



The C919, China's first self-developed jetliner, is greeted with a water salute after touching down at a Beijing airport on May 28. — Xinhua

China's first domestic passenger jet in maiden commercial flight

The C919, China's first domestically developed narrow-body passenger aircraft, completed its first commercial flight from Shanghai to Beijing on May 28.

The jetliner's first passenger travel was a success after it was delivered to Shanghai-based China Eastern Airlines, its first operator worldwide, by its developer Commercial Aircraft Corp of China last December.

The jetliner went through 100 hours of test flights before officially taking aboard passengers.

It took off at 10:32am from the Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport and arrived at the Beijing Capital International Airport at around 1pm with flight number MU9191, according to China Eastern.

It was welcomed by a "water-gate" ceremony, or water salute, after landing in Beijing.

About 130 passengers flew on the C919. To begin the journey, everyone obtained a specially designed boarding pass provided by China Eastern, commemorating the aircraft's first commercial flight.

The flight has 164 seats, which are also domestically made; eight for business class and 156 for economy class.



A passenger displays a specially designed boarding pass aboard the C919 jet from Shanghai to Beijing on May 28. — Xinhua

It is equipped with a total of 20 12-inch digital screens and supporting high-definition (1080P) movie play. It is also the first time that China Eastern has introduced 1080P program player into a single-isle jetliner.

The first C919 aircraft cabin is about 2.25 meters high, offering passengers a comfortable top and front visual space, according to China Eastern.

A special design is that the middle seat in each row is 1.5 centimeters wider than the window and aisle seats.

This is adopted to improve passenger experience.

The flight number was changed to MU9192 for the return journey to Shanghai later in day.

Lu Boyuan, a 21-year-old student and aviation enthusiast, was at Hongqiao airport on May 28 to fly to Chengdu from where he planned to return on the C919 the following day.

"I've been really looking forward to its flight, especially because it's a new-generation aircraft, unlike Boeing and Airbus equivalents which have been around for a number of years now," said Lu.

The aircraft started its first normal commercial operation between Hongqiao airport and the Chengdu Tianfu International Airport from May 29. Tickets have been available to passengers since Friday on different online platforms.

The C919 will engage in more domestic routes after China Eastern introduces more such jetliners.

"The first commercial flight is a coming-of-age ceremony of the new aircraft, and C919 will get better and better if it stands the test of the market," said Zhang Xiaoguang, director of

the marketing and sales department of COMAC.

The C919 has received great attention across the world since its development program was launched in 2007.

It was sent into the sky in 2017 after researchers' 10-year effort.

From 2017 to 2022, the C919 flew all over the country, through rain, snow, strong winds, high temperatures and severe cold. It also challenged extreme tests such as stall, shortest distance braking, and minimum ground clearance speed, and obtained all the qualification certificates before delivery to China Eastern.

In the future, more C919s will serve China's civil airlines.

China Eastern has purchased an initial batch of five C919s, becoming the jet's first operator. The other four will be delivered to the airline over the next two years.

Some 300 C919s were sold to seven leasing companies at the 2022 Air Show China in mid-November.

According to COMAC's official website, Hainan Airlines Group signed a contract on April 27, for the purchase of 100 aircraft from COMAC, 60 of them C919s.

(Shanghai Daily/Reuters)