

Joby will launch UK air taxi service with Virgin Atlantic



Virgin Atlantic announced a partnership with California-based Joby Aviation to launch an air taxi service in the UK, becoming the latest airline to bet on a new class of electric aircraft vying to become taxis in the sky.

Joby's all-electric aircraft has six rotors and seats five, including the pilot. The vehicle can take off vertically, like a helicopter, and then shift into forward flight using tilt rotors. Joby says it can reach a top speed of 200mph, travel 150 miles on a single battery charge, and is 100 times quieter than a conventional aircraft.

Under the partnership, customers will be able to book a seat in one of Joby's multi-rotor aircraft through the Virgin Atlantic website and app. The vehicles will be co-branded with Joby and Virgin Atlantic logos. But the UK service will need

to wait until Joby has acquired type certification, which means the aircraft meets all the FAA's design and safety standards, and then launched its US-based service.

Under the partnership, customers will be able to book a seat in one of Joby's multi-rotor aircraft through the Virgin Atlantic website and app.

Air taxi operators face a number of hurdles before they become a reality, including safety regulations and airport designs. Britain's Civil Aviation Authority has started looking into how airports would need to be reevaluated for air taxi flights, including charging and air space.

Joby and Virgin Atlantic envision 15-minute flights from Manchester Airport to Leeds, or 8-minute journeys from Heathrow Airport to Canary Wharf. Joby is planning a network of landing locations around the UK, and expects to offer prices that are comparable with "existing premium ground ridesharing options at launch."

Air taxis, sometimes misidentified by the mainstream media as "flying cars," are essentially helicopters without the noisy, polluting gas motors (though they certainly have their own unique noise profile). In addition to Joby, companies like Archer Aviation, Volocopter, and Beta Technologies have claimed they are on the cusp of launching services that will eventually scale up nationwide. But others have floundered; German company Lilium recently said that two of its subsidiaries were insolvent and could cease operations.

Joby said recently it has made record progress in completing four of the five stages required for commercial passenger service in the US, and expects to carry its first passengers late this year or early next. The company has also recently delivered a second aircraft to the US Air Force as part of a testing partnership.

Joby got a boost recently, when the Federal Aviation

Administration published highly anticipated final regulations for eVTOL vehicles that it says will chart the path for the “air travel of the future.” But it’s unclear whether those rules will go into effect, after the FAA ordered a pause to allow the Trump administration to review them. A long review could stretch Joby’s timeline out beyond the 2025 target date it set for a taxi service launch.

<https://www.theverge.com/news/629857/jobby-virgin-atlantic-air-taxi-uk>