

# On Demand Flight Service Provider Guide

Aviation service providers who can take persons and the personnel of companies to destinations not on regular airline routes are usually referred to as air charter operators. These flights are called charter flights, and any entity or person that might need to be flown to a destination by aircraft should only use legally licensed and certified operators in the interest of personal safety and to ensure personal life insurance remains valid.

## South African Air Charter Guide

*An initiative by:*

*The Association of Non-Scheduled Operators and the South Africa Civil Aviation Authority*

### **DISCLAIMER**

*This guide is intended to provide general information to assist consumers in understanding how to select air charter operators. The types of questions suggested in the guide reflect the initial inquiry that a user of this guide might consider. In order to make an informed judgment, you should ask for more specific information; those questions are beyond the goals of this guide. The contents do not constitute legal advice or an endorsement of any particular air charter operator or air charter broker. No warranty, assumed liability or responsibility for the professional competency of any air charter operator or air charter broker selected as a result of the process recommended in the guide while be assumed.*

### **Introduction**

Convenience, flexibility and access to remote locations are key reasons why individuals and companies are increasingly choosing aircraft charter for personal and business travel. Air charter flights operate on the passenger's schedule, allowing considerable flexibility and convenient access to your destination. And air charter is a safe mode of transportation.

Even with all the benefits air charter provides, it also is true that not all air charter operators will meet your specific needs. You must become an *educated* air charter consumer. Because each consumer has different needs and requirements, there is not necessarily only one correct method to pre-screen providers, although it is recommended that consumers at least evaluate charter operators or charter brokers as indicated in this guide.

Some answers will be straightforward while others will require aviation knowledge and expertise. The introduction you receive via this guide will help in many areas, yet first time charter consumers might consider working closely with an aviation expert to ensure that they are dealing with a reputable operator who has sound safety oversight.

All charter operators are required to hold an Air Operating Certificate (AOC) issued by the CAA and also an Operations Specifications that contains the company name, AOC number, permitted types of aircraft authorised, limitations and geographical region of permitted operations. These certificates allow charter operators to conduct chart or on-demand operations under the South African Civil Aviation Regulations and have met the requirements and standards as determined by the relevant SACAA flight operations section. Each charter operator is assigned to a CAA Flight Operations Inspector that oversees their AOC and Airworthiness. Some charter operators are permitted to, and serve the domestic market only, while others operate regionally and internationally. Some operate

smaller single-engine aircraft, others operate large turbojet aircraft; some operate at world-class levels, others operate at the minimum standards set by the CAA regulatory requirements. Knowing your requirements and preferences will help you find the right operator.

## What Is Your Charter Requirement?

When considering the variety and capability of various aircraft, one size cannot fit all. Several business and operational aircraft makes and models exist, many of which can be used for charter flights. Understanding your requirements will help ensure that you arrange correct aircraft for the type of service required.

The following are some key considerations you will need to know before arranging a charter flight:

- What is your proposed point of departure?
- Where is your destination
- Is there any other point, along which you wish to stop?
- Are your dates/times for travel firm or do have some flexibility?
- How many passengers will be travelling?
- Do you have aircraft cabin preferences or requirements?
  - Sleeping capabilities
  - Toilet (consider the time of each flight sector)
- What catering and dietary requirement you prefer?

## How Do I Find an Air Charter Operator?

Any resource that may help you find a charter operator located in your general geographic area and with aircraft that will meet your mission may not necessarily help you determine which charter operators train their crew to the highest standards, carry the appropriate insurance or ensure the best possible maintenance for their aircraft.

Consumers will need to engage any proposed Air Charter Operator to understand the organisational values and safety culture adopted by their company before confirming a flight.

## Air Charter Brokers / Agents

Charter Brokers and Agents are individuals or companies that link charter customers with charter operators. Unlike an SACAA certificated Air Charter Operators, charter brokers and agents are not regulated by the CAA or Department of Transportation (DOT).

Air Charter Brokers and Agents work either at the request of the consumer to find charter operators or at the request of the charter operator to find customers. Alternatively, brokers can act as a “middle-man” where the broker, at the request of a customer, finds an appropriate charter operator, with which the customer then contracts directly for the charter flights. In this middle-man scenario, the customer pays the broker separately for its services. If, as the consumer, you would like the charter broker to be your agent, then you need to control the authority you delegate to the broker. While some Charter Brokers and Agents have aviation industry experience and understand all facets of the charter industry, others have limited aviation experience and place a priority on their profit, with the customer’s needs secondary.

If you choose to work with an Air Charter Broker or Agent, you will want to inquire about the broker’s aviation experience and knowledge of the SACAA Regulations as well as ensure that the Air Charter Broker or Agent provides you with the information requested in this guide so that you can make an informed decision regarding your preferred charter operator choices.

If the air charter broker is unwilling or unable to provide you with the required information, you might consider working directly with a charter operator or another broker who can provide you with the necessary information.

## Selecting a Charter Operator

It is highly recommended that charter customers pre-screen charter operators, so that when a charter flight needs to be arranged, you will have a list of pre-qualified charter operators readily available for your particular need. Alternatively, your air charter broker could provide this pre-screening for you provide they have your best interest at heart and provide full disclosure in their efforts to satisfy that safe standards are being met.

You will want to select an Air Charter Operator based on several criteria, which include:

**Safety and Security:** Contact the local CAA Flight Operations Inspector regarding the safety and accident history of a charter operator. If the charter operator is in your area, visit their facilities to see firsthand the condition of the aircraft and determine the level of customer service. Request any external or internal audit results or history.

**Operational Considerations:** The SACAA mandates initial and recurrent training for all charter pilots, and it is suggested that you request information regarding these events. Generally, for jet aircraft, a minimum of annual recurrent training in a flight simulator is preferred. The experience level of the crew is also important. The highest SACAA rating a pilot can earn is an Airline Transport Pilot's (ATP) license, which requires a minimum of 1,500 hours flight experience. You will want to know the total flight hours of all the crew and, even more important, how many hours each crewmember has on the type of aircraft operated. Ensure that newer, less experienced pilots are paired with pilots who have more experience in the aircraft. Aviation Auditors can also be engaged to provide companies with a report on the compliance and safety standards employed by an operator

Another consideration is maintenance and care of the aircraft. The SACAA approves the maintenance organisations and schedules for all aircraft operated by an Air Charter Operator. You will want to know who maintains the aircraft. Is it maintained by a factory approved service centre, by an in-house mechanic or by a local repair facility? How does the operator handle maintenance situations that, on a rare occasion, might arise during a trip you have booked?

If you are planning an international flight, determine what experience the operator has flying to/from/within the countries you wish to visit. Similarly, the training and experience levels of flight crew conducting specialized flight operations, such as island operation and extended range over-water operations, polar operations, or flights into airports with unique operating characteristics.

A benefit of flying on a chartered aircraft is the customer service experience. While screening potential operators, determine how the charter operator ensures a consistent and high level of customer service. Do the pilots, flight attendants and other employees receive customer service training – if so, what does the training entail and how is their performance measured? Have service standards been established for the crew? What are they and how are they measured?

How soon prior to the scheduled flight will the aircraft be at the airport ready for departure? How will the charter company accommodate you if there is a problem with the flight arrangements? To whom would you go with a complaint – the flight crew or company headquarters? Will someone be available at any time – day or night – to assist you should you have a complaint? One indication of a charter operator's service levels will be the number of repeat customers they have.

Related to customer services is confidentiality. You might inquire with the charter operator how they ensure and maintain the confidentiality of your travel arrangements, if this is important to you or your business.

**Know the Charter Operator:** Is there an Air Charter Broker or Agent involved in arranging the charter flight or are you dealing directly with the Air Charter Operator? While brokers can be beneficial to the customer, be certain any broker you work with has aviation safety and regulatory understanding. You should know who will be conducting each flight and the qualifications of that Air Charter Operator. Be sure to ask for a copy of their SACAA issued Air Operating Certificate. From that, you will see the SACAA AOC number and operators name.

Sometimes the charter operator supplements, substitutes or is unable to conduct a flight that you might have scheduled. In most cases the charter operator will find another charter company to conduct the flight for you. Ask how the charter company handles situations such as this. What criteria does the operator use to select a substitute charter company? Consider whether the same criteria you have set forth are used when choosing the substitute charter operator and if the substitute operator meets the same standards you have established. You should insist upon being advised of the name of any substitute charter operator proposed and of the right to cancel your arrangements with a full refund in the event that substitution does not satisfy your criteria.

**Insurance Requirements and Recommendations:** Inquire about the charter operator's insurance coverage to ensure the limits are adequate. The minimum requirements is at least R1,000,000 per seat, but in most instances, charter companies have additional cover in the form of a Combined Single Limit (CSL) to include death, bodily injury and property damage liability.

Prior to the flight, obtain a certificate of insurance confirming the coverage and specifically identifying the aircraft that will be used. Industry standards are for consumers to acquire proof of insurance coverage under the operator's aviation insurance policy.

**Price:** Do not choose a charter operator based on price alone. The safety and security of the passengers must be the primary consideration. There may also be other costs associated with charter operations, including one-way fees (for one-way flights), fuel surcharges, diversion costs, crew transportation, overnight charges, catering, ground transportation and passenger taxes. Know what the entire cost of the flight will be before signing the charter contract.