Chartering An Aircraft

A Consumer Guide to Help You Fly Smarter

NATA
National Air Transportation Association
The Voice of Aviation Business

AIR CHARTER SAFETY FOUNDATION®

National Air
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Association

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What is charter?

Charter is probably one of the best-kept travel secrets around. In fact, our research shows that only a small percentage of frequent business travelers have considered chartering an airplane. But now, the secret is out.

Each year, thousands of people all over the United States discover the benefits of air charter. And every day, more travelers are discovering just how smart charter can be.

Charter is about saving you time and, often, money on your business trips. Safety, security, convenience and productivity are key reasons why individuals and companies choose charter air travel.

Charter is the convenience of traveling on your schedule rather than the airlines' schedule and flying to airports closer to your final ground destination. With the ability to fly in and out of more than 5,500 public use airports in the United States, air charter provides convenient access to your final destination. Selecting a charter operator is not difficult, nor does it require a vast knowledge of the industry or federal air carrier regulations.

Best of all, charter is having complete control over your travel environment, while enjoying the comfort, safety and security of a private aircraft. Charter aircraft operators are often referred to as on-demand or air taxi operators. The synonymous terms convey the key attribute of charter service – we're there when you call, ready to conform to your unique schedule and needs.

But, to help you form your own opinion of what charter is – and what it can do for you or your business – let's answer a few of the most common questions asked about charter to help you select an operator that can meet your needs.

Charter is more than just passenger air transportation. Charter aircraft serve many critical niche markets such as just-in-time air cargo delivery, scenic air tours, and emergency medical transportation to name just a few. More information about these industry services is provided at the conclusion of this guide.

When does it make sense to charter?

Charter is smarter only under certain circumstances. The airlines are very competitive when it comes to carrying a lot of people, for long distances, to a limited number of destinations. So when you are traveling between two very distant, major cities, like Los Angeles and New York, or traveling overseas, it may make sense to travel on the airlines.

But, there are times when charter makes a lot more sense. When you have several places to go but very little time, if there are multiple passengers travelling, if your destination is not a major airline hub, or when the airlines' schedules just don't fit into your business schedule, charter is the better choice.

So, before you compare the costs of airline travel to air charter, consider the time and money you'll save on overnight expenses – motels, meals and car rental – and factor in the inconveniences you often face with the scheduled airlines: lost/delayed baggage, missed connections, cramped seating and oversold flights, to name a few.

Finally, what is it worth to be home with your family at night? When you charter your own aircraft, it's possible for you to get back home to your family.

Many times it's smarter to charter.

How much does a charter flight cost?

It will depend on your particular flight and really can't be determined until you call a charter operator with specific trip plans. But, generally speaking, charter rates will be hourly or by the mile, and will vary according to the size of the aircraft.

What information should I have when calling a charter operator?

You've decided to charter an airplane. Good choice. So what's your next step?

First of all, lay out your travel plans. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What city do I want to depart from and where am I going?

2. Will there be any intermediate stops?
3. What is my return date?
4. How many people will be traveling with me?
5. Will I need ground transportation arranged?
6. Will I need any special catering for my flight?

This way, you'll have the necessary information ready when you call your local charter operator.

What Information should I ask the charter operator?

Ask about the fee structure.

Some charter operators will charge by the mile and some will charge by the hour.

Hourly rates are determined based upon the type of aircraft chartered, and normally include the cost of the aircraft, pilot(s), and standard catering.

Operators will sometimes charge by the mile rather than by the hour, and their mileage rate will also include those items mentioned in the hourly rate method.

Because the services offered are customized to fit your specific desires, it is difficult to give general price estimates. Keep in mind that the charter operator may need to adjust the final cost of your charter due to changes in logistics or en route deviations. If there is a potential for variations from a quoted price, this should be clearly noted at the time an agreement is reached with the operator.

Ask about any extra charges to the quoted price.

Extra charges may include landing fees, deicing, hangar storage, and federal and state taxes where applicable.

A common extra fee is the pilot(s) waiting fee and overnight crew charges (if your trip requires an overnight stay for the crew at your destination.)

If your visit is a long one, your pilot(s) may have to drop you off, fly back to base and then come back later to get you. This doubles the flight time and possibly your fare. Ask your charter operator about this before the flight, so you can create a plan that best suits your needs and budget.

If it's only a short visit, you'll probably be better off paying the pilot(s) to wait. Typically, the hourly wait fee is based on the number of pilots, with a maximum charge per day. If the crew is to remain overnight, an overnight charge will be imposed to cover the crew's overnight expenses.

Ask about the aircraft.

Normally, charter operators have a variety of aircraft types in their charter fleet, each designed for different missions. You should ask the charter operator about what aircraft they would recommend for meeting the mission of your flight. Then determine whether that aircraft will meet your needs for speed, comfort, range and price.

Generally, there are four classes of charter aircraft, with different models within each class. These four general classes of aircraft are:

- Single- and multi-engine piston
- Single- and multi-engine turboprop
- Jet (small, medium and large)
- Helicopter

There are approximately 2,000 air charter operators in the United States that have met the comprehensive criteria required to qualify for a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Air Carrier Operating Certificate.

Are these aircraft safe?

Yes.

Just like the airlines' passengers, nearly every charter flight passenger who leaves an airport in the United States this year will land at his or her destination safely. The FAA has rules that address crew rest and physical examinations and that mandate a stringent anti-drug/alcohol program for operators. The FAA closely monitors operators to make sure that they conform to the established standards of performance.

The high standards for training, maintenance and operators required by the FAA, and the devotion to safety of the charter operators themselves, assure you of the safest possible flight environment. Couple this attitude towards safety with technology improvements in the cockpit over recent years and you have the safest mode of transportation available.

Am I secure?

Global security concerns have led to significant security enhancements within the entire aviation industry, and charter operators are no exception. In fact, enhanced security is often one of the primary reasons for chartering, because when you charter an aircraft, you are in control.

You decide who is permitted on your flight. There are no strangers to overhear your confidential business conversations or to threaten your personal security.

When traveling via charter, you dictate the departure time and location as well as the destination. Your flight itinerary is private, not published for the world to see, as is the case with airline schedules.

Recently, the federal government has mandated security programs for most charter operators. In addition, most charter operators, and several airports, have also instituted security precautions for charter passengers that may include a verification of identification, checks of baggage for dangerous items, screening with a metal detector and other measures, even when not required by federal regulations. Your charter operator is

dedicated to ensuring your safety and security and will be willing to answer any of your questions.

What about weather?

Weather can affect your flight plans when chartering just as it can affect airline schedules. The FAA has many regulations concerning weather, types of aircraft, and pilot capabilities. Some aircraft are equipped with various optional equipment that allow operation in complex weather, such as icing conditions or heavy rain showers.

The operator you select can explain the limitations of the aircraft and the company's authorizations. The pilot will not fly an aircraft if the weather conditions do not meet safety standards. Always trust the decision of your professional pilot when it comes to weather and flight safety.

How can I avoid any problems?

Do some checking.

Every charter operator must have a certificate from the FAA showing that his or her operation meets or exceeds the agency's standards for aircraft maintenance, management control and oversight of its crew's training, flight time and health. Your safety depends on flying with a legally certified air taxi operator; never fly with an operator who does not appear to hold proper FAA certification. You may also wish to ask for

verification of the type and limits of insurance coverage carried by the operator.

Your pilot must hold either a Commercial Pilot Certificate or an Air Transport Pilot Certificate issued by the FAA, just as his or her airline counterpart does. Every six months he or she undergoes a mandatory proficiency check-ride with an FAA inspector, who also verifies the pilot's knowledge of standard operating procedures and the aircraft he or she is flying – just like the airlines.

But before you charter an airplane, you may wish to exercise your right to contact your regional FAA office and request verification that the charter operation is certified for the trip you're planning. The telephone number is easily found on the FAA's Web page at http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/field_offices/fsdo/.

Or, just ask your selected charter operator. Most are pleased to deal with an educated consumer and are proud of their safety record. They can provide you with their certificate number and the phone number of the FAA inspector responsible for overseeing their operations.

If a charter operator is unwilling or reluctant to provide answers to questions about their certificate and authorized operations, or does not want you to contact the FAA for verification, you would be wise to consider another operator to fill your travel requirements.

What about the ground facilities?

They will vary from airport to airport.

The smaller airports will often have many of the accommodations of major airports – waiting areas, restrooms and telephones to name a few. Many of these facilities, known as fixed base operators (FBOs), provide complimentary airport-to-town transportation. Also, it is very likely that your charter operator can prearrange ground transportation to be waiting for you upon your arrival. Charter operators are also excellent resources for obtaining your preferred lodging if your trip necessitates hotel accommodations.

What these smaller facilities may lack in size, they make up for in warm hospitality. With few exceptions, people in aviation are there by choice: They like what they're doing and their enthusiasm sparks a cordial atmosphere.

There are two primary benefits to choosing a smaller airport: avoiding the delays and hassles so often found at the major airline hubs and landing at an airport close to your ground destination.

Can I make my connections with airlines if necessary?

Occasionally, passengers in towns without airline service decide to charter an aircraft to connect more easily with an airline flight. This is possible. However, due to security, airports and airline service are divided into separate general aviation (including charter) and airline areas. But at most of these airports, courtesy cars are provided to drive you to the airline terminal. Inform your charter operator that you will be making an airline connection, and they can make the necessary arrangements.

How do I find a charter operator?

NATA recommends that you pre-screen charter operators. Ask questions about their experience, safety, security, maintenance and insurance. You should also ask if the operator has undergone an independent third-party safety audit, such as the Air Charter Safety Foundation's Industry Audit Standard, which sets the standard for the independent evaluation of an air charter operator's safety and regulatory compliance. You can view the full list of operators that have been audited by the Air Charter Safety Foundation and meet its standards at www.acsf.aero/registry. There are also other companies that provide audits for air charter that may be useful as well.

Take that familiar finger-stroll through your local Yellow Pages, and look for the heading "Aircraft" and the sub-heading "Aircraft Charter, Rental & Leasing Service." Under this heading, you will find the charter operators servicing your area.

Another popular resource is the Air Charter Guide. This publication is like the Yellow Pages of the air charter industry. Air Charter Guide offers a free search engine available at www.aircharterguide.com.

It is possible that your local travel agent may be familiar with the charter operators in your area and you can book your trip through him or her.

Keep in mind that you are not limited to only those charter operators in your immediate area. It's possible that other operators in your region can serve your needs without large cost increases.

So what makes charter smarter?

The **advantages**.

The advantage of saved time.

You can fly in or leave whenever you like – without having to depend on the airlines' schedules or without the long hours on the road. You can go where you need to, get your business done and come back when you want. This means saving money on food, lodging and car rental. It could also mean spending more valuable time with your client or your family.

The advantage of convenience.

Over half of all airline flights connect with only the 20 busiest airports in the U.S. With charter, you have direct access to all of these major airports – plus some 5,500 airports in small communities that the airlines don't reach.

With a chartered aircraft, you can often land whenever and wherever you want – usually much closer to your destination. You can avoid the large, crowded airline hubs. You can even have a car waiting for you when you land.

You can choose your traveling companions. This means converting wasted travel time into useful study or preparation time. Just think of what you could accomplish with everyone together in your own private work area. And, you can take along extra people and equipment – at no extra cost.

Glossary

Aeromedical Services According to the Association of Air Medical Services (AAMS), approximately 270 organizations in the United States are engaged in the airlifting of seriously ill or injured people to hospitals for emergency care. This number includes hospitals, which operate their own air medevac service, and operators not affiliated with a medical facility.

Air Tour Operators In certain very scenic parts of the United States, sightseeing flights are an important part of the tourist industry. An air tour operator is an individual or company that flies sightseeing trips on at least a part-time basis. In the United States, the air-tour business is concentrated mainly in Alaska, particularly around Denali National Park, and the Grand Canyon and at two locations in Hawaii: Haleakala National Park on Maui and Hawaii Volcanoes National Park on the Island of Hawaii. While the Grand Canyon and Alaska operations include about a 50-50 mix of fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, air tours in Hawaii are almost exclusively done by helicopter.

Airway Distance The actual (as opposed to straight-line) distance flown by an aircraft between two points, after deviations required by air traffic control and navigation along prepublished routes. The difference between this and straight-line distance will vary throughout the country.

Block Rates A lower "contract rate" for scheduling significant amounts of charter time in advance on a prearranged agreement.

Block Speed The average speed over a specific distance, "block-to-block" or "door-to-door" with respect to the airport gate.

Cabin-Class Twin The heavier piston-twin airplanes that have a separate passenger section.

Certificate FAA-issued license to carry passengers for hire.

Corporate Jets Jets also use a turbine engine but jet propulsion is derived not from a propeller, but from the hot gases forced from the back of the engine. Although the jet is more costly, typical small jets can reach speeds of up to 400 mph and have a range of 1,000 miles. Medium-sized jets can reach speeds of more than 500 mph with a range of up to 2,000 miles. Large jets are capable of speeds more than 500 mph and can have a range of greater than 7,000 miles. Passenger capacity is typically fewer than 18, but larger jets may be configured for up to 30 passengers. Some models may have a satellite phone, fax and Internet, sofas, private bedrooms, or even a shower, but nearly all will have a private lavatory and many have a cooking galley.

Cruise Speed The normal speed attained at altitude once the aircraft is in level flight at its cruising altitude.

Cruise Range The distance an airplane may fly at cruise speed.

Duty Time That portion of the day when a crew member is on duty in any capacity (not just airborne.) This can be a constraint on long day-trips, as there are FAA-imposed limits on the amount of time allowed on duty.

FBO Fixed Base Operator By definition at a permanent location, this is a vendor of aircraft services such as maintenance, fuel, flight instruction, aircraft sales, and charter.

Flight Time That portion of the trip actually spent in the air. For billing purposes, this definition is generally strict and applies from the moment of liftoff to the moment of touchdown.

General Aviation That portion of aviation other than military or the scheduled airlines. Commercial nonscheduled operations (like charter); corporate flight operations and private aviation are the most conspicuous members of this group.

Helicopters Most charter helicopters are powered by a turbine engine and can travel at 150 to 180 mph. Although some have a tremendous range, most helicopters are chartered for very short distances. The passenger capacity of a helicopter can be as high as 14 passengers but normally is about three or four people.

IFR Instrument Flight Rules (flight in low visibility).

Jet Airplanes Jets are powered by a kerosene-fueled engine. They differ from turboprops in that their propulsion is derived not from a propeller, but from the hot gases forced from the back of the engine.

Knot Nautical miles. The equivalent of 1.15 mph. Standard measurement of speed in aviation and marine operations. Abbreviated as kts.

Layover A night spent in the middle of the trip in a city other than home base for the aircraft and crew.

Minimum Daily Usage Most charter operators have a minimum daily usage for their aircraft. If the logistics of your flight do not meet these minimums, there may be a charge to satisfy the minimums.

Nautical Mile The equivalent of 1.15 statute, or standard, miles. The standard measurement in marine and aviation operations. Abbreviated as nm.

On-Demand Air Cargo Operations The on-demand air charter sector, while primarily associated with passenger transportation services, is also involved in cargo movements. Most of the aircraft used in the U.S. on-demand cargo fleet were originally delivered as utility aircraft, operating in passenger, freight, or combination passenger-freight roles.

Payload The weight of cargo and passengers an aircraft is capable of carrying with full fuel.

Positioning Ferrying an aircraft for departure from other than the originating airport. (Also for return.)

Range The distance capability of an aircraft, usually with a specific amount of reserve fuel.

Single-Engine Piston Aircraft These are airplanes powered by one piston-driven engine. The piston single can usually seat up to nine passengers and is capable of speeds from 115 to 180 mph, with a range of about 800 miles.

Stage Length Distance of non-stop leg.

Taxi Time That portion of the trip spent rolling between the gate, terminal or ramp and runway.

Turbine Engine The turbine engine has no cylinders or pistons. Using kerosene as fuel, it operates by compressing air, igniting it, and using the hot exhaust gases to drive the turbine wheel. In turboprops, this power is used to turn the propeller. In jets, the gases are forced out the back of the engine and, in combination with the internal front fan, provide propulsion. This engine type allows for much greater speeds, longer ranges and higher altitudes.

Turboprop Aircraft These airplanes are powered by a turbine engine (instead of a piston engine) that turns the propeller. The turboprop generally carries fewer than 18 passengers, but some are capable of carrying up to 30, at speeds of 260 to 350 mph. Flying range is up to 2,000 miles, nonstop. Most of these aircraft have a lavatory.

Twin-Engine Piston Aircraft This airplane is powered by two piston engines, usually mounted on the wings. Twins are usually faster than singles, with flying speeds of 180 to 275 mph and a range that is comparable to the piston single. Passenger capacity is normally four to nine people. The heavier piston twins often have a separate passenger section and are referred to as cabin-class twins. They can fly at speeds of 250 to 300 mph and carry up to 10 passengers.

VFR Visual Flight Rules (flight outside of any clouds).

Waiting Time That time the chartered aircraft and crew must wait on the ground during any portion of the trip.

National Air Transportation Association

The National Air Transportation Association (NATA) is the voice of aviation business, representing the legislative, regulatory and business interests of its more than 2,000 members. NATA also provides education, services and benefits to strengthen the economic success of its members.

For more information, visit http://www.nata.aero.

Air Charter Safety Foundation

The Air Charter Safety Foundation is a non-profit organization that strives to improve the safety of air charter and fractional ownership operations worldwide.

For more information, visit http://www.acsf.aero.