

An ALTEA Guide:

ALTEA's 'Choose your FBO wisely' Housekeeping Checklist

Choosing the wrong FBO for your private aircraft can have unexpected consequences. How can private aircraft operators be sure an FBO will look after their aircraft properly?

Selecting the right FBO is crucial because it affects your **aircraft's safety, appearance, operating costs**, and the **overall ownership experience**. While many FBOs operate to very high standards, there *are* tell-tale signs that you and your operator should look elsewhere.

If you are unsure where to start, contact us at ALTEA, we are here to provide independent advice and support.

What Good FBOs Typically Demonstrate

1. Transparent, Consistent Communication

A reputable FBO communicates clearly about:

- Fuel pricing
- Hangar fees
- Handling charges
- Any additional services (e.g. GPU, de-icing, lavatory service)
- Maintenance observations

Good, consistent communication = managed expectations and therefore no surprises.

2. Proper Aircraft Handling & Safety Culture

You should see:

- Line crew trained and certified (National Air Transportation Association (NATA) for aviation professionals)
- Use of wing walkers
- Chocks and cones properly placed
- Correct towing equipment and procedures
- Clean, organised ramps

A strong safety culture is visible the moment your aircraft arrives.

An ALTEA Guide:

3. Well-Maintained Facilities

Signs of a quality operation include:

- Clean hangars
- No visible fluid leaks
- Tools stored properly
- Adequate, good lighting
- Dry, well-maintained hangar floors

A disordered facility often indicates careless aircraft handling.

4. Professional Relationship Management

Great FBOs:

- Know their frequent customers
- Track your preferences (catering, fuel type, cabin cleaning needs)
- Provide consistent service regardless of busy periods

Good customer service typically equals good aircraft service.

5. Clear Fee Structure & Value for Money

A trustworthy FBO shares:

- A complete list of services and associated fee before arrival
- All handling fees
- Any additional charges

You should easily understand *what you're paying for* and *why*.

Warning Signs You Should Look Elsewhere

1. Vague or 'surprise' pricing

If they can't provide:

- A clear fuel price
- Accurate handling fees
- Hangar costs
- Overnight charges

...before your aircraft arrives, proceed with caution if you proceed at all.

An ALTEA Guide:

2. Poor ramp discipline

Red flags include:

- No wing walkers
- Rushed or careless towing
- Ramp vehicles moving too close to aircraft
- Missing chocks, cones, or marshaller

This is a safety hazard and can lead to expensive damage.

3. Lack of training or certifications

If the FBO cannot confirm line crew training standards, that's a warning sign.

4. Dirty or disorganised facilities

Clutter, leaks, or disorganised tools typically reflect deeper operational weaknesses.

5. Slow or unresponsive communication

If simple questions require multiple follow-ups, imagine the standard of aircraft handling.

6. Fuel or billing inconsistencies

Examples:

- Different clerks quoting different prices
- Unexpected line items on invoices
- No clear justification for extra charges

A consistent FBO has consistent invoicing.

7. No clear safety policies

If an FBO can't quickly speak to:

- Fire safety
 - Ramp access rules
 - Hangar entry procedures
- ...then its internal safety culture may be lacking.*

An ALTEA Guide:

How to Ensure You're Getting Value for Money

Here's how to confirm you're paying fair and reasonable fees:

1. Compare fuel and handling fees between nearby airports

Even adjacent FBOs can differ significantly. A quick comparison helps establish fairness.

2. Ask for an itemised fee sheet in advance

A reputable FBO will happily provide one.

3. Monitor consistency over time

Fees shouldn't fluctuate wildly month-to-month unless:

- Regional fuel prices change
- Peak-time premiums apply
- Involve some oversight for a short period (ALTEA can support)

4. Track the condition of your aircraft

Things you *should never* see:

- New scratches
- Tow bar damage
- Scuffed paint
- Incorrect tire pressures due to poor towing

Any pattern of minor issues is a sign the FBO is simply not diligent enough.

5. Review customer and pilot feedback

Pilot forums and owner groups often have candid reviews. A quick sweep on the internet can be revealing but this should be followed up by personal contact and recommendations where possible.

About ALTEA: ALTEA is retained by those who want fresh thinking secured by experience in asset management; procurement and sales; financial solutions and design. Specialising in business jets, regional aircraft and helicopters, the expert team interprets knowledge and insight to achieve extraordinary results. Clients include financial institutions, operators, aircraft manufacturers, governments and private individuals who seek, a blend of specialist knowledge, integrity, and inspiration to resolve complex and sensitive aircraft projects. Visit: <https://altea-aero.com/> **Contact:** Robin Dunlop robin.dunlop@altea-aero.com

© ALTEA March 2026