

Sebastian M. Smith

Partner

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OVERVIEW

Sebastian Smith is a partner in the firm's Finance practice. He has a wide range of aviation experience and regularly advises leasing companies, financial institutions, export credit agencies, institutional lenders, and airlines in respect of cross-border aircraft finance and leasing transactions. He has significant experience with the JOL/JOLCO market in Japan and has niche experience in advising on aircraft freighter conversions and Unit Leasing Device (ULD) agreements. He has also been a key figure on M&A transactions/joint ventures for aircraft leasing and banking clients.

Sebastian has extensive disputes and restructuring experience in the aviation arena and has advised clients on distressed transactions during the COVID crisis and issues arising from Russian sanctions.

One client praises him saying "*He's very commercial, practical and focused on getting the deal done within the allotted timeframe*." (*Chambers Asia-Pacific* Guide, 2022)

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Sebastian previously worked at a Magic Circle law firm in London. During his tenure there, he was seconded to both Airbus and RBS Aviation Capital (now named SMBC Aviation Capital).

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Recognized by *Chambers Global* for Banking & Finance: International Asset Finance in Japan, 2017-2026
- Recognized by *Chambers Asia-Pacific* for Banking & Finance: International Asset Finance in Japan, 2019-2026
- Recognized by *The Legal 500 United Kingdom* in London as a Recommended Lawyer in Aviation, 2026
- Recommended by *The Best Lawyers in Japan*™ for Asset Finance Law in Tokyo, 2020-current
- Recognized by *The Legal 500 Asia Pacific* as a Recommended Lawyer for Banking and Finance - International firms and joint ventures in Japan, 2019-current

- Ranked and mentioned in the Aviation category of the Japan Law Firm Awards 2024. Together with partners Bob Melson and Eiko Grieger, Sebastian Smith is recognised for his long-standing experience and expertise in the JOL and JOLCO markets.
- Advised on Aviation 100 European Restructuring Deal of the Year, Airline Economics, 2023
- Advised on Aviation 100 Asia-Pacific Debt Deal of the Year, Airline Economics, 2022
- Advised on Aviation 100, Middle East & Africa Supported Finance Deal of the Year, Airline Economics, 2022
- Listed as a “Expert” by Expert Guides: Aviation, 2021-2022
- Advised on the Insolvency & Restructuring Deal of the Year, Australasian Law Awards, 2021
- Listed as a “Rising Star” by Expert Guides: Aviation, 2019-2020
- Advised on Aviation 100 Asia-Pacific Debt Deal of the Year, Airline Economics, 2019
- Advised on Aviation 100 Asia-Pacific Overall Deal of the Year, Airline Economics, 2019
- Advised on “ABS Deal of the Year” AirFinance Journal Awards, 2019
- Airline Economics' Equity Deal of the Year, 2017
- Global Transport Finance's “Aircraft Lessor JOLCO deal of the Year, 2016
- AirFinance Journal's PDP Deal of the Year, 2014
- Listed as a “Rising Star” by *AirFinance Journal,* 2014

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- Moderator, “Aircraft Financing: How are Airlines Navigating the JOLCO Market?,” Ishka Tokyo 2026, 10 September 2026
- Moderator, “Leasing & Asset Manager Panel,” Airline Economics Tokyo 2026, 14 April 2026
- Moderator, “Aircraft trading, leasing, finance & asset management,” Airline Economics Singapore 2025, 5 November 2025
- Panel Member, British Chamber of Commerce in Japan and British Airways Sustainability Roundtable, 16 October 2025
- Roundtable Discussion, “Frontiers of Collaboration: Commercial Innovation and Opportunities in Space,” jointly hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce and British Chamber of Commerce, 10 July 2025
- Moderator, “Leasing & Asset Manager Panel,” Airline Economics Tokyo 2025, 10 April 2025
- Panel Member, Tokyo AirFinance Engine Round Table, 2017

EDUCATION

- Legal Practice Course, Nottingham Law School, 2003
- PgDL, Nottingham Law School, 2002
- M.Eng., University of Edinburgh, 2001 *(Mechanical Engineering with Management)*

ADMISSIONS

- Japan (Dai-ni Tokyo Bar Association (Gaikokuho-Jimu-Bengoshi - registered foreign lawyer))
- Solicitor of the Senior Courts of England and Wales
- Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (British Virgin Islands) (non-practicing)

LANGUAGES

- English
- French

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP *POWERED BY HUB*

- 18 January 2019, Cleared to Land: Aviation Newsletter
- August 2018, Cleared for Landing

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

ARTICLES- JAPANESE LAW

- Japan: Loan signing and Drawdown (CPs) Q&A, Practical Law, February 2018
- Japan: Waiver & Consent Letter Q&A, Practical Law, July 2017
- Japan: Comfort Letters Q&A, Practical Law, July 2017
- Japan: Corporate Loan Facilities Q&A, Practical Law, July 2017

PUBLICATIONS-INTERNATIONAL

- UAE: More Gold From the Desert, Cleared to Land, K&L Gates Aviation Newsletter, January 2019
- Argentina: Silver Skies, Cleared to Land, K&L Gates Aviation Newsletter, January 2019
- India: Legal Documentation & Changes Arising As a Result of the Collapse of Kingfisher, Cleared to Land, K&L Gates Aviation Newsletter, August 2018

NEWS & EVENTS

- 16 April 2026, More Than 80 K&L Gates Lawyers Across Asia-Pacific Recognised in 2027 Best Lawyers, Ones to Watch Editions
- 12 February 2026, *Chambers Global* 2026 Guide Ranks K&L Gates Lawyers, Practices
- 11 December 2025, *Chambers Asia-Pacific* 2026 Guide Recognises K&L Gates
- 13 February 2025, *Chambers Global* 2025 Guide Ranks K&L Gates Lawyers, Practices
- 15 February 2024, *Chambers Global* 2024 Guide Ranks K&L Gates Lawyers, Practices
- 14 December 2023, Chambers Asia-Pacific 2024 Guide Recognises K&L Gates
- 27 April 2023, K&L Gates Advises Stratos on Acquisition of Magi Aviation Capital
- 16 February 2023, K&L Gates Recognized in 2023 *Chambers Global* Guide
- 17 February 2022, K&L Gates Recognized in 2022 Chambers Global Guide
- 24 February 2021, K&L Gates Recognized in 2021 Chambers Global Guide
- 16 December 2020, K&L Gates Recognized in Chambers 2021 Asia Pacific and FinTech Guides
- 1 July 2020, K&L Gates Aviation Finance Practice Recognized with Multiple Deal of the Year Honors During *Airfinance Journal* Awards
- 12 June 2019, K&L Gates Assists on First-of-its-Kind Japanese Operating Lease Asset-Backed Security Transaction
- 6 February 2019, Legal 500 Recognizes K&L Gates in 2019 Asia Pacific Guide
- 18 April 2018, *Airfinance Journal* Ranks K&L Gates as Top Law Firm for 2017 JOL/JOLCO Transactions
- 4 October 2017, K&L Gates Advises on Tokyo Century Corporation

MEDIA MENTIONS

- 17 April 2026, *Ishka* | JOLCO investors undeterred by Iranian crisis

OTHER MEDIA MENTIONS

- Quoted, “Briefing: Why shipping JOLCO investors are coming back to aircraft deals,” ISHKA, 1 August 2025
- Quoted, “Will Indian carriers soon be able to access the JOLCO market?,” ISHKA, 21 July 2025
- Quoted, “Legal Survey 2025: Products,” *AirFinance Journal,* 6 March 2025

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Aviation Finance
- Corporate and Acquisition Finance
- Debt Capital Markets
- Restructuring and Insolvency
- Securitization and Structured Finance

INDUSTRIES

- Aviation
- Energy
- Maritime
- Transportation and Logistics