

SOFIA (SOF/LBSF)

Elevation 1,742ft

CATEGORY B

AV brief – not required

GENERAL

- ATC occasionally difficult to understand.
- ACARS can be intermittent.
- Altimetry officially given in metres QNH but in practice units of feet are used. Exercise caution on first contact. Wind and cloud base are now generally given in knots and feet on the ATIS.
- Metric Units
 - For details of metric units, altimetry and C.I.S common procedures see OM C RIM Shorthaul Operations to the CIS briefing.

Threats

CFIT

- Airfield is located immediately E of the city with high ground in all quadrants.
- SW the terrain rises to over 7,500ft asl at 10 nm.
- NE the terrain rises to over 5,500ft asl at range 13 nm.
- There are masts and obstructions in the city to nearly 700ft aal.
- Ensure strict adherence to the SIDs. This should also apply to the published STARs, approach and missed approach procedures in order to ensure that terrain clearance is achieved.
- Wind and cloud base now generally given in knots and feet, however altimetry is officially given in metres QNH, in practice units of feet are used. Exercise caution on first contact.

Metric Units

Altitude (QNH) – metres.

Distance – km and metres.

Speed and Upper Wind – km per hr.

Surface wind – metres per sec.

Pressure settings – mb.

Approx conversions: SPEED km/hr/2 = knots (DIST km/2 = nm)

WIND m/sec x 2 = knots

ROC/ROD m/sec x 200 = ft/min.

ARRIVAL

Diversions Airports

PLODIV	PDV/LBPD	074 nm/120°T	CAT B
BUCHAREST OTOPENI	OTP/LROP	162 nm/046°T	CAT A
BURGAS	BOJ/LBBG	182 nm/092°T	CAT A
BELGRADE	BEG/LYBE	185 nm/313°T	CAT A

Others that may be used include Istanbul, Budapest, Athens and Thessalonika

- Arrival route generally from NISVA.
- At the boundary with Belgrade you may be kept high until released for further descent by Belgrade and handed over to Sofia Approach.
- ATIS may state ILS Rwy 27 but, if wind is acceptable, it's worth planning for the shorter ILS approach Rwy 09.

Approach

- Rwy 09 Possible procedural approach from NISVA, but often vectored S to pick-up inbound radial.
- Occasionally, aircraft may be held high and an option to avoid being rushed is to descend in hold at waypoint BENG0.
- Rwy 27 Possible procedural approach from NISVA. Height restrictions on the procedure are due to the high ground to the S.
- With strong tailwinds and the height restrictions, early gear selection may be required to avoid becoming high on the approach.
- ATC do not always pass QNH during Intermediate approach, and may expect crews both to self-position and to descend below the transition level at the beginning of the final approach.
- ATIS available in English giving QNH, includes AIS info such as taxiway closures etc.

GROUND

- Contact handling agent when inbound with ETA, for stand allocation.
- Outbound fuel may be passed to the BA staff on arrival.
- **Note:** BA does not have a radio at SOF
- Initial taxi instructions given by Tower, then Follow-Me car as you approach the apron for guidance to the allocated remote or jetty stand.
- Parking usually on Stand 2 or 3 on Terminal 2 Building.
- De-icing carried out by Sofia Airport Authority remotely at 2 areas near Rwy's.

BAV Crew Report

- *We were given landing clearance on approach THEN switched to tower after landing to vacate. Vacating runway 27 at Foxtrot we noticed the markings on the taxiway are very unclear.*
- *There don't appear to be any marking boards, only painted markings. Looking for markings for Kilo, we could only see Hotel marked on the taxiway. We noticed these were markings for LEAVING the apron towards hotel, but a H looks the same upside down. These markings could be confusing, especially considering the short taxi to the apron and if it's dark/wet.*
- *Please be careful when using jetty steps to access apron area on stand 1. There are concrete paving blocks that are poorly laid and standing proud of surrounding blocks immediately at the base of the steps and represent a severe trip hazard. The paved area at the base of the steps is also raised above the surrounding stand area by two feet with no barriers.*

DEPARTURE

- Starting: On stand. As ACARS is intermittent, Global Operations Flight Planning (GOFP) may have to be called to obtain accurate take-off performance figures. Final loadsheet from ground staff if ACARS not working, ensure final figures received prior to closing doors.
- Care is required to ensure that altitude constraints are met for terrain purposes, particularly when given direct routings away from published tracks.
- Emergency turn procedures are available from the Performance Manual or CARD.

WEATHER

- Prevailing wind is W to NW.
- Cb activity associated with frontal conditions in May and June.
- Thunderstorms build up locally from May to August especially over the mountains.
- Frequent fog from October to March.

OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

Handling Agent	SOFIA AIRPORT EAD
Handling Agent VHF	
Potable Water	Uplift Permitted

IF ONLY Electrical Power is required	Airport (FEGP) – Use ground power for contracted time ONLY (60mins), then use APU GHA (GPU) – Use ground power at all times
If BOTH electrical power and air conditioning is required:	Use APU for air-conditioning (Keep ground power connected according to guidance above to reduce fuel burn)