

Air Ambulance & Aeromedical Repatriation

Guide and Information



This guide answers common questions about air ambulance repatriations. Having family members ill or injured abroad can be a very busy time and so this guide is brief but do not hesitate to call us at any time if you have questions.

Initially our job is to provide you with information, advice on the most appropriate form of repatriation and an estimate of the costs involved. This service is entirely free.

You can speak to us, day or night, on +44 (0)1202 375 444.

This guide covers:

- The air ambulance repatriation process.
- Aviastra and our service.
- What information we need.
- The costs involved.

Air Ambulance Repatriations

The principle requirement is to transport patients by air with uninterrupted medical care before, during and afterwards. Flights may be on scheduled airlines with a medical escort or with dedicated air ambulances and full medical teams with intensive care capability. Almost always a family member can travel in company with the patient. Patients will only be repatriated if it is safe to do so or if there is absolutely no other choice.

Initially the patient's medical situation is established to determine the type of aircraft and escort required and the most appropriate destination (home, local or specialist hospital).

Medical information is shared between the doctors currently looking after the patient, the air ambulance medical team, the doctors receiving the patient and the patient's own doctor. This process is vital to ensure continuity of care.

A chain of transport is planned for the journey:

- Suitable road ambulances to the departure airport.
- Special clearances and assistance as required at the airport.
- The appropriate aircraft, crew, medical team, and equipment for the flight.
- Special clearance and assistance again at the destination airport.
- Further road ambulance transport to destination

At each stage a full medical hand-over is conducted and progress of the repatriation centrally monitored with back-up procedures in place if required. Every case is unique and the repatriation is planned as required.

Occasionally long distance road ambulance journeys can be undertaken for the entirety of the repatriation.

Our Service

Aviastra Flight Charter Ltd is an accredited member of the British Ambulance Association, the European Business Aviation Association and the British Helicopter Association. We are recognised for our quality of service, reliability and the level of care we provide to passengers and patients.

Each air ambulance operation is planned and monitored by a medically qualified repatriation manager. We are insistent that despite the ad hoc nature of air ambulance flights (they can be from any part of the world to any other) only ambulance companies and medical staff with appropriate training and certification are used. Very occasionally, usually due to location, it is not possible to find services such as ambulances which are members of nationally recognised institutions like the British Ambulance Association. In these cases the service providers already have been, or will be, the subject of a careful audit to ensure the highest standard of safety and medical throughout the operation.

Aviastra plans, co-ordinates and monitors the air ambulance process and simultaneously provides a single point of contact for families and next of kin. We ensure contact with the treating hospital on a daily or more frequent basis to ensure that plans remain suitable or adapted as necessary.

Our service includes covers every aspect of repatriation and includes:

- **Planning & Co-ordination.** We plan and execute the entire operation from bed to bed. Every air ambulance flight is different and we combine the services of all necessary parties to complete the repatriation.
- **Medical reports and documentation.** Procuring all appropriate medical reports either directly or if required through the use of international medical agents. We provide translations where necessary and while adhering to strict policies of privacy and medical confidentiality ensure that all information is received by those involved in patient care, including family doctors for onward and long term follow up as required.
- **Customs, immigration, security, flight clearances and other “red tape”.** We ensure that all aspects of domestic and international paperwork and other formalities are taken care of behind the scenes with minimal impact on the smooth running of the flight operations.
- **Family Support and Liaison.** This is often a very difficult time for families and we are available day and night to provide information, reassurance, updates and support. While families usually do not have the experience, knowledge or contacts to arrange the repatriation themselves it is important that at all times they feel included in the process and remain informed of what is happening.

Before the air ambulance operation begins you will have full details of exactly when and how the patient is leaving the hospital, who is looking after them en-route, and where and at what time they will arrive in a specific department or ward at the destination hospital. Usually one family member can travel with the patient and others can see them off and be there to meet them on arrival. The destination is usually the patient’s local hospital, occasionally their home and occasionally a more distant home hospital if specialist treatment is needed.

- **Flight doctors, nurses and paramedics** –All staff have specialist flight medicine training and are selected from a wide range of specialist qualification and experience to suit the type of case.
- **Road ambulances** – If hospitals are unable to assist we make use of private road ambulances from companies providing the correct level of equipment, training and expertise.
- **International Agents.** In some countries it is necessary to use the services of agents to provide medical reports and to facilitate the all important communication between ourselves, outlying hospitals and medical staff at the destination. It is an unavoidable frustration but one that we take care of for you.
- **Aircraft Operations.** All aircraft are operated by fully licensed companies holding a UK Air Operators Certificate or national equivalent. Broadly there are two types of aircraft:
 - **Scheduled Aircraft** eg British Airways. Seated passengers requiring medical escort or stretcher cases for relatively uncomplicated conditions can often travel this way. “Low Cost” or budget airlines are not used as they do not provide the level of service required
 - **Dedicated air ambulances.** These are smaller aircraft, jets or turboprops, equipped with stretchers and the necessary equipment to provide full intensive care and life support. These aircraft are used for shorter journeys, serious cases or for routes where no reasonable scheduled service exists.

What information we need

Initially all that is needed is the name and contact details of the person making the enquiry, the location and a description of the patient’s condition (we understand that you probably won’t have all the technical details or extensive medical knowledge) and finally the expected or required destination. With this information we can provide you with an estimate of what is required and what the costs will be.

To provide an accurate costing we will need a medical report. For this to be released to us we need the permission of the next of kin or other close relative and we will send you a brief form to complete and sign giving us this permission. We do not charge for this service ourselves nor is there any deposit as such but there may be costs involved if the hospital will only release the report via an agent in that country (it occurs in the minority of cases, usually in Greece and Italy, and usually costs about £130 but can be more). There is no other cost at this stage or any obligation or assumption that we will be completing the air ambulance for you.

If you wish us to proceed we need the patient’s home address and passport/immigration details (also for travelling companions). We will send you an air ambulance agreement document to complete detailing all aspects of what will be provided, the costs and your instruction for us to proceed.

The costs involved

If Air Ambulance repatriations are funded privately we ensure that the families and clients know exactly why and how costs might be incurred on their behalf. This approach is not common but it is Aviastra's policy that while medical repatriations are primarily about care and safety, our clients should always have this additional information. Air Ambulance operations do not incur any VAT.

Each repatriation is planned and costed individually. Short distance straightforward repatriations can cost as little as £1500 but prices can be higher according to region and complexity. Flights and medical staff costs can vary according to distance and if specialist training and equipment is required. All other costs are fixed and do not increase for long distance flights.

Our job is initially to provide you with information and advice regarding what options are available for each case. Your case manager can give you an estimate of the cost for each individual case. There is no charge for this service.

We are here to help, give advice and support you at what is possibly a quite difficult time. Please don't hesitate to call and speak to a repatriation manager on +44 (0)1202 375 444. If you are abroad they will return your call immediately.