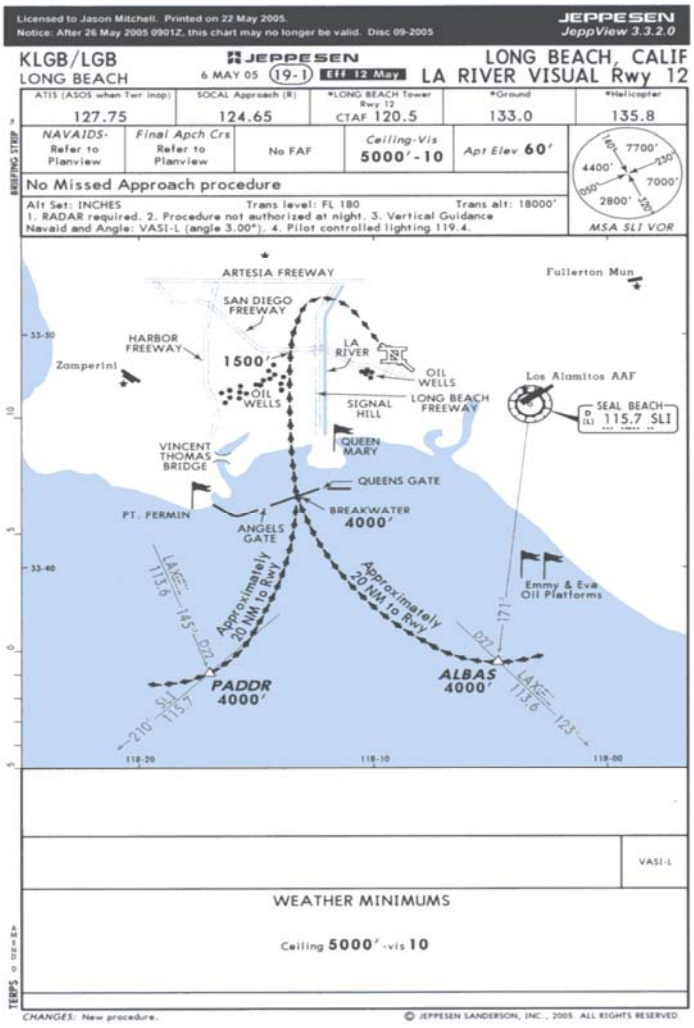
LA RIVER VISUAL IS HERE

It's time to talk, and what an opportunity. The publication of the LA River Visual Runway 12 Approach to the Long Beach Airport is here. **Wait, if you are a VFR only pilot this information is for you.** Yes, I know a "Published Visual Approach" is an IFR procedure. Unfortunately, in the Los Angeles area the safest way to get around is to know what the other guy is doing or in this case where he is going. If you are IFR it never hurts to know where the high concentrations of VFR airplanes might be on a clear day. If you're VFR it's a good thing to know where that IFR guy is because he may not be looking outside even on a beautiful day.



While we are looking at this little piece of ATC art - the new LA River Visual approach to Long Beach, let's first keep our thoughts on West Traffic, VFR flight, and the LA Terminal Area Control, (TAC) chart. The Airspace Users Working Group (AUWG) and some friends at the FAA Western Region Headquarters have worked continuously to make improvements to this chart. Publication of the LA area practice area "Caution Boxes" and the Mini Route, identifying VFR waypoints with five letter identifiers for GPS use, along with a re-work of the LAX Class B airspace, are just a few improvements the Group has helped with. The Group members who work hard on airspace issues are all volunteers. What they all agree on is that it is really difficult to put everything on the LA TAC chart.

So, when you look carefully at that airspace South of Compton, West of Long Beach and East of the 110 Freeway to the breakwater, here are some things you might not see on the chart. Think about the IFR Departure from Runway 30 at Long Beach Airport. Oh, I'm not forgetting the VFR pilots who might not know that such a thing exists, but it is on the TAC chart, just a little hard to read.

Here is how it goes. Jet and high performance airplanes departing IFR from Runway 30 are instructed to "fly runway heading to 1,500 feet, then turn left to a heading of 180 and climb to 3,000 feet." ***(There have been several tests run lately to come up with a better heading, but this is the official departure)***. Somewhere between 1,500 and 3,000 feet there is a hand off between LGB Tower ATC and SOCAL TRACON. Unfortunately, we are still working on a better solution for what happens next. For now the continued climb to higher must wait until SOCAL establishes the radar hand-off and communications with each IFR departure. This is to ensure no one is in the way prior to issuing instructions for continued climb.

The question is, **"are you in the way?"** Oh, I know everyone has rights to the airspace, but we are trying to make it work without establishing more restricted airspace. I also know it's a see and be seen world up there, but have you ever tried turning an Airbus abruptly, or climbing it rapidly to miss another airplane. Well it's not fun for either aircraft, and especially for the passengers in the "back of the bus". Remember now, the Airbus crew is responding to a TCAS alert and must respond appropriately. You see them because they are **BIG**, but can they see you**?**

How hard is it to stay out of the way? Well remember that 3,000 foot assignment the jet off LGB is climbing to maintain? You need to either be below that by 500 feet to avoid being his TCAS alert, 1,000 feet not to be his wake turbulence victim, or well above that jet if you are in the area not talking to SOCAL. Why so much above you ask? Well, because the jet may still be climbing if SOCAL can work it out. If not the jet is going to be forced to fly low right through a concentration of little airplanes transitioning or training off shore. Are we asking you to avoid the departure route - **Yes, Please.**

Next, remember there is a 2,000 foot crossing altitude near the Vincent Thomas Bridge called the Bason Intersection, or sometimes referred to as the "Final Approach Fix" for the Torrance ILS. This fix is only on the approach chart for Torrance Runway 29R; don't look for it on an IFR chart or the TAC chart for LA. So, do you think one of those guys approaching Bason could have a hood on and neither pilot is looking outside because that instrument instructor is giving his best ILS dual?

Don't worry about the traffic on the two airways, V23 and V64 that run through the area. Don't worry unless you are at 4,000 or 5,000 feet. The IFR traffic, unless they are climbing, (***maybe worry then***) should be at those altitudes, and you should be at odd thousands plus 500 feet right? Wait, are you climbing or descending?

Do I know, what's the best altitude to transition? I like 1,500 feet, it keeps me clear and I still have forced landing areas if I think about it. Of course you can climb up above Torrance Airport, stay well west of the 110 Freeway, and well west of the Long Beach Departures. Or, stay in contact with Long Beach Tower and use there airspace east of the LA River. Finally, my true favorite, maybe talk to SOCAL TRACON and let them help you through the area, especially if you are going to be near the jet IFR departure route from Long Beach Runway 30.

OK, now the new visual approach SOCAL cooked up with a little help from their friends. The procedure is not that new, it's what some pilots and controllers have been doing for a long time when Long Beach Airport is East Traffic. This is especially true when the airport is turned around because of those famous Santa Ana Winds, and not storms that keep it using the IFR approaches with a circle to land. On a clear day pilots normally get vectored for a Visual right base to Runway 12. Now the procedure is official and in print. Arrivals to Runway 12 come right up the LA River with most of low flying done in the Long Beach Class D surface area. However, the entry points, (Pador and Albas Intersections) were picked to be far enough off shore and well known enough that pilots are familiar with them. It does mean airplanes in the practice area need to be aware when East Traffic is in operation. Then you will know where the big airplanes need to fly to arrive safely at Long Beach, what altitude they should be at, and how you can help them accomplish that all important goal of arriving safely by avoiding their flight path.

If you have questions about this approach, or any airspace question, remember your local Flight Standards District Office, Aviation Safety Program Manager is just a phone call away. If necessary they can refer you to the Southern California Airspace Users Group and one of us will be happy to help.

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