A key feature of the company has been its products' ability to take off and land on short runways, weaving their way through mountains on approach and take-off. It's Switzerland, after all. The name, by the way, comes from a mountain overlooking Lucerne in Central Switzerland, where the company is based.



Its most famous model is probably the PC-6 Porter. Whether it's a short drop-off for another wealthy skier at St Moritz, or a vital delivery of medical equipment to a remote sheep station in Australia, one can rely on the rugged Pilatus Porter to do the job. Propeller-driven, and powered by either a piston or turboprop engine, the stylish aircraft with its characteristic 'anteater' nose has been serving the world since 1959.



A more recent model, and one that at first glance appears a typical executive jet, is the PC-12. It is, though, powered by a single Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6 turboprop engine. Available in several configurations, as an executive shuttle it seats nine - every one of whom will enjoy an interior penned by BMW Group Designworks in the USA. Over 1200 PC-12s have been delivered, including a specially liveried version for the Swiss-based F1 team Sauber.

Ever forward-looking, though, Pilatus is not totally wedded to the propeller. In 2015, first deliveries of the PC-12 will offer the company's legendary abilities over short, and poorly maintained runways, with the flexibility of greater top speed (488mph) and range (2051 miles). It will be the first true 'off road' executive jet.

Gallery

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