

Flying site evaluation process for Paramotoring

General information

Advantage of using a paramotor is that one does not have to go to the hills or depend on lift for long duration flight. The motor can be carried as a backpack or mounted on a trike for convenience. Paramotoring is generally done from a flat ground in smooth and laminar winds. Big open grounds or sparsely crowded beaches without any obstructions or structures in its flight path are popular sites for paramotoring. The takeoff and landing zones should have reasonably flat and wide open spaces with safe margins for pilot errors.

The wings used on a paramotors are similar to the ones used for paragliding. They are not designed to fly in the rains. Gusty and unpredictable weather is not at all safe for paramotoring. Paramotoring is done in daylight with good visibility; flying in fog or clouds is not advisable.

Paramotors, especially the ones mounted on a trike, are more convenient for offering joyrides. No need to go to a mountain, no running is involved during takeoff or landing. No need of ridge lift or thermic conditions to gain altitude. In fact if the winds become strong or thermic paramotoring activity is stopped. Though it may have less risk as compared to paragliding, remember that there is an element of risk associated with the sport.

Choosing the site

Flat open grounds and sparsely crowded beaches are preferred locations for paramotoring. For a launching with a trike about 200 feet of taxing space is sufficient, for foot launch the requirement is much lesser. However a good unobstructed clearance is necessary in the takeoff and landing path because the climb up is gradual and so it the approach for landing. Paramotors are to be flown over areas with emergency landing zones in its glide ratio. The area surrounding the takeoff site should also have enough open spaces for emergency landing in case of engine failure during takeoff. The ideal wind conditions are from nil wind to maximum wind speed of about 20 kmph. Gusty and unpredictable wind pattern is unsafe for paramotoring. The area to be used for flying needs to be scanned for and electric wires or cables as these pose a big hazard as they are not easily visible to the pilot during flight.

Paramotors use a two stroke engines which do make some noise, hence they cannot be flown low over areas such as meditation centers or prayer halls. This too should be factored in while choosing the site for paramotoring.

The location co-ordinates should be noted and referred to while corresponding for permissions.

View, Terrain and Accessibility

Beautiful view and great scenery are the main factors that need to be considered while choosing the site. Easy accessibility to the takeoff and landing zone is important not only as a convenience but as a safety requirement. A tourist destination or a city in close vicinity will always be an advantage because such places generally have good infrastructure and other facilities.

Test flying.

Once the site is found to be suitable and meets the above mentioned requirements, the activity has to be sanctioned by the district authorities for trial flights. Qualified and experienced pilots will have to be invited for test flights and certifying the site. A good idea would be to involve and invite an enthusiastic and influential government official when test flights are conducted. Videos and photographs would always be useful for reference and record.

No Objection Certificate from local administration and local police for regular flying

This process becomes easier if the district administration or district tourism department is taken into confidence by making a project report. Their recommendation and push can speed up the process.

First you need to obtain an NOC for use of particular site or location. The location or site may be a private property, public property, forest land, seashore etc. The district administration has a home department which will generally look into such matters; hence the correspondence has to be addressed to "Home" department in district collector's office. The DC office will refer the case to District police and get their clearance before issuing the NOC for flying activity. For giving the clearance district police will refer the matter to the local police under whose jurisdiction the particular site is located.

AAI clearance

The final and important clearance is from Airport Authority of India. Airspace is managed by AAI with help of ATC. Once NOC's from district authorities are obtained one has to apply to AAI for NOTAM requesting desired radius and height ceiling. Once the NOTAM is published other aircraft pilots get notified about your activities by ATC if they share same airspace during their flight.

Air Defence Clearance

Air defence clearance will be needed from the Indian Air Force to fly at most locations along with clearance from AAI.

Daily permission

For every day flying you need to obtain permission from local ATC over telephone. Local police can also be intimated by SMS/Whatsapp about the daily flying activities to keep them in loop.

Flying site management during operations

Each popular flying site should have a site manager to look after the safety. He should take responsibility of how many pilots can fly in the air on a given day as per the wind and weather conditions. He should be also monitoring the skill level of the pilots flying on the site during the specific wind window. There should be some means of communication to be in touch with the pilots in the air for safety, preferably via radios.

Notes:

It would be a good idea to consult PAI while scouting for a new flying site.

For tandem operations please refer to PAI guidelines for tandem operators

You can refer to PAI Technical Manual for more information. PAI has formed panels consisting of experience pilots to look into various aspects of paragliding and paramotoring activities. Consult PAI if you need any further assistance.