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Turbine Tourer

‘Go-getter’ Slovenian company GOGETAIR becomes the first aircraft manufacturer to market a very light touring aeroplane powered by a turbine engine

Words: Stefan Löfgren **Photos:** author & GOGETAIR

The morning air is crisp in eastern Slovenia this time of year. But the sun is slowly defrosting the grass and the forecast promises clear weather with +8°C at midday. It bodes well for a nice day for flying.

Iztok Salomon, who, with his wife Ania, founded the Slovenian company GOGETAIR (pronounced 'go get air' and formerly called ONE Aircraft), picks me up after an early breakfast at my small countryside hotel in Loce. We have a lot to talk about on our way to Slovenske Konjice airport (LJSK), which is beautifully situated in a valley surrounded by forested hills.

For many years Iztok sold aircraft for other sport aircraft manufacturers in central Europe but during the financial crisis of 2008 the market went dead and he needed to look around for new challenges. During his years in aircraft sales he had gathered enough impressions of what he considered successful solutions – and less successful solutions – to start an aircraft project of his own. So in 2009 he made

use of his experience and ideas and started sketching. His prototype ONE Aircraft flew in 2011 and after refining his design further, he built two more that took to the air in 2014. In 2018, the company was renamed GOGETAIR and the composite aircraft it produces is now known as the G750. (Its maximum takeoff weight of 750kg might have something to do with that!) According to Iztok, the idea for the new company name came from the English term 'go-getter' – an ambitious person who sets out after something they want, or want to achieve. I would say the name is a perfect fit in describing the visions and values of founders Ania and Iztok Salamon.

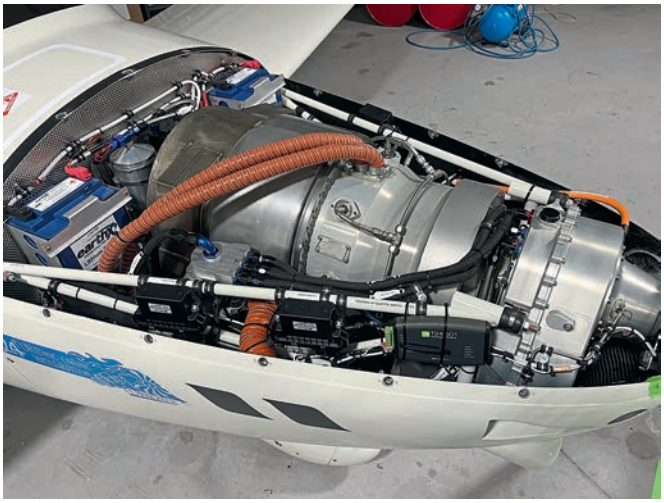
The G750 is classified as a factory-produced Experimental, meaning that it doesn't have a type certificate, but is flown on a Permit to Fly issued in EU countries by EASA. The entire 2025 production of six aircraft has already been reserved and sold.

FIRST CUSTOMER TURBOPROP

In late 2024 GOGETAIR became the first aircraft manufacturer to supply a customer with an aeroplane powered by the French made Turbotech TP-R90 engine *(an outstanding new power unit we first described in detail in the November 2020 edition of Pilot – Ed).* Two more examples of the turboprop G750TP model are scheduled for delivery during 2025. Iztok claims the

Tail art portrays all the GOGETAIR people involved in producing the G750TP, the time line extending along the fuselage

To accommodate the turbine engine the G750's nose had to be extended by 24cm, actually improving its looks



'A engine turbine has just one moving component', they say: an oversimplification – but there's some truth in it

Propeller drive reduction gearing and – at the rear – the heat exchanger add to the TP-R90 engine's lengh

company has the capacity to increase production to ten aircraft per year, although this is not an immediate priority. So far, production has been relatively modest, and the time and effort has instead been devoted to perfecting the fine aircraft the company proudly offers today. At the time of my visit (February this year) aircraft number seventeen was undergoing final assembly.

The installation of a turbine engine has entailed a number of modifications to the G750. The nose has been extended 24cm from the firewall forward, and the cowling has been redesigned to perfectly house and cool the new engine. GOGETAIR is the first, and so far only, manufacturer to have approval to *sell* its aircraft with the Turbotech engine. The engine manufacturer works in close collaboration with GOGETAIR to fine-tune the marriage between the two products, and improvements are being made continuously.

The European aviation authorities have agreed to eventually allow an SEP (Single Engine Piston) holder to fly the Turbotech-equipped G750TP. A 'differences' training package (presently under development) for flying with a turbine will be sufficient – a possibility that so far does not apply to ultralights equipped with turboprops. Manufacturers JMB and Bristell have both fitted Turbotech engines to their VL3 and Classic models respectively, but according to Iztok, neither of them is close to being able to offer an approved turboprop ultralight.

TP-R90 offers a fuel consumption that matches piston engines

TEST FLIGHT

I shall be flying with test pilot Ales Stimec, who has flown the G750TP for around thirty of the 39 hours recorded in the logbook. We pull the aircraft out of the hangar and give it a preflight check. Naturally, we soon find ourselves in conversation about the engine.

The Turbotech TP-R90 is a French-made gas turbine developing 141hp (104kW), as installed in the G750TP. With its patented heat exchanger system, the TP-R90 offers a fuel consumption that matches piston engines of similar horsepower. Turbotech is the first turbine manufacturer in the world to make such a system work efficiently. The compact and lightweight engine utilises the heat energy contained in the exhaust gases by recycling it via a heat exchanger

G750s under construction at GOGETAIR's factory, located at Slovenske Konjice airport, near Loce. Note the baggage bay door and very different nose profile of these, the piston-engine model from which the G750TP turboprop was developed

that returns it to the turbine intake. The process is controlled by three little black boxes that evaluate the temperature and oxygen content of the exhaust air. The system reduces fuel consumption, and GOGETAIR is seeing figures in the order of thirty litres per hour at approximately 65% power. But testing and tuning continue, so future flight tests will reveal where the consumption actually lands. It is expected to be around 20% higher than with the equivalent Rotax piston engine. Ales believes that an optimum flight altitude for the G750TP should probably be 8-12,000 feet. He has tested the aeroplane up to 20,000 feet, but the maximum altitude is set at 18,000, simply because above that oxygen from nasal cannulas is not enough and some type of oxygen mask is required.

The cabin has a 2+2 seating configuration – two adults and two children. (The rear seat is designed for passengers no taller than 1.50m and weighing no more than 25kg each.) The luggage compartment behind the rear seats is approved for 25kg and is accessible through an outside hatch. The doors open upwards, like on a Cirrus. The lines of the aeroplane are very appealing and the wing has a nice, almost elliptical shape. The extended nose further enhances an already attractive appearance. The wing is the same as on the Shark ultralight, but with a larger span. This is an industry where everyone knows everyone, and sometimes advantageous design features are rather obviously shared between companies.

We reach our seats via walkways on the wings. I'll be on the left. Entry is easy and when installed, I note good comfort overall and nice design of the interior. You sit snugly in a robust, Kevlar-reinforced cabin section, designed to protect the occupants in case of a rollover. A aircraft recovery parachute (BRS, Ballistic Recovery System) is included as standard equipment. The instrument panel has Dynon screens and Garmin avionics. The optional extra-large fuel tanks are fitted, allowing the G750TP to carry 236 litres usable Jet-A1.

Let the ECU automatically perform a problem-free engine start

A clever design of the checklist, and the grouping of the electrical switches, contribute to a particularly simple work routine. The eleven electrical switches at the bottom of the left pilot's instrument panel are separated into groups, relating to different phases of flight. You start from the left and set the battery switch to ON and then continue to turn on the switches, moving left to right. You halt when you reach the 'START', 'TAXI' or 'TAKE OFF' label, working through each phase in sequence.

When I reach START, I know I'm good to go ahead and press and hold the starter button at the left end of the panel, and let the ECU (Engine Control Unit) automatically perform a problem-free engine start. The whole thing takes about thirty seconds. At the moment, the aircraft must be considered as a prototype under development in terms of the equipment fitted, and the engine instruments are yet to be connected to Dynon Skyview. A separate display from Turbotech is installed above the instrument panel for monitoring engine

parameters. The start process consists of six stages in the automation, and when these have been completed and the ECU is satisfied, a 'FLIGHT' caption appears on the engine display. The engine turns at 60-80,000 rpm and the gearbox reduces this to the 2,273rpm maximum allowed on the propeller. Turbotech's technicians in Toussus-le-Noble, France, near Paris, are monitoring our flight in real time via telemetry.

More switches are flipped, and I reach the word TAXI on the panel. A tiny push on the 'throttle' – it's really a condition lever – changes propeller pitch, and we are moving. Thrust is controlled with this single lever but turboprop Beta mode (for keeping the taxi speed down and even reversing) is not available. The Beringer wheel brakes are dimensioned for aircraft weights up to 900kg, so I have a stopping capability that is more than sufficient anyway. The nosewheel is free-castoring, differential braking keeping us on the desired course. The flaps can be lowered in three stages, and we select the first for takeoff. A couple more switches are flipped and – you guessed it – I have reached TAKE OFF on the sub panel.

During the engine checks, the turbine responds and revs are satisfactory, so I set the throttle fully forward, check that the engine values are still in the green, and release the brakes. We weigh 730kg, which is twenty kilos below the maximum allowed, and the acceleration is as expected with a 140-horsepower engine in the nose; rather good! At 55 knots lift-off occurs after a slight pull on the stick and then I let the aircraft accelerate to 75. After the flaps come up the throttle is pulled back to the ninety per cent mark. (Currently, it is not actual thrust, but throttle position that is shown in the engine display. It would be a good idea to consider changing that, if possible.)

We climb at around 1,200 feet per minute to 4,000ft, positioning ourselves for manoeuvring over the airfield. Visibility is fairly good but is slightly compromised by the wide screen/door frame hoop – a low price to pay for the passenger protection the design offers in the event of a rollover, I would say.

A few steep turns and a couple of

Intriguingly, the test aircraft sported a non-standard belly camera port with a sliding cover

Large diameter pipes give an idea of the typically high turbine gas flow. Nosewheel free-castors

Forward-hinged 'Le Mans car' doors offer excellent cabin access. You board from behind the wing

GOGETAIR test pilot Ales Stimec reckons the G750TP's most efficient operating altitude will be 8,000-12,000ft

lazy eights (horizontal turn reversals) confirm that the controls have a nice feel. Reducing speed requires a lot of throttle movement for anything to happen. The revs and thrust need to be given some time to decrease. Manoeuvring at minimum speed, 55 knots produces a slight buffeting while in a turn, hinting at what's going on, but the aircraft still flies nicely, with good response from the controls. Bringing the throttle back to idle and the stick fully aft results in a marked stall break, the starboard wing dropping at fifty knots with flaps up, and the same thing happens about three knots lower with flaps fully down. Ales tells me that there are discussions about appropriate measures to calm things down a bit.

We don't have time for a detailed analysis of cruise performance, but I note that in level flight with the throttle in the 75% position, the indicated speed is just under 130 knots and the fuel consumption is around thirty litres per hour. Full fuel would keep us in the air for just under eight hours – an endurance that can of course be extended by operating at a lower power setting. According to GOGETAIR, the turbine engine matches the cruise performance of the Rotax 915iS turbocharged piston engine up to 10,000 feet, above which it is slightly less efficient.

The landing technique recommended by Ales is to set idle thrust (you don't have to worry about the engine cooling down too quickly) while maintaining

Working along the console from the bottom: 'throttle' (condition lever); parking brake; fuel selector; BRS handle; autopilot & flap controls

GOGETAIR G750TP

Price, as tested: €537.350 exc VAT

Dimensions

Length	7.37m
Height	2.21m
Wingspan	9.65m

Weights and loadings

Empty weight	450kg
Max takeoff weight	750kg
Useful load	300kg
Seating	2+2
Baggage	25kg
Fuel	244 lit (236 usable)

Performance

Vne	152kt
Economy cruise @ 10,000ft	140kt
Economy fuel consumption	28.5 lph
Stall, clean	50kt
Stall, full flap	47kt
Take off to 50ft	220m
Landing from 50ft	450m
Operational ceiling	18,000ft

Engine & Propeller

Turbotech TP-R90 turbine producing 141hp (104kW) driving a DUC Tigerblack-R electric variable pitch propeller

1,000 feet above the airfield. If you pull the throttle back on a piston engine, the thrust is gone immediately – but with this turboprop, it probably takes ten seconds to reach idle revs. A little extra forethought is required.

The speed continues to decrease while we fly downwind. At speeds below 81kt you can go to flaps 1 and at 65, which is the best glide speed, I start a gliding descent. If I do this right, it will be a simple power-off landing.

This is however a slippery little aeroplane and I soon discover that I have made the final turn a bit too early, and applied full flap a little too late. To save my landing approach, I have to sideslip on final until my approach angle is satisfactory again. Not so graceful, but very effective!

It's very easy to put the aircraft down at the threshold, and as soon as the flaps are on their way up to the takeoff position again, I can apply full throttle for another go. I have learned my lesson, and during the next two circuits I deal with the aeroplane's good gliding abilities and manage the energy in a much better way.

After the final touchdown, I slow down without any difficulty, in time to turn for the apron via the taxiway, which is 350m after the threshold. Parked on the apron we let the engine cool down at idle for a minute before we shut it down by pressing the stop button.

Standard-fit panel is augmented by Turbotech's own engine monitor, which relays data live to the French manufacturer

While the aircraft handles nicely, GOGETAIR is working to tame its stalling characteristics with an aerodynamic fix

REFLECTION

After an interesting and rewarding flight, it is time for reflection. Why even consider a turboprop engine in a small aircraft like this when the piston-engine alternatives offered by, for example, Rotax are reliable, fuel-efficient, and deliver relatively large horsepower in relation to their weight?

A major advantage is that a gas turbine can be powered by a range of different fuels. The TP-R90 can be run on Jet-A1, Diesel, UL91, AVGAS, Bio-Fuel, and H_2 (hydrogen). In some parts of the world, it is very difficult to find gasoline that is clean enough to be safely used in aircraft engines. Jet fuel is also significantly cheaper.

Another factor is the time between overhauls. The Turbotech TP-R90's TBO is an impressive 3,000 hours and the engine generally has low maintenance costs. There are 300 hours (or one year) between services, and, in the case of an Experimental class aeroplane, they can be performed by the owner. This can compensate for the fact that the price of the turbine is significantly higher than for a piston engine of the same size. Another advantage is that turbine engines, with their fewer moving parts, are generally more reliable than piston engines. Their vibration level is also lower.

The G750 is a nice little airplane that is fun to fly and offers a comfortable and safe cockpit. When the customer looks at the engine options, price (for most of us) is a significant factor in the equation. A quick internet search reveals that the Rotax 915iS (141hp piston engine) costs about $44,000 and a Turbotech TP-R90 about $140,000. With that price difference, it would probably be a long while before the economic operating advantages of the turboprop would balance the total cost, unless the price of the unit drops significantly in the future.

That said, there are always people with lots of money, and with a turboprop up front, you increase your ramp appeal. And in the air, you will certainly move into the fast lane!

In the air, you will certainly move into the fast lane!