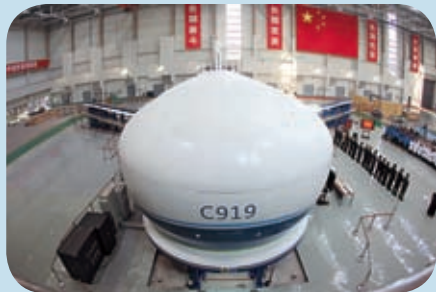


December 30, 2013



The test platform of C919, called "iron bird," was launched by Commercial Aircraft Corp of China in Shanghai's Baoshan District. The platform undertook 60,000 hours of life verification for the C919.

September 19, 2014

The alignment of the front and middle fuselages of the C919 marked the start of the final assembly of the C919.



May 5, 2017



The C919 made its maiden flight at the Shanghai Pudong International Airport and completed its flight testing targets.

December 9, 2022

COMAC delivers the world's first C919 large passenger aircraft to China Eastern Airlines. The jetliner finished its first flight from the Shanghai Pudong International Airport to the Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport.



May 28, 2023



The C919, China's first home-grown jetliner, took off from Hongqiao airport at 10:38am for Beijing on flight MU9191.

Photos by Dong Jun

Moment of pride flying China's first C919

Andy Boreham

I must admit I'm a bit of a plane nerd. Not the serious type, but let's just say I have had a C919 model on my desk at work for the past few years.

You can imagine my joy, then, when I had the chance to fly China's first ever home-designed and built passenger jet on May 29 on its maiden voyage to Chengdu, Sichuan Province.

Built by the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC), the C919 carries up to 168 passengers, depending on configuration, and has a range of over 5,000 kilometers. If you want to compare it to some more famous aircraft, you could say it's very similar to the Airbus A320 and the Boeing 737.

Those two companies have held a duopoly on the aircraft space for decades, and the C919 hopes to squeeze in and offer another choice.

I've been following closely since the C919 program was launched in 2007, right through to production kicking off in 2011 and the first model rolling off the production line in 2017.

The first ever C919 was delivered to launch airline, China Eastern, last December. After 100 hours of flight testing, the plane made its debut on Sunday with a special flight to Beijing. The next

day, it was setting off on its real route: between Shanghai and Chengdu.

As soon as I heard about the flight I was online buying a ticket and grabbed one just before they completely sold out.

It was a moment of pride for the 160-plus passengers taking China's first ever C919 from Shanghai to Chengdu, with almost every passenger milling around outside the plane to take photos and commemorate the historic moment. Airport crew were surprisingly understanding as dozens of passengers posed and took their selfies.

The excitement continued onboard as the C919 took to the air, and captain Wang Qiuye made an announcement welcoming all the plane enthusiasts onboard.

And there were a lot of them.

I was sitting in a middle seat with plane enthusiasts on each side. To my left was a young man from Chengdu who specifically flew to Shanghai on Sunday just to take the first C919 flight back to his hometown the next day. To my right was a young plane enthusiast from Hong Kong who made his way to Shanghai's Hongqiao Airport to photograph the historic moment as the C919 took off for Beijing on Sunday. He was meant to be staying in Shanghai plane-spotting for a few more days until he found out about the C919 service to Chengdu launching Monday and grabbed a ticket.

What a life.

It was a pretty short flight, about 2.5 hours to the capital of Sichuan province. A special breakfast was served: Shanghai noodles, some White Rabbit milk, and a special commemorative desert



ANDY BOREHAM

Editor's note:

Andy Boreham comes from New Zealand's capital city, Wellington, and has lived in China for a decade. He has a master's degree in Chinese culture and language from Fudan University and is interested in all things related to contemporary Chinese society. E-mail him at andy.boreham@shanghaidaily.com and follow him on Twitter: @AndyBxxx.

with a "World's First C919" logo on white chocolate. Nice touch.

Before long we were landing at our destination. You could feel the pride in the air, and everyone — except for a few elderly customers who seem to have just booked the flight to get home — seemed excited to have witnessed and taken part in such a proud moment for China: its very own, homemade passenger jet.

It's early days yet, but I think the C919 has a definite shot and taking on Airbus and Boeing, and I'm excited to see how COMAC develops and which new planes they have planned for the future.



A dessert featuring C919 logos served on board the flight. — Andy Boreham



Scan the QR code to watch the video.