

Tour Planner Guidelines – Airshow Events

Airshow planning is a multi-step process. Unlike barnstorming or out and back events where the tour planner is responsible for nearly all the event planning and operation plans, airshow planning usually starts with events like ICAS where airshows approach the GCW and express interest in having TR attend their event. That starts a negotiation between GCW and the airshow that will decide the basic elements for the appearance agreement like the appearance fee, fuel/oil allocations, cars/rooms, etc. Usually, this up front work with airshows will be done by a GCW ICAS team member. At the end of this stage, we have a signed appearance agreement and the airshow can be considered confirmed. Now the detailed operational planning starts.

3 Golden Rules for Airshow Planning

Whether you are working on the upfront planning for an airshow or developing detailed operational plans, there are three things that you need to remember.

Rule Number 1: The airshow is our customer. Make sure air show organizers understand that we want their show to be successful as well as us being successful. Talk about what we can do to make their show better. We can offer Media/VIP flights, free VIP tours, local flyovers, print and digital ads that we pay for, seats on unfilled revenue flights.
Work to build relationships!

Rule Number 2: Be Flexible. Don't blow at \$50k gig over 200 gal of gas. Every show has a tight budget and we are all competing for the same piece of the pie.

Rule Number 3: Don't be over confident. We are in competition with every other act out there.

Initial Planning and Appearance Agreements

If you do get involved in initial planning for an airshow, here are some things to keep in mind while negotiating

Appearance Fee The appearance fee we negotiate depends on the type of airshow – civilian or military. Civilian shows generally have small performer budgets. A fee of \$5,000-\$7,000 is typical for civilian shows especially if we can nest missions or are going to be in the area of the show anyway. Military shows require a significantly higher appearance fee to compensate for the fact that we cannot charge for aircraft tours (typically \$1000/day), cannot do revenue rides from the airbase (\$4400 for a full flight), and can only sell limited PX. A starting point for most military airshows is \$15,000.

Fuel/Oil/Smoke Oil Negotiate Fuel and Oil allotment (don't forget smoke oil – typically 10 gal or so per event). We use 100 Low Lead fuel and 120 AD oil only. While we need to get everything we can, at least try to cover fuel burn getting to and from the show. (use 225 gal/hour). You can use airnav.com to get approximate flight distance and then calculate flight time using 150 nautical miles per hour for flight speed. We can trade fuel for cash and vice versa to meet the shows requirements. Remember that if TR is flying in the show we usually ask for an additional 200 gal per airshow sortie.

Rooms/Cars Rooms and Cars are typically provided for performers. Usually 6 double rooms/might (depending on the amount of crew). 2 mini-vans or large sedans/day. Rooms and transport are for the duration of the stay. Typically Thursday through Sunday night. Consult with Operations for how many crew should attend. The bigger the event, the more crew we need. Find out if the truck and trailer will be required (normally for out of town events) , and account for the driver(s) in our crew.

Appearance Agreement Get a signed Tour Agreement. Be sure we understand the terms of payment. When and where and from whom do we collect?

Operational Planning

Once the basics are in place for the airshow and we have an appearance agreement, it's time for the detailed operational planning to begin. Here are some key steps.

Clarify Airshow Expectations What are the Airshow's expectations of Texas Raiders? Do they want a media/VIP ride? When? (usually Friday before the show) Being static at airshows during WAS (Waivered Air Space – the time the show is going on) increases tour revenue at civilian shows– if they don't want us to fly – don't push it. What time do we have to be in place? Are there any ramp access requirements, badges, etc? Remember Rule #2. Provide the summary sheet of Marketing and Promotional support to airshow organizers – remember that adds value to the airshow host. We can't charge for tours at military shows, but we usually do at civilian shows. Make sure the airshow is OK with us charging for tours – some are not.

Aircraft Parking and Placement Be sure we understand our parking arrangements. Whether we are static or flying, we can't be on a sterile ramp – the public must have access so we can sell tours (or conduct tours on a military show).

Most show organizers will get us up front near show center – especially if we are static. If not – ask for a better location.

If we are flying the airshow, we will have to move TR from an area with public access to a ramp to taxi out to fly the show sortie. Make sure they have marshals and crowd control staff when we have to move the aircraft. Make sure they understand that if we cannot power out forward we will likely have to tow out backwards and will need a tug (we carry a rear tow bar) . The above applies to airshow sorties as well as revenue rides during hours the show is open to the public (example – before or after WAS).

Where can the truck and trailer park? Close to TR is best, but sometimes it's far from the ramp.

Any TSA issues if we arrive early? Any access requirements for crew, whether arriving on TR or POV?

Performer Perks/Requirements Any special events for crew? VIP appearances? Most shows have performer parties or dinners and often will provide breakfast and lunch during show days – ask what kind of meals might be provided and where (sometimes you need to get tickets/vouchers – where – from whom?). It is not unusual to not have to spend anything for food at airshows. MTD (Mission Tour Director) needs to know where to get wrist bands/performer passes/food tickets.

What other activities are going on? Are the crew invited? Or Required? Many shows have VIP events, especially Friday night, and may want the aircraft positioned near the event. If they want tours, we usually don't charge for tours at a VIP event. Airshow will need to supply interior lighting if an event is at night. Is the crew invited? If VIP high rollers are invited it's often a great place to sell rides!

Create a Day by Day Schedule Create a day by day schedule of TR activities using the Tour Ops Plan template. It captures all the information above and takes into account WAS (Waivered Air Space), practice and show day times. Get contact information for organizer, air boss, marketing. Every airshow is different, some are 3 days, some 1 day. Some have big jet teams attending like the Blue Angels. This increases complexity because of Temporary Flight Rules – no fly times can create tight windows to arrive or reduce revenue potential. Provide the Tour Ops Plan to Ride Coordinator, Flight Ops and Marketing and PX, and ultimately the MTD. Keep it updated.

Create a graphical ramp plan to show where aircraft will park, how a/c will move, PX tents, rides tables, public access, crowd control spaces. Use Google Earth for a photo and use airnav.com for data.

Crew Changes You may be working on a show that is in the middle of a multi-week mission. Create a plan for crew changes on tours of over 10 days. Try to break the tour up into manageable legs of 7-10 days each. Operations will help with this. Arrange for crew change out at the show airport or a major nearby airport. For example: Columbus GA → Atlanta one hour away. Show airports may not offer commercial service or may be prohibitively expensive.

Crew change out can be done any day, but weekends minimize time off from work for working folks. Try to get crew change out where incoming crew overlaps with outbound crew, for example Inbound crew arrives Saturday, Outbound crew leaves Sunday.

Overlap may require a couple of extra hotel rooms at our cost, but ensures adequate crew to staff the mission – especially at civilian airshows where we are usually stretched. Set limits on flight times of day – try to minimize airport trips that may be an hour or more. For example, inbound arrive no later than 1700 so if inbound crew arrive earlier, they can wait for the last inbound and we can get them all in one trip. Similarly, outbound leave no earlier than 1200.

Remember Rule Number 2. Not everybody can meet a planned change out city or day.

PX and Ride Coordinator PX sets up only on show days. No PX if the public cannot be present. Where can we set it up? Usually near the airplane is best. Sometimes we are placed near other PX or souvenir stands. If we are going to power out, take location and prop wash into consideration when setting up PX!

Where to locate Rides Coordinator? Near TR is best, but it may be indoors. Be sure we know where passengers enter and report. Airshow days passengers usually report to the aircraft itself and/or the rides desk. For non-airshow days passengers must be provided an address and facility name (like an FBO). Can we set up our pop-up tents? Some places won't allow.

Scheduling Revenue Rides Air bosses or show organizers may offer to get us in the air for Rev Rides during Waivered Air Space. THIS IS ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN IN OUR 6802 EXEMPTION. WE CANNOT FLY PAYING PASSENGERS DURING WAIVERED AIR SPACE

Avoid very early times. Nothing before 0900. 10:00 is better

Maximize TR revenue potential. We should schedule Rev Rides before and after WAS at practice and show days at civilian shows. Gates may or may not open before we schedule a ride, so be sure we know how our passengers can get access prior to official opening hours. If we are going to schedule a ride on a day or time when passengers have to arrive prior to public gates opening, you must make arrangements with Airshow security to let people come in with a copy of their flight reservations. MTD's - find the head security guy and talk to him – all airshows have a “command center”. Otherwise our passengers may be denied entry.

At military shows, sometimes we will transition TR to a nearby airport to do revenue rides. Operations will provide guidance on if, when, and where we will go. You may be asked to work with the airport we are going to make arrangements with an FBO, airport management, etc., just like we do for a barnstorming stop.

Check on local sunset times. We cannot fly after sunset. This is especially an issue early and late in the season.

Most importantly – Coordinate with Rides Desk (Jane Copeland) to develop the flight schedule.

Certificate of Insurance Does the Airshow need a Certificate of Insurance m(COI)? Many airports, shows, cities, etc, need a special rider to the CAF insurance policy. Get it from Rita McNew at CAF HQ (rmcnew@cafhq.org). Get specific information from the airshow, airport, FBO, or whoever is requesting the COI about party(s) named on COI including names, job title, addresses, contact information and relationship to the event. They need to supply us with the exact wording they require.

Hotels/Cars Airshows will provide us with hotel information and where and when to pick up cars. Make sure the MTD gets this information via the Tour Ops Plan template.