

Inside the Community

Important questions to ask when you charter a private jet

The cost of flying privately has come down in the past few months. It's a simple matter of supply and demand. The number of available jets has not reduced much from the boom times of the past few years, but the demand has softened as people cut back on travel during the recession which now seems to be finding a bottom. Fuel prices have also moderated from last years highs. This is a good time to check out what's available.

Private jets can be chartered directly from operators or indirectly through brokers. The difference is in; who controls the training and procedures for the crews, and who controls the maintenance on the aircraft.

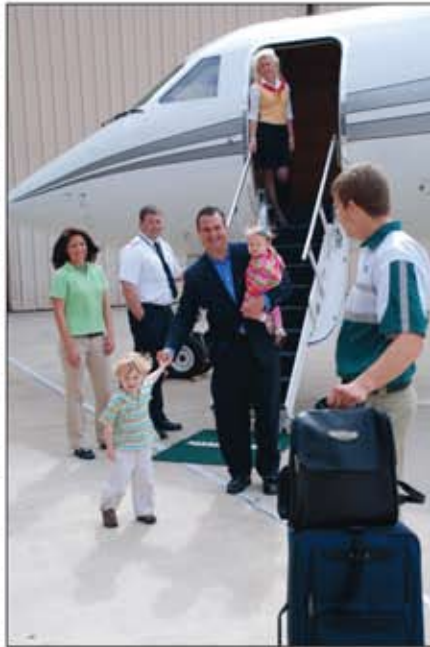
Here are some key questions to ask when enquiring about a charter:

Is the fleet based locally? Flying aircraft from other cities adds ferry costs to your trip before you even get off the ground, and may reduce the flying time available to you due to pilot legal maximum flying-hours limitations.

What is the standard of maintenance on your aircraft? Does the maintenance team have a "Diamond Award" rating from the FAA? (This is given to only a few top-level maintenance organizations including at least one charter operator in the Dallas area.)

Does the charter company have a "Platinum" rating from ARG/US, or "Wingman" rating from Wyvern? These are safety ratings from independent organizations that audit the qualifications and operations procedures of charter operators. Platinum is the highest rating. Why settle for less?

Are the pilots full-time employees of the company you are considering? Some companies use contract pilots on a part-time basis. You want to know these crewmembers are part of a



well monitored consistent safety management system under the professional supervision of a full-time Director of Operations.

Does the charter company offer a wide choice of aircraft types? This can affect both your cost and your comfort. Using a "right-fit" aircraft for the trip you are planning saves money and time in the long-run. Aircraft differ in both range and seating capacity. Why pay for more than you need or suffer the inconvenience of a too-small option?

Can the charter company handle international trips as well as domestic

itineraries? All charter companies must, by law, stop at the nearest airport to our southern border when returning from Mexico or the Caribbean. However, a few operators have been granted a "border overflight exemption" by the Federal Government and can fly you directly to Dallas, non-stop, saving time and money.

Where will you board your aircraft? Is there a private comfortable facility with a full time staff to greet you upon arrival or is there a ramp you need to find by yourself and hope there is a person to direct you?

Is the phone answered by a live person 24/7? You never know when your plans may change. You want to be confident and assured you will always be able to reach someone to help answer questions, or make changes at any time.

Asking these questions will guide you to the best and safest experience in private flying. You pay about the same for the top-level charter operation as you would by using a lesser option. Find an operator who does not compromise on quality and you won't have to compromise either. You deserve the best for your money and your peace of mind.

