

GETTIN' THERE

aviation information for local destinations

Destination:

Tofino (CYAZ)

Why Go?

There are books and websites full of reasons why you'd want to go to Tofino. The beaches are spectacular, the local area has a ton of attractions and the flight itself has some amazing scenery – mountains, lakes, islands, etc. All in all, the flight to Tofino is the quintessential West Coast aviation experience. Depending on conditions, routing, etc. figure on about sixty to seventy-five minutes flight time each way. However, unless you go the long way around the coastline, this IS a mountain flight. If you're flying Club aircraft you need to have taken the Mountain Flying Course to go to Tofino. Weather is also a factor. Tofino is usually accessible in the summer but hit-and-miss during the winter.

From the airport it's a good twenty minute walk to the beach, and about a ten minute walk to the golf course. To get to town you will need to call a taxi from the airport terminal building or have made other transportation arrangements. Located in the airport terminal building is Orca Airlines as well as Budget

Rent-a-Car. The golf course has a restaurant that's open during the summer but other than that if you want food you'll need to head into town.

Getting There

There are basically three routes you can take to get to Tofino. They are:

- Victoria -> Lake Cowichan -> direct to Tofino.
- Victoria -> Lake Cowichan -> Nitinat Lake -> coastline to Tofino.
- Victoria -> Sooke -> coastline to Tofino.

The first option is the most direct route however be aware that between the end of Lake Cowichan and Barkley Sound you'll encounter some pretty mountainous terrain. The second route takes a bit longer but is more scenic, taking you past a couple of lighthouses. The third route is the longest route, and it's the only way to get to Tofino if you haven't taken the Mountain Flying Course. Finally, no matter which route you take remember you'll be crossing Barkley Sound so you'll want to have sufficient altitude to reach shore if you need to.



Once you're over Lake Cowichan or out over Sooke you're out of controlled airspace and on your own. Don't forget to monitor Pacific Radio on 126.7. You also have the option of climbing higher and requesting flight following from Vancouver Centre.

As you cross Barkley Sound you'll be heading in the general direction of Ucluelet, probably a good time to start monitoring the Tofino frequency since on a nice day there can be a lot of traffic headed in and out of Tofino. Start your descent when you feel it's safe to do so. You'll make your initial call to Nanaimo Radio (DON'T call them "Tofino Radio"... they get rather grumpy) before reaching Florencia Bay. As you proceed inbound to Tofino airport watch for the areas that have altitude restrictions.

Local Knowledge

Flying into Tofino isn't really complicated and you shouldn't have much of a problem. However, here are a few things to be aware of that you may not find written down:

- There's a landing fee at Tofino which, at time of writing, is \$15.
- Fuel is available by card lock / credit card at the main apron.
- The thresholds of Rwy 25 and Rwy 29 are close together and it's really easy to get mixed up and land on the wrong runway.

Rwy 25 extends into the trees while Rwy 29 is close to the beach.

- If you're landing on Rwy 16 it's better to go around the hill that's on the approach path as opposed to turning base inside the hill.
- Taxiway Foxtrot has a gravel covered ditch about halfway along. It is passable (or was at the time of this writing) but you do have to be careful if you choose to cross it.
- The quickest way to the beach is south-east along the terminal apron and taxiway Golf to the road, turn right and follow the road down to the main road. There's a parking lot with beach access across the road. All in all, about a 15-20 minute walk.
- Check out the WWII vintage building that houses the weather station.

- You need to be aware of wildlife, particularly deer and bears. Bears often hang out in a small clearing off of taxi way G and occasionally can be seen in the infield between the runways. I've also heard of people having to go around because of animals on the runway so be on the lookout.

Weather

Tofino has a METAR and a TAF however you'll also have to engage the Mark I eyeball. Weather at Tofino can change

almost instantly so you'll want to keep a constant watch on that nearly permanent fog bank sitting off-shore. Because the weather can change while you're in flight it's a good idea to make use of Nanaimo Radio or Pacific Radio for up-to-date weather information while you're enroute. Also, pay attention to fuel reserves and alternates when doing your flight plan. If you get to Tofino and can't land your only viable alternates are usually Qualicum, Nanaimo or Victoria. Make sure you can get there. Port Alberni is often overcast when Tofino is so you can't always count on Port Alberni as an alternate.

Other local weather factors to be aware of include:

- There are no Weather Cams at Tofino but the ones at Amphitrite Point and Estevan Point Lightstation can give you an idea of what Tofino will be like.

Important Links & Contacts

Tofino Airport:

www.tofinoairport.com/index

Tourism Tofino:

www.tourismtofino.com/activities

Ucluelet Tourism:

www.ucluelettourism.ca