

# Chartering An Aircraft

## A Consumers Guide



[U.S. Department of Transportation](#)  
[Federal Aviation Administration](#)

- [Chartering An Aircraft](#)
- [Selecting an Air Taxi Operator](#)
- [Selecting The Right Aircraft](#)
- [How Does Weather Affect My Flight Plans?](#)
- [What Is A Pressurized Cabin?](#)
- [Bringing Children Along](#)
- [Aircraft Comparison Table](#)

---

## Chartering An Aircraft

This guide is designed to help you charter an airplane or helicopter, if you don't know where to start.

Air charter or air taxis (the general term used for all kinds of chartered aircraft) offer many advantages over larger airlines' regularly scheduled flights. Air taxis can offer savings of time and expense by landing at an airport close to your destination and by following your time schedule. Take the following examples:

- **You need the speed and convenience of air travel but there is no scheduled airline service to your destination - general aviation airports with good facilities can accommodate air taxi flights.**
- **Your boss has a hectic schedule and has trouble making all his or her appointments because there aren't enough flights near the desired destination(s) - air taxis follow your itinerary.**
- **You need to get from place to place quickly, but the destinations are separated by geographic features, such as water - chartering an aircraft may save you time, money, and aggravation.**
- **You have a medical emergency - chartering an aircraft is a quick and easy way to get there fast.**

These pages provide guidance on selecting a safe, suitable Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Certificated air taxi operator.

Selecting an air taxi operator is not difficult, nor does it require a vast knowledge of the air taxi industry or Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR's).

Included in this guide are some general questions you should ask an air taxi operator prior to arranging for a flight. A chart is included describing different types of aircraft, passenger seating capacity, and some of the comfort items you may expect on the aircraft. A brief description of some of the FAA regulations operators must meet are also discussed.

There are approximately 3,000 air taxi operators in the United States who have met the comprehensive criteria required to qualify for an Air Carrier Operating Certificate. Of those operators, approximately 2,500 offer service in airplanes and 500 provide service in helicopters.

---

## Selecting an Air Taxi Operator

Any air taxi operator that offers services to the public must by law be certified by the FAA and meet stringent operational, maintenance, and safety rules. In addition, the pilots must be specifically qualified.

The regulations for air taxis provide for a high level of safety and control. They address flight operations, maintenance requirements, and crew member training and testing.

The FAR's also address crew rest, physical examinations, and mandate a stringent anti-drug program for operators. The FAA closely monitors air taxi operators to make sure that they conform to the established standards of performance. Your safety depends on flying with a legally certified air taxi operator.

Asking a few basic questions of the air taxi operator is all that is needed to be certain that you are dealing with an FAA Certificated Air Carrier (this is the official name for an air taxi operator) and that the operator is authorized to provide the type and kind of service you require. The following questions may be helpful before arranging a flight:

1. **Do you hold a current FAA Air Carrier Operating Certificate?**  
\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
2. **What is the name of the company as it appears on the certificate?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. **What is the certificate number?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. **What is the name and telephone number of the FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) and who is the FAA Principle Operations Inspector overseeing your operation?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. **(For International trips) Is your company FAA authorized to conduct international operations to \_\_\_\_\_?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

You have the right to contact the FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO). The telephone number is in your local directory under "U.S. Government, Transportation Department of." If the air taxi operator is unwilling or reluctant to provide the answers to the above questions, or does not want you to contact the FAA for verification, you would be wise to consider another operator to fill your travel requirements.

---

## Selecting The Right Aircraft

When making inquiries with air taxi companies, the operator will probably want to know the following:

- number of passengers,
- amount of baggage,
- time constraints, and
- your itinerary. Also, tell the operator your passengers' ultimate destination so the most convenient airport can be chosen.

Like everything, there are trade-offs between cost, aircraft speed, seating capacity, amenities, and weather capabilities.

The air taxi operator is your best source of information for choosing an aircraft. Unless you have a specific preference, let the operator recommend the aircraft that is best suited to your needs.

---

## **HOW DOES WEATHER AFFECT MY FLIGHT PLANS?**

Weather can affect your flight plans. The FAA has regulations concerning weather, types of aircraft, and pilot capabilities. Some aircraft are equipped with various optional equipment that allows the 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 the standards of his/her certification. Do not second guess a pilot's decision-making authority when it comes to weather and flight safety.

---

## **WHAT IS A PRESSURIZED CABIN?**

Many air taxis use aircraft that are unpressurized. Cabin pressurization refers to an aircraft's ability to maintain a comfortable environment in the cabin as altitude increases and outside air becomes colder and thinner. There are differences in flying in a pressurized versus unpressurized aircraft. Pressurized aircraft can fly at higher altitudes than unpressurized aircraft. Flying at a lower altitude can be a wonderful experience. On a clear day, you can enjoy the scenery. You can see the towns, cities, roads, mountains, lakes, and rivers. Unpressurized aircraft usually climb and descend slower than pressurized aircraft and fly around, rather than over the weather. If the weather is going to be a factor, the choice of aircraft can affect your flight plans. The operator you select can explain the options.

---

## **BRINGING CHILDREN ALONG**

Remember, children are safest in an approved child safety seat. Children under 2 years old can be held by another passenger, but in a sudden stop, they may not be safely restrained. If a safety seat is used, install the seat in a rear airplane seat (consistent with the pilot's instructions), but not near an entry door or emergency exit. Seats manufactured to U.S. standards after February 26, 1985, must bear two labels reading:

**"This child restraint system conforms to all applicable  
Federal motor vehicle safety standards"**

**"THIS RESTRAINT IS CERTIFIED FOR USE IN  
MOTOR VEHICLES AND AIRCRAFT"**

in red lettering. Follow seat manufacture's instructions and observe weight limitations. Chartering an air taxi is a convenient and safe way to travel. We hope this guide has helped you become a better informed consumer of an important segment of the air transportation industry.

<b>Aircraft Comparison Table</b>					
<b>Aircraft</b>	<b>Single Engine Airplane</b>	<b>Multi-Engine Airplane</b>	<b>Multi-Engine Turbo Prop Airplane</b>	<b>Multi-Engine Jet Airplane</b>	<b>Single And Multi-Engine Helicopter</b>
<b>Passengers</b>	1 to 9	1 to 9	1 to 30	1 to 30	1 to 12
<b>Crew Requirements</b>	1 pilot	1 pilot, 2 if requested	1 or 2 depending on aircraft requirements	2 pilots, flight attendant over 19 seats	1 pilot
<b>Speed</b>	115-200 MPH	170-230 MPH	200-300 MPH	350-580 MPH	120-160 MPH
<b>Food / Beverage</b>	Catering, if	Catering, if requested.	Catering, if requested.	Catering, when	Catering, if requested.

	requested.			requested, many have ovens on board	
Comfort Items	May have A/C, reading lights and tray tables	Most have A/C, reading lights and tray tables, reclining seats, and club seating	In addition may have stereo and in-flight telephone	Feature are similar to an airliner	Many have A/C, stereo, in-flight telephone, reading lights and tray tables
Lavatories	No	Mostly No	Mostly Yes	Yes	No
Pressurization	Mostly No	Mostly No	Almost all	All	None

For more information, please write to:

FAA Office of Public Affairs  
Consumer Liaison  
800 Independence Ave. S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20591

To receive a printed copy of "Chartering An Aircraft A Consumers Guide"

brochure from which these pages are based, write:

FAA/ASY-20  
400 7th Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

You may also leave your request with an automated telephone answering service  
by dialing:  
202-267-7770

These pages are based upon a brochure produced by the FAA Associate Administrator  
for Aviation Safety with the Flight Standards Service in cooperation with the National Air  
Transportation Association.

Many thanks to Don Severs -Atlanta FSDO

*Original Issue: May 10, 2002*