

Spotter Guide to Birmingham International Airport (BHX/EGBB)



Photo of the apron in front of Terminal 2 taken from spot A

Frequencies

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| Approach | 118.055 | |
| Director | 131.325 | |
| Tower | 118.300 | |
| Ground | 121.800 | 455.475 |
| Delivery | 121.925 | |
| ATIS | 126.275 | |
| Fire Service | 121.600 | 455.575 |
| Handling/Operations | 122.050 | Groundstar |
| | 122.350 | Signature |
| | 131.425 | Servisair Globe Ground |
| | 131.575 | Aviance |
| | 131.700 | First Choice Operations |
| | 131.850 | British Airways Ops |
| | 136.850 | Britannia / Thomsonfly |
| | 138.105 | Police Air Ops |

Spotter Sites

Birmingham International Airport is the UK's fifth largest airport and the second largest airport outside London. The airport has one runway 2,605-metres long runway (15/33). In addition there is a second smaller runway (06/24 - 1,315 metres) crossing the main runway. In early 2005, Birmingham International Airport issued a white paper calling for a second parallel runway (15R/33L) southwest of today's main runway.

Birmingham is the UK's second largest city and airport's catchment area is the West Midlands and it suffers from strong competition from airports like Manchester Ringway and Nottingham East Midlands. 8.8 million passengers used BHX in 2004.

Birmingham has two official spotting spots - the Aviation Experience on the third floor of Terminal 1 and the outside spectators' area next to the long-stay car park, plus a small number of unofficial spots. The Sheldon Country Park spot is the only spot not easily accessed without a car.

A Spectators Area South of Terminal 2

Between the long stay car park on the apron in front of Terminal 2 is an open grass field with benches and litter boxes. From this area you can see the whole the terminal apron area, taxiways Echo, Delta and halfway down Alpha, and aircraft taxiing to/from runway 15/33. Since most of the activity is to the west and north, the area is best from morning to midday. The fence in front you is quite high, so a step ladder is recommended if you have an SLR sized lens. Be aware of the slippery conditions down in the corner towards the fuel park. If you need to park your car, the long stay car park is your best choice, but it can prove expensive.

B Western Area of the Long Stay Car Park

If you want to stay on after the sun has hit spot A, you can move over to the part of the long stay car park closest to the runway. At this spot, aircraft holding at Echo One are just in front of you. The fuel park with its tanks and other equipment can restrict your view of the terminal apron. For this spot a step ladder is needed even though the fence is lower than at spot A, but it is not possible to photograph through it.

C The Aviation Experience

The viewing gallery on the third floor of Terminal 1 was reopened in 2001 and named "The Aviation Experience". During our last visit there late April 2004, our focus was on the books and other goodies at the "Ian Allan Bookshop". The view from the gallery is some what restricted due to the roofs of the new departure lounges, but with the two video cameras installed you can zoom in to get registration numbers of the most distant aircraft. With a number of senior spotters and a sound system sending out live ATC communication, we could not complain on the atmosphere. The admission fee for the facility is around £1 for adults, children/OAP/disabled half price and children under five/passengers with boarding passes have free admittance.

D The Millennium Link

The fourth spot at BHX is also under roof - the building joining Terminal 1 and Terminal 2. The same goes for this spot as for spot C, it isn't the best for photographers - coloured glass windows and not to good window cleaning. This spot is the best for food and drinks. In our view, the best place is the Blues Music Bar on the first floor, where some of the tables have a direct view over the airfield.

E Sheldon Country Park

The southernmost part of Sheldon Country Park is a working farm, and therefore you are advised to only used the northern part for spotting (if you're not into farm animal spotting that is). Park your car at the parking lot by St. Giles Church at the end of Ragley Drive, and then walk a little over 1 km northeast along the Tallington Road/Hazeldene Road housing - the last part along a foot path. You will then end up at the centre line of runway 15, and depending on the time of day choose west or east to get shots of aircraft on short final or taking-off.

Other remote spots

Actually we didn't find any other good spots, and some of the old spots over at the old Elmdon terminal have been closed down since the latest Iraq war.

Anti-Terrorism Hotline 0800 789321

