

The Super Bowl Bugle

San Jose, California

5 February 2016

Travel Tips for the Big Game

San Jose's airport is beginning to fill up with private jets arriving for Sunday's Super Bowl like this Gulfstream G450, which – for several thousand dollars an hour – can take you and 15 friends nearly 5,000 statute miles nonstop. That's more than twice the one-way distance from Charlotte to San Jose. The airport will close all or parts of three taxiways to park up to 180 aircraft on game day. More than 1,000 private jets are expected at all Bay Area airports combined.

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Since far more people on this email list are from North Carolina than Colorado, these travel tips are targeted at that audience.

1 That parking place you're looking for in San Francisco? It's not there.

2 Four-way stops are common at California intersections – far more common than I've seen in any other state – and unlike elsewhere, the signs rarely say they're four-way stops. So if you're supposed to stop, look to your right and left to see if those directions stop, too. Usually they do. If you arrive at such an intersection at the same time as other traffic, tradition demands that all drivers get out and meet in the middle. The first driver to get a two-thirds majority of votes gets to go first. Everyone else goes in order of declining votes. Naah, I'm just jerking your chain. Same rules apply as back home but it's a good idea to catch the eye of the other drivers so everyone knows who's going next.

This aircraft is one of the larger ones in the 150-plane fleet of a fractional ownership company. That means lots of companies buy blocks of usage time and use the planes as needed without bearing the expense of buying and maintaining an aircraft and employing a crew to operate it. About a quarter of this fleet will be used taking passengers to the Super Bowl this weekend. A new G450 costs more than \$30 million, depending how fancy an interior you wish to install. Used ones average about half that. It burns about 465 gallons of fuel – at \$6 a gallon – per hour.

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There are lots of palm trees here, but do not take that to mean we have tropical weather. The palms are not native but are planted by many cities, including San Jose, because that's what people expect to see when they come to California. It's forecast to be sunny and 74 degrees at kickoff, which is above normal and very comfortable for midwinter. But kickoff is about 3:30 in the afternoon our time. It will be dark and in the 50s by the end of the game. That's pretty chilly when you're sitting still.

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Wear your team's colors to the game. But if you're one of those tourists who doesn't like to stick out from the locals and you're staying in San Francisco, wear black. Everybody in San Francisco wears black. Winter, spring, summer, fall. I don't know why. They just do.

This plane is very similar to the Gulfstream V that Apple gave Steve Jobs when he was alive. But for a Silicon Valley company it's not that exotic. Google has a fleet of eight jets, which start as small as a Gulfstream V and include a Boeing 757 narrow-body jet, which carries about 200 passengers in an airline configuration (Donald Trump's plane is a 757), and a Boeing 767 wide-body jet, which seats around 275 people in an airline configuration. When customized for private customers the Boeings often have one or more bedrooms. Silicon Valley's biggest corporate jets are still no match for the Boeing 747 SP owned by Christian evangelist Ernest Angley's Grace Cathedral. Don't know if Ernie's coming to the game.

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Lots of restaurants serve “pulled pork,” “Carolina-style pulled pork” or other similarly named dishes. It tastes good, but it doesn’t taste like what you eat at home. I’m sure Peking duck tastes different here than it does in China. Regional food only tastes the way it’s supposed to in the region where people ordinarily eat it. Elsewhere it’s a resemblance. While I was at the airport working on this private jet story for the *Silicon Valley Business Journal*, I noticed that a shopping bag unloaded from one plane had a bag of grits. Please, if you like grits for breakfast – which I do – bring and fix your own. There’s a restaurant in Los Gatos, which markets itself as serving Southern food, that makes grits with sugar. You don’t want to eat that.

According to the company that owns this plane, its peak Super Bowl travel day will be Sunday and most of the travelers will be coming from Southern California, which I take to be the Hollywood crowd. It says the only sports event that draws more of its customers than the Super Bowl is the Master’s golf tournament in Augusta, Ga.