



Chartering Aircraft in Alaska's Backcountry

Who Should I Fly With?

Air charter operators must have a permit to operate within National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges and some other public recreation lands in Alaska. You should check in advance with the land agency managing the area that you plan to visit. National Parks and some National Wildlife Refuges provide lists of commercial permit holders which may be obtained from the individual agency offices or from the Alaska Public Lands Information Center. For names of air charter operators in other areas of Alaska, check local telephone directories, visitors bureaus, community visitor guides, or the official State Vacation Planner, available free from the Alaska Division of Community and Economic Development, PO Box 110800, Juneau, AK 99811-0800, (phone 907-465-2500).

Flying in Alaska is a unique adventure.

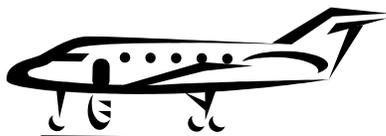
Due to our wild country, airplanes are often the only way to reach backcountry areas that offer superb wilderness recreation opportunities. You can reduce costs by taking a scheduled commercial or mail flight to the community nearest your destination and chartering an aircraft from there. Aircraft may also be chartered directly from Fairbanks, which is more convenient but usually more expensive because of the longer distances involved. There are many companies providing scheduled and charter service from Fairbanks; check under "airlines" in the yellow pages of the telephone directory, which may be available in your local library.

You can also write for a free copy of the Fairbanks Visitor's Guide from the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau, 101 Dunkel St. Ste 111, Fairbanks, AK 99701, or call toll-free 1-800-327-5774, fax 459-3757.



Aircraft

The type of aircraft depends on a number of factors, including the number and weight of people in your party, the amount of gear, the length and condition of the landing area, weather conditions, and the aircraft available. A Cessna 185 can carry 2-3 passengers and their gear, depending on the above factors. A Cessna 206-207 carries 3-5 people and gear. A PA-18 (Cub or Super Cub) carries only one passenger but is best suited to short, rough landing areas. Pilots insist on lighter loads when operating out of shorter, rougher landing areas, so your party may require more flights for the pick-up than the drop-off. For your own safety do not pressure the pilot into taking more weight than the aircraft can safely handle for existing conditions.



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Cost

Check with the operator for an estimate. **Charter costs always include the pilot's round trip, so double the one-way cost.** Poor weather or wind can increase flying time. If your plane picks up another group after dropping you off, you may not need to pay for that portion of the flight, depending on the initial arrangements. Some operators have a fixed rate to more popular destinations. **You should have a clear understanding of how costs will be figured before leaving Fairbanks.**



Pick-Up

Make certain there are no misunderstandings about where and when you should be picked up. If you miss a pick-up it could cost more for the operator's time spent looking for you. The pilot should be familiar with the landing area and certain that the plane can land there. Discuss alternatives with the pilot in case the landing area becomes temporarily unusable.

Weather

Bad weather is often a problem in Alaska, especially in coastal and mountainous areas. Your trip plans should allow for a one- or two-day delay on each end of the trip due to weather. Longer delays are certainly possible, so plan accordingly and take extra food. Remember, the weather could be fine at your pick-up point but unflyable where the plane is based.

Boats

Some larger aircraft, such as a DeHavilland Beaver, can accommodate a canoe and passengers together. Smaller aircraft may carry canoes, but only when there are no passengers on board, and an external load permit is required by the Federal Aviation Administration. Consequently you would have to pay for two round-trips — one for yourself and one for your canoe. Canoes must be chartered from Fairbanks since the cost of air freighting them to bush communities is extremely high. For these reasons, canoes are generally not practical in remote parts of

Alaska. Collapsible boats, such as folding canoes or kayaks, inflatable kayaks or rafts, and some smaller hard-shell kayaks, readily fit into Cessna 185 and larger aircraft and are preferred. Plan on bringing your boat with you, as there are only a few businesses in the Interior that rent collapsible craft at this time.

☞ **For more information** on visiting Alaska, check our website: www.alaskacenters.gov

Note

☞ If you are carrying any red pepper-based (capsicum) aerosol sprays for bear protection, fuel, campstoves, guns, and/or ammunition, be sure to notify the pilot. For safety reasons, he or she may have special procedures for handling these materials.

