

Arrival maps – Questions and answers



What are arrivals maps?

These maps show the typical patterns of where aircraft fly on their arrival to London Heathrow Airport. Unlike departures, arrivals do not have set Noise Preferential Routes but we can see a pattern of where you can expect to see these flights. Both maps show flight tracks for an average day in summer 2008. This is the most up to date data available.

Why have these maps been produced?

We want to provide easy to understand illustrations to show where aircraft arriving to Heathrow fly. The maps are designed to help you see how our day to day operations look. We can also give an indication through these maps of what heights you can expect to see aircraft at in any given area.

Who have the maps been produced for?

Our neighbours and local community. They also form part of our specific information available for people moving within the local area or who wish to find out more about operations at Heathrow. They are available through the Flight Evaluation Unit (FEU) on 0800 344 844 and are on our website www.heathrow.com/noise.

Who has produced this information?

The Environmental Research & Consultancy Department (ERCD) of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) was commissioned by BAA Heathrow to produce this piece of work. Their website is www.caa.co.uk.

Why are there two maps for arrivals?

There are two maps which represent arrivals to both ends of the runways, and reflect aircraft heights and routes. Which end of the runways used depends on whether the wind is coming from an easterly or westerly direction at the airfield. For an explanation of easterly and westerly operations and wind direction please see our fact sheet on arrivals, which is available on our website.

Why are there two runway directions?

Heathrow has two runways and the direction of the wind determines which end is used for aircraft taking off and landing. Heathrow's predominant wind direction is from the west, so aircraft generally land towards the west. This happens around 70% of the time.

What about departures?

We have produced separate maps to show flight tracks of aircraft departing from Heathrow. These are labelled 'aircraft departing from London Heathrow Airport'.

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What is the information in the small boxes?

This information gives details of:

- The average number of arrivals a day
- the average percentage of all arrivals a day
- the range of how many flights you could expect to see during a 24-hour period
- the average number of days with no arrivals
- the average number of days with more than ten arrivals.

This information is based on data over a 92 day period (three busy summer months) in 2008.

What is the information in the oval boxes showing?

This information gives the runway which the arriving flights are landing on:

09L means runway 09 Left

09R means runway 09 Right

These are arrivals from the west, 'westerly operations'

27L means runway 27 Left

27R means runway 27 Right

These are arrivals from the east, 'easterly operations'

Why are the average daily figures based on 92 days?

The 92 day summer reporting period from mid-June to mid-September has been in use for many years now as the established timescale over which to describe the noise exposure arising from aircraft. This is because it is one of the busiest periods of the year and so demonstrates the 'worst case scenario'.

What are the small black aeroplanes showing?

The aeroplanes show the direction aircraft are moving in along the route.

Why are the tracks coloured differently?

Each aircraft track is shown in three different colours along its route. The dark green band shows aircraft below 3,000 feet (ft), the light green band shows aircraft between 3,000ft and 6,000ft and the yellow band shows aircraft above 6,000ft.

Are there set routes for arriving aircraft?

Unlike departing aircraft, there are no set routes leading to the final approach for arriving aircraft; neither are there any noise limits or fixed heights. This is because arriving aircraft approach UK airspace in a random pattern and then have to be sequenced to ensure safe separation. When the airport is busy, arriving aircraft may be held by Air Traffic Control (ATC) in a 'stack' before being instructed to make their final approach. The four stacks used for aircraft arriving at Heathrow airport can be seen as yellow oval shapes on the left, right, top and bottom on the arrivals maps.

ATC ensure that the planes are sequenced for safe separation by controlling the speed and lengths of routings prior to the aircraft being turned on to final approach. Aircraft are finally directed onto the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

Please see our fact sheets, which are available on our website, on stacks and arrivals for more information.

Do these two arrivals maps represent the flights that occur at night?

No. The data used relates to movements in the 16-hour (07:00 – 23:00 hours local) average summer day in 2008. Although there is no ban on night flights at Heathrow, there are strict restrictions relating to night movements and generally there are approximately 16 flights each night. For more information regarding night flights, please see our fact sheet on night flights, which is available on our website.

What does 'daily range of arrivals' mean?

This provides an indication of the minimum and maximum number of arriving flights recorded over the summer period at each location.

What does 'average daily arrivals' mean?

This is the average number of arriving flights at each location over the 92 day summer period. This figure allows you to gauge how many arrivals you can expect on an average summer day.

Do you think we have answered all of your questions?

If we haven't and you think we could add to these questions and answers, please let us know and we will endeavour to incorporate your suggestions.

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Our other factsheets

Please see our other fact sheets which provide information on:

- Arrivals
- Departures
- Go arounds
- Aircraft stacks
- Night flights
- Aircraft noise on the ground
- Heathrow and helicopters
- The legal overview.

Further information

If you would like further information, please contact the Flight Evaluation Unit:

By telephone: 0800 344 844

By e-mail: noise_complaints@baa.com

By post: Flight Evaluation Unit
Second Floor Meridian
The Compass Centre
Nelson Road
London Heathrow Airport
Hounslow
TW6 2GW

Website: Make an enquiry on our website:
www.heathrow.com/noise

Please note that the freephone telephone number is an answerphone. Please leave you name, contact details and brief details of your enquiry. A member of the FEU will contact you as soon as possible.