Saudi Arabia Lifts Cabotage Ban

Kateřina Michalská
13 May, 2025



Key Points

- **Starting May 1, Saudi Arabia has removed its cabotage limits, which means foreign charter flights can now operate domestic sectors within the country – repositioning without passengers and quick drop-offs are no longer the only option.**
- **To gain approval, operators need to complete three steps: register with MISA, apply to GACA with a business plan, and comply with GACAR Part 129 requirements including safety and sustainability documentation.**

Here's what you need to do:

Step 1: Register with MISA

Before anything else, you need to register with MISA (Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Investment). They handle investment licensing, which is the starting point for getting your charter approval. If you hit any snags here, you can reach them at logistics@misa.gov.sa.

Step 2: Apply to GACA

Next, you'll submit an official letter to the President of the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) at generalaviation@gaca.gov.sa. This letter should:

- Request approval for domestic charter operations
- Include your business plan (GACA has provided a template)
- Optionally include any extra economic details you want to share

Step 3: Meet the regulatory requirements

You'll need to comply with GACAR Part 129 – basically, Saudi's rules for foreign air carriers. Part of this includes submitting a Safety and Environmental Sustainability Sector form.

What does this change mean?

For international operators, it's a big deal. You can now:

- **Pick up and drop off passengers on domestic segments**
- **Reposition flights domestically without worrying about cabotage violations**
- **Offer more flexible services to clients operating inside Saudi Arabia**

This change is part of Saudi's big push to grow its general aviation sector into a $2 billion industry by 2030, creating thousands of jobs and expanding the private aviation market. GACA says they've already received plenty of interest from international and regional operators, so expect some competition.



Where to get help

If you need help or have questions, GACA and MISA have both provided contact points:

MISA: logistics@misa.gov.sa

GACA: generalaviation@gaca.gov.sa