

# The ACMI advantage

ERA member and ACMI specialist avantiar celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary this year. We spoke to the airline about its background and how to make a success of the ACMI business.



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**E**stablished in 1994 by current managing directors Markus Baumann and Stefan Kissinger, German airline avantiar is based at Saarbrücken Airport with its administrative division at Siegerland Airport. Having worked with various aircraft types over the years, the airline now operates an all-jet fleet of three Fokker F100s and holds a German-registered AOC, with approval for worldwide operations.

avantiar is specialised in ACMI leases for short, medium and long-term operations for various airlines in and outside of Europe. The airline takes pride in delivering the highest level of around-the-clock service to different types of customers, such as charter series for tour operators, ad hoc charter flights for sport teams, bands, orchestras and incentive groups, as well as government and diplomatic flights. Over the years, the airline has flown a variety of passengers, including the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, pop band A-ha, WWE wrestlers, and AC Milan and Bundesliga football teams.

All of avantiar's Fokker 100 aircraft are equipped with comfortable full leather seats with 100Y configuration offering a spacious seat pitch of approximately 35 inches.

## **A changing market**

**//** In 2005, avantiar entered the ACMI business for the first time, having operated charter flights and PSO (Public Service Obligation) routes within Italy for more than 10 years with its fleet of ATRs. In 2007, the airline even had an ATR 72 based in Bangkok for several months. By 2016, when the airline acquired its second F100, it started operations within the network of fellow ERA member HOP! as a standby wet lease operator, and by the end of the year the standby contract became a contract with fixed base and schedule. The contract has been extended ever since.

Baumann commented: "Last year was one of the best years in the ACMI sector for us and during winter we were very busy with two of our Fokker 100s." This is something he explained the airline wasn't fully expecting.

He added: "In order to adapt to the ever-changing market, it is important to operate ACMI and full charter (ad hoc and tour operator) flights. avantiar is an active player in both sectors. In addition, avantiar has the advantage of being a small and flexible market player and as such we are able to adapt quickly to niches and deliver solutions for our customers quickly."

Nevertheless, avantiar has seen the ACMI market change year on year, and recognises that there are a lot of challenges for every aircraft operator in this market. "In our case, we are faced with an aging fleet and need to change aircraft within the next two to five years. However, from a commercial point of view, our biggest challenge is gaining commitment for long-term ACMI contracts, especially during the winter season. As a result, it is difficult to make the business case for new aircraft."

## **Silver anniversary**

On celebrating twenty-five years of operations this year, Baumann said: "Even though we are not usually ones to revel in our own success, we do plan to celebrate this very special event with our employees, some of whom have been with us since the very beginning."

When asked about the key contributors to its long-term success, he cites steady growth, foresight and not taking too many risks; adding: "In practice for the airline this means investing in the right type of aircraft at the right time and keeping them up to the latest standards."

Beyond its anniversary, in 2019 avantiar is preparing to obtain its IOSA certificate again, having been registered before in the past, and, following changes in the company setup, is establishing its own Part 145 in order to do its line maintenance independently. The airline is also close to receiving approval for electronic flight bags (EFB) and will be relaunching its website in the near future. In the meantime the company can concentrate on celebrating its twenty-five years of success in the business. ■

