

Choosing a Private Jet Charter Provider

by Executive Jet Management

As service from the commercial airlines continues to decline and travel by private jet becomes more common, choosing the right private jet charter provider has never been more important. And while there are more options than ever to fulfill your flying needs, the private aviation market has become cluttered with misinformation. This guide presents 10 things you should consider when choosing a charter provider. Let's look at each in detail.

1. Aircraft Operator Versus Broker

Many providers that offer jet charter services are brokers or middlemen between you and a charter operator and do not actually operate aircraft. The risk associated with using a broker and not a charter operator that is certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), is that there are no guarantees as to what you will be receiving in regard to safety, security, and service. Brokers are solely responsible for booking the flight and do not have any direct control over the actual charter operator you will be flying with.

The best charter providers are legal, FAA-approved operators. True operators are ultimately responsible for flying the airplane as well as any activities necessary to conduct the flight. When you choose a charter provider that is also an operator, you are able to inquire about, and accurately assess, their safety and service standards and practices.

2. Safety and Security

Many charter providers claim to be the safest and most secure but you want to choose one that can back it up with fully developed, inspected, and approved programs in place.

Look to work with a provider that has an active emergency response program which addresses all foreseeable emergencies related to air travel and plans out their solutions step-by-step. In the event of any emergency, small or large, you want to be with an operator who has planned for every contingency. The provider should also have fully developed quality and safety management systems to ensure there is full oversight of all daily operations.

A critical program your chosen provider should have in place is the Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP), which is based on a safety partnership with the FAA. The goal of the ASAP is to enhance aviation safety through the prevention of accidents and incidents by

encouraging employees to voluntarily report safety issues and events that come to their attention. They should also follow, and ideally exceed, all requirements of the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Additionally, all of their charter operations should be in accordance with the TSA-approved Twelve-Five Standard Security Program (TFSSP) on which associated employees should receive annual training.

Each and every member of the charter provider's organization should also undergo extensive training to ensure that any issue, no matter how small, is resolved quickly and efficiently. Training should cover a variety of subjects from aircraft, client, and facility security to ensuring strict client confidentiality. They should also conduct random security tests and checks, as well as regularly scheduled security procedure audits, to ensure that all personnel are fully trained to follow established procedures.

All employees, contractors, and vendors who routinely access the provider's facilities and aircraft should be screened for safety including extensive background checks. All crewmembers should also pass a fingerprint Criminal History Records Check (CHRC) from the TSA.



3. Aircraft Maintenance Standards

Aircraft safety standards vary greatly from provider to provider. Although industry aircraft standards are set by the FAA, such as mandatory routine aircraft maintenance, the best charter providers work hard to exceed these requirements. Your charter provider should have rigorous safety standards in place for their aircraft and strive to exceed the FAA requirements. All aircraft operated by the provider should undergo routine safety checks and maintenance inspections to ensure that all aircraft not only meet FAA regulatory requirements, but also meet the highest standards of safety and quality.

Your provider should have their own fully-equipped, in-house maintenance facility as this enables them to perform routine maintenance on a regular basis. However, not all of these facilities are the same. One way to ensure that they are operating a top-notch facility is to look at their training including any third-party recognition they may have received. One well-respected standard is the FAA Diamond Award for Training. A good maintenance department will have received this award for multiple years running. This industry award recognizes advanced training for aircraft maintenance professionals throughout the airline industry and is only given to employers with 100% employee participation in an FAA-approved aviation maintenance training program. Their maintenance staff should also receive biannual training and ongoing education directly from manufacturers to ensure operational safety, teamwork, and efficiency within the workplace.

4. Pilot Experience

Although private aviation is a federally regulated industry, there is a broad range of pilot experience and training from one charter provider to the next. To legally fly commercial or charter aircraft, the FAA requires that a captain or first officer has a Commercial Pilot Certificate. This translates to only 250 total flight hours. Regarding recurrent training, a Pilot only has to receive flight simulator training once a year.

Your charter provider should hire and retain the most seasoned pilots, and invest in ongoing training that exceeds the FAA's requirements. The safest providers require a minimum of approximately 3,500 flight hours for captains and 2,500 for first officers in addition to mandatory recurrent flight simulator training twice a year. Their pilots should also be required to hold a First Class Medical Certificate, which helps to ensure the safety of the passengers in case of an emergency.

5. Flight Scheduling and Tracking

Your charter provider should have experienced, live staff available 24/7/365, with the ability to book travel, alter travel plans, or provide you with flight tracking updates at any time. Unfortunately, many providers outsource their flight scheduling and tracking functions, making booking travel with them much more complicated.

Your chosen provider should have a fully equipped, 24/7/365 flight center with a knowledgeable flight scheduling, following, and coordinating staff. The staff should be able to easily book or change the details of your charter trip and provide you with constant updates and alerts throughout the entire trip, including take-off and landing notifications and in-flight status reports. This eliminates the hassle of scrambling to make potentially costly, last-minute travel arrangements or changes and ensures that your trip will go as planned, down to the smallest detail.

6. Travel Planning Services

Look for a charter provider that can assist you with every aspect of your trip, down to the smallest detail. A full-service charter provider can offer you many travel-related services beyond flight scheduling from provisioning your aircraft and giving you weather updates to arranging for chauffeured ground transportation, onboard catering, and any other special requests including cakes, flowers, and decorations. Put simply, the charter provider should be capable of serving as your personal private aviation assistant.

7. International Travel

The charter provider you choose should be able to fly almost anywhere in the world while providing you the same standards of privacy, flexibility, safety, security, and service you are accustomed to in the United States. They should not only have a fleet of aircraft with the ability to travel internationally, but also be able to provide you with international trip and flight planning services including overflight and landing permits, hotel accommodations and travel services, itinerary and route planning, computerized flight plans, weather briefings and change notices, onboard catering, chauffeured ground transportation, and airport recommendations.

Your provider should also monitor threat levels of all countries worldwide on a daily basis to ensure the highest levels of security for their clients who fly internationally. They should be able to advise you of any known security threats and coordinate any necessary security arrangements to maximize safety and comfort.

The provider should also have international operations programs in place that provide convenience to their clients when traveling internationally. One of these programs, most commonly called a Visa Waiver Program (VWP), allows citizens of specific countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for up to 90 days without having to obtain a visa. Additionally, the Southern Border Overflight Exemption (SBOE) program allows an aircraft coming in from the Caribbean Basin, the Bahamas, South America, Latin America, and/or Mexico to bypass designated Southern Re-entry Airports. The result is that travel which otherwise required a mandatory stop to clear United States Customs is now streamlined so you can fly directly to your intended destination airport, if it is a United States Customs-approved location.

8. Flexibility and Tailored Solutions

When chartering a private jet you can fly on your schedule in the specific aircraft type and cabin size you prefer. The best charter providers are able to accommodate any situation and help you identify the best-sized, best-priced aircraft for each trip.

Make sure that the charter provider you choose can fulfill all your flying needs including your arrival and departure cities, dates and times, number of passengers, luggage requirements, and preferred amenities including flight attendants, sleeping capabilities, and in-flight services such as Internet and phone access.

A good charter provider should also be able to offer you several fully-customizable charter programs. Most charter providers have an “on-demand” or “pay-as-you-go” charter option with no minimum commitment or membership. However, the charter provider should have several other charter programs available, such as a frequent flyer or city-to-city program, which you can tailor to meet your specific needs. These programs should include varying billing options as well as incentives.

9. Quoting and Billing

Quoting and billing can widely vary by charter provider. Your provider should discuss all of your charter options with you before giving you a detailed, guaranteed quote. Your written quote should reflect the best-sized, best-priced aircraft for your trip with no hidden fees or charges and no obligation to book the flight.

With a good charter provider, your quoted price should be guaranteed once you book your trip. If the actual flying time exceeds the quoted amount, you should

not be responsible for the additional cost. The provider should absorb the cost as part of its guaranteed quote promise. With the standard on-demand charter option, payments should be able to be made in advance or invoiced after the trip.

10. Experience and Stability

Experience levels and stability can vary significantly from one charter provider to another. Look to work with a provider that is established, preferably in business for many years (ideally decades), and has the resources to guarantee that they will not only be there for you now but well into the future.

Experience levels can vary significantly from one charter provider to another. Experience is extremely important as some providers may have not previously flown flights similar to the one you may be currently booking. You do not want your trip to be their first time. Other factors to look for that can speak to overall experience are total number of countries and cities flown to, along with flight hours completed in the past year, and average tenure of the employees.

Stability should also factor into your decision process when choosing a charter provider. Your provider should have the resources available to hire talented and trained professionals, develop sophisticated technologies, and invest in award winning safety and security programs.

We hope that this guide to finding the best charter provider was helpful. We welcome an opportunity to discuss your private flying needs with you further. For more information please contact one of our Charter Services Representatives at 877-356-5387.



About Executive Jet Management

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- Awarded "Best Charter Service" by *Professional Pilot* magazine
- Voted "Best of the Best" Charter Company by *Robb Report* magazine
- ACSF Certified, ARGUS Platinum Rated, IS-BAO Certified, and Wyvern Wingman Certified



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