

GOOD AND BAD OF CHARTER FLIGHTS

KINDS OF CHARTER FLIGHTS:

Public Charter: Can Be purchased from a tour operator, travel agent or directly from airlines ex: Suntrips, Air Jamaica, Air Pacific, Peoples Express – Norwegian Air

Affinity Charter: Flights arranged by a club or other organization for its members – Generally do not carry the consumer protection provisions of Public Charters. Be sure you know what kind of charter flight you are purchasing.

GOOD

1. Can be an excellent Value IF YOU ARE FLEXIBLE
2. Often Operate NON-STOP from major gateways
3. All seats are the same price
4. If your charter operator notifies you of a major change before departure you get a full refund if you decide to cancel. (If you choose not to cancel, the operator is not required to make partial refunds)– HOWEVER, if you don't find out about a change until after your trip has begun, you can reject the changed flight or hotel, make and pay for own alternative plans, and insist on a refund for the original component when you get home. Keep in mind how it will affect your connecting scheduled service arrangements if there are any.
5. Charter flights are required to hold monies in an ESCROW TRUST ACCOUNT.

BAD – The DOT Rules for Charter operators

1. Penalties if you cancel: The closer to departure you cancel, the bigger the penalty. Scheduled-service /non-refundable, Charter may or may not permit this however, name changes can be minimal
2. Charter cancellation insurance often won't pay you if you must cancel because of a preexisting condition
3. A Public Charter can cancel for any reason up to 10 days before departures. (a risk you take in return for a low fare) During the last 10 days they can ONLY CANCEL if it is physically impossible to operate it.
4. You as the passenger can cancel if there is a "Major Change" ex
 - a. A change in departure or return city (not including a simple change in the order of which cities are visited)
 - b. A change in departure or return date, unless the date change results from a flight delay –(However, a flight delay of more than 48 hrs. is a major change)
 - c. A substitution of a hotel that was not named as an alternative hotel in your contract.
 - d. An increases in price, if the total of all increases billed to you is more than 10% of what you originally paid (No increases are allowed during the last 10 days before departure)
 - e. Public Charters can operate as one-way but no open returns on round trip
 - f. Baggage rules are different...there may be a dispute over who is liable. Possession is the key issue, If not clear regarding possession the airline may decline liability. (Check homeowner's insurance or 3rd party insurance).
 - g. Your charter could be delayed a regular occurrence with charters for several hours or days IF a flight is delayed more than 48 hours they must offer you the options to cancel with a full refund.

- h. If you are connecting to scheduled air and the Charter is late, you would have to pay your own expenses, perhaps a higher fare to switch to another scheduled-serve flight if you were ticketed at a discount fare. Bottom line: leave plenty of connecting time between charter and scheduled flights when making your arrangements. You will have to retrieve your baggage and re-check for your next flight
- i. Charter and scheduled airlines operate independent of each other...If you miss a connecting flight for any reason you are OUT OF LUCK.
- j. In International flights you may be delayed through customs...
- k. You might find seating space for your charter plane to be more crowded than you are used to. "Load Factors" are usually higher, which means less chance of an empty middle seat next to you if you're traveling alone. [An important metric for an airline is the Load Factor, which measures the percentage of available seats that are filled during a specific period] i.e. Yield Management
- l. Check-in deadlines are lengthier on charters than on scheduled service flights. 3 hours is not unusual for an international charter.
- m. If a Charter hasn't sold out completely shortly before departure the operator can sell seats at bargain basement prices to latecomers. Though this upsets the early purchaser, the alternative would be to cancel the flight altogether for economic reasons by the airlines.
- n. Charters rates are relatively low, but might not be the cheapest fare to your destination.

Charters offer nonstop flights for an affordable price. They can be a wise travel investment IF YOU CAN BE FLEXIBLE IN YOUR TRAVEL PLANS. Just be sure you know the conditions for the trip you're buying BEFORE YOU PAY FOR IT.

Ex of disasters: Suntrips, Allegiant, Air Pacific, Norwegian Air.