China's 10 Biggest Aviation Stories In 2022

Which Chinese aviation news impressed you most in 2022?

BY **SU WU** PUBLISHED 4 DAYS AGO

Photo: China Eastern

As we turn the page to the brand new year of 2023, we take a look back at some of the biggest aviation stories from the China region that took place in 2022.

1. COMAC delivered the world's first C919 to China Eastern Airlines

COMAC delivered its first C919 to China Eastern in Shanghai on December 9th. This milestone could mean the start of a new era in which Chinese airlines will have a third option other than Boeing and Airbus when they expand their fleet in the future.

Before the first delivery, COMAC has received the C919 program's Type Certificate (TC) and Production Certificate (PC) from CAAC on September 29th and November 29th, respectively.

China Eastern Airlines has begun to conduct its proving flight of a total of 100 hours since December 26th, aiming to put the C919 into commercial operations in the spring of 2023.

Popular

HISTORY

The Fatal Errors That Caused The Loss Of Singapore Airlines Flight 006

AIRLINE NEWS

US Judge Sides With Sacked American Airlines Pilot

AIRLINE NEWS

Photo: China Eastern

2. CAAC announced all COVID-related restrictions would be suspended on January 8th, 2023

International travelers to China after January 8th, 2023, will face no quarantine time with the background that China has fully lifted its domestic restrictions towards COVID-19 prevention.

The CAAC's "five-one" policy, which has been in effect since March 2020, will be suspended. The CAAC "five-one" policy means **one** airline can only operate **one** flight on **one** international route per **one** week with **one** foreign country. The meltdown policy of international flights will also be suspended.

中国边检
CHINA IMMIGRATION INSPECTION

Photo: Xi'an Airport

3. Three major Chinese airlines made a record purchase of 292 Airbus aircraft in one day

On July 1st, three Chinese central government-owned airlines, China Eastern Airlines, Air China, and China Southern Airlines, purchased 292 Airbus A320neo for $127.96 billion, $12.213 billion, and $12.248 billion, respectively, for a total of $37.257 billion all in one day. The order is a record for both Airbus and Chinese airlines.

Additionally, in November, during German PM Scholz's visit to China, China Aviation Supplies Holding Company and Airbus signed a framework agreement on the purchase of 140 Airbus aircraft, including 132 A320 family aircraft and eight A350 aircraft, with a total value of $17 billion.

SpiceJet Begins Scheduled India-Italy Flights Using 737 MAX Aircraft

ANALYSIS

The Oldest Active Aircraft Flying With United Airlines

AIRLINE NEWS

flydubai Boeing 737 Diverts To Iran After Captain Falls Ill

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Photo: N509FZ via Wikimedia Commons

4. Crash of China Eastern Airlines MU 5735

On the afternoon of March 21st, China Eastern Airlines Flight MU5735 crashed at Teng County in Wuzhou, Guangxi. The aircraft was on its way from Kunming to Guangzhou. There were 132 souls, including 123 passengers and nine crew members onboard, all of whom were killed in the crash.

The flight was operated by a 6.8-year-old Boeing 737-800 registered B-1791. The plane's two black boxes, the Flight Data Recorder and Cockpit Voice Recorder, were recovered on March 23rd and 27th, respectively. CAAC sent its initial report on the crash to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) on April 20th.

Wall Street Journal reported in May that "Flight data indicates someone in the cockpit intentionally crashed a China Eastern jet earlier this year." CAAC later responded, "investigators from the CAAC and the NTSB confirmed that they had not released any information about the investigation to any media."

The accident ended CAAC's safety record of over 100 million hours of safe operation, which was achieved one month before the accident.

Photo: Md Shaifuzzaman via Wikimedia Commons

5. Tibet Airlines Airbus A319 catches fire while taking off

A Tibet Airlines plane suffered a runway excursion in the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing. Taking place in the early morning of May 12th, the incident resulted in the aircraft skidding off the runway and catching fire. The aircraft involved was an Airbus A319, registration B-6425. It was due to operate flight number TV9833, the daily service from Chongqing to the Tibetan city of Nyingchi.

Amazingly, all 113 passengers and nine crew were safely evacuated, although the aircraft is clearly damaged beyond repair.

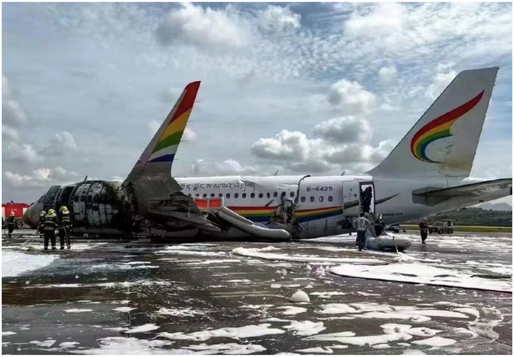

Photo: CAAC

6. The Boeing 737 MAX is still grounded in China

There has been significant progress toward the reintroduction of the Boeing 737 MAX in 2021 and 2022. Aviation regulators across the continents have been sharing positive updates regarding the jet's reentry to service.

CAAC organized a specific Aircraft Evaluation Group (AEG, part of CAAC's Flight Standards Department), which met to discuss the Boeing 737 MAX in Zhoushan, Zhejiang Province, on September 14th. The next day, Boeing announced that it would begin to remarket some 737 MAX aircraft earmarked for Chinese customers. Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun said resuming 737 MAX deliveries in China was critical to Boeing's future, but the prospect of selling planes to China in the near term (a year or two) was low.

One additional side effect is that Xiamen Airlines, which owned an all-Boeing fleet since it was founded in 1984, has received its first Airbus aircraft (an Airbus A321NEO) on the first day of 2023.

1st A 321neo
AIRBUS
XIAMENAIR

Photo: Airbus

7. Airbus Tianjin delivery center made its 600th delivery

Airbus delivered the 600th aircraft from its Tianjin delivery center on September 23rd. The aircraft, an Airbus A320neo, was received by China Eastern Airlines.

The Airbus Tianjin delivery center was opened in 2008, and it's Airbus's first aircraft production line in China. Airbus announced the production of the first A321 aircraft at its Tianjin assembly line on November 9th.

AIRBUS
热烈祝贺空中客车天津总装第600架A320系列飞机交付中国东方航空
Congratulations to the Delivery of the 600th A320 Family Aircraft Assembled by Airbus Tianjin to China Eastern Airlines
B-32CT

Photo: Airbus

8. China Southern retired all its Airbus A380s

China Southern's last A380 commercial flight, CZ328 (registration number B6139), took off from Los Angeles at 15:00 (UTC+8) on November 7th and landed at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport (CAN) at 6:28 (UTC+8) on November 8th after a 15-hour flight. This means China Southern has retired all its five Airbus A380s after 11 years of service in its fleet.

China Southern is following a more significant trend within the aviation industry by retiring its Airbus A380s. Even before COVID-19, many airlines were looking to retire quad-jets in favor of more fuel-efficient twin jets. The pandemic did speed up the retirement of quad-jets for many airlines.

China Southern was the only Chinese domestic airliner that owned Airbus A380.

中国南方航空
CHINA SOUTHERN

Photo: Vincenzo Pace | Simple Flying

9. CAAC has a new administrator after six years

Mr. Song Zhiyong, former Chairman of Air China, was appointed as the new party chief of CAAC in May and later the administrator in June.

Song was born in 1965. He graduated from China Air Force First Flight Academy and entered Air China in 1987. He started as a standard pilot, worked his way up to join the company's senior management in 2006 (as VP of Air China), and finally became the Chairman of Air China in December 2020.

Interestingly, Song has some similarities with his other two predecessors. Song will be the second pilot leading the CAAC, after Yang Yuanyuan, who served as CAAC administrator between 2002 and 2007; Song will also be another CAAC administrator promoted from the position of Chairman of Air China after Li Jiaxiang, who was CAAC administrator from 2007 to 2016.

Besides Song, major personnel changes took place for several major Chinese airlines in 2022, as listed below:

	Current Position	**Former Position**
Song Zhiyong	CAAC Administrator	Chairman of Air China
Ma Chongxian	Chairman of Air China	GM, Air China
Liu Shaoyong	Retired from the managerial position	Chairman of China Eastern
Li Yangmin	Take full charge of China Eastern	GM, China Eastern
Xie Bing	GM, Xiamen Airlines	Secretary of the Board of China Southern

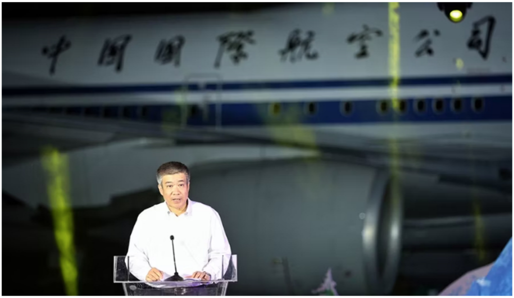

Photo: Air China

10. Embraer's E190-E2 wins certification In China

Embraer's E190-E2 has received type certification in China, as announced at the Zhuhai Airshow, marking a significant achievement for the Brazilian planemaker in the Asian marketplace. The Civil Aviation Authority of China (CAAC) certified the jet to operate in Chinese skies, something Embraer has been waiting almost five years to realize.

Photo: Steve Lynes via Flickr