

Australian Air-Ferry

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Chinese Restaurant

Australian Air Ferry arrived in Duluth Minnesota, to take delivery of a new demonstration model SR22 that was destined for China. This was to be the first aircraft of its type to remain in China, and the regulations surrounding aircraft operations in China are very restrictive.

The trip back to California, and then across to Majuro were uneventful.



Heated Hangar In Duluth For Aircraft Acceptance

From Majuro we headed for our friendly skydiving base in Saipan, where we over-nighted and refuelled.

The following day we arrived at the aircraft early and a Chinese-speaking representative from Cirrus (Peter Claeys), was to accompany us from Saipan to China.

We both boarded the aircraft and closed the doors, however, the request for an airways clearance had us return to the office three times before it was forthcoming. On the fourth attempt we received a clearance and we finally started our engine and headed towards the runway.



The Japanese were very obliging, as we entered their airspace and despite making changes to our clearance, everything seemed to be going well.

As we approached the Korean airspace, the air-traffic-controller asked for our clearance number, and after rummaging through some paperwork we managed to relay that information onto him.

The reply came back that Korea would not accept our handover and that we weren't to enter their airspace.

This would mean that we'd have to return to Japan and land while we sorted this mess out. The Japanese require an aircraft to be assisted by an agent, and there's nowhere in Japan that an agent won't cost at least \$1,000USD. We relayed the number directly to the Korean controller and we were told to track towards the northern capital, another clearance came back, track onto the next major city. We wanted to go straight across to our entry point into China, but our Korean friends were adding significant track miles.

At this point the controller had asked for a phone number in Australia to discuss the clearance number. Darren Gibson's phone was now running hot in Kempsey, with question like, "why you send this aircraft Korea," several explanations were forthcoming but the phone calls continued for approx three weeks after our transit. The caller admitted being the one who issued (signed) the clearance, and went onto say, "the Air Force very interested in this aircraft." This fibreglass aircraft would not provide a very good return to the radar.

As we tracked south through Korea the air traffic controller said, "N946CD increase speed to 280 knots and climb to FL180." Negative, Negative, unable we replied. I think they were testing our capabilities, but were in a non-pressurised aircraft and there's no way we could accelerate to anywhere near that speed.

When we applied for an entry into China, the Chinese told us where we could land, and where we would be able to enter Chinese airspace. We were to land at an airport other than the one we'd applied for. And we were told specifically where to enter their airspace and what route to take to get to the assigned international airport.



We got in touch with the authorities and told them that they'd made a mistake; this was not what we'd requested. To which they replied, yes we know, but that is what you must do.

The Chinese air-traffic controllers were speaking English when we entered their airspace, but even so, I was glad to have Peter along in case we had any problems.

As we approached our landing airport I asked Peter Claeys to request a descent, to which he said no we must wait until we are told to descend. Next I asked Peter Claeys if we could get a clearance for a visual approach onto runway 25, to which he replied no we must wait, they will tell us what sort of approach we must do. By now I understood perfectly why we needed someone from this country to come along.

All the altitude clearances are in metres, so every time we got a descent clearance we both started working it back to feet.



Approach Into Siapan

As we approached the airfield they cleared us to make a visual approach to the runway that we wanted and despite being left reasonably high the approach and landing went well.

Now on the ground you'd think your troubles were over, but not in China, now we're on the ground our troubles were just beginning.

Because we'd been airborne for a considerable time, without a toilet break, I needed to visit the little boys room. This is where Chinese and Australian cultures clash I'm afraid. Spotting a guard tower nearby, and as we were miles from the terminal, and because we'd been waiting for considerable time for customs and immigration to attend the aircraft. I decided to walk over to the tower, slip around behind it, where no one could see me, having my toilet break.

As I approached the guard tower the guard leaned out of his third story perch and started yelling at me in Chinese, of which I speak three words. So I commenced sign language, this made perfect sense to me, roughly translated it meant, I'm going around to the back of your tower where I will leave a wet patch on your wall, all very easy to gesture.

This guard was having none of it, I hadn't noticed, but the China Eastern Airlines representative who met us when we landed was running towards me from behind. I thought that eventually this guard would get it and gesture some sort of OK. But he yelled louder and put his hand on his firearm, which of course caused me to stop approaching him.

About this time the airline representative caught up and started yelling back at the guard, but instead of letting me go behind the tower I was gestured back to the van and driven over to the terminal. This was a very serious guard post, one of three on this particular ramp, and I was warned to stay well clear of them, do not approach under any circumstance. Apparently they do not have a sense of humour.

Our plan was to recover the equipment the following day; a Chinese pilot was to take the aircraft to its final destination, and I'd make my way to Shanghai for 24 hours rest before heading home.

The following day we tried to reverse our exit and return to the aircraft, but we were stopped before getting out of the passenger area at the terminal. This went on all day and so we sort out accommodation close to the airport and decided to try our luck again early the next day. Day two we were successful, after several phone calls the authorities allow us access to the aircraft on the ramp.

An airport representative met us and proceeded to all three guard towers, gaining a signature from each one, and they'd get their copy, before we proceeded towards the aircraft.

By this time I was taking no chances, I started removing equipment and packing it into my suit cases as quickly as I could. Fifteen minutes into this frenzy an A320 Airbus pilot arrived and informed us that he was taking the aircraft to Binjo, its final destination. If I was to finish recovering my equipment I was going to have to take a van ride up to the small provincial airport.

This ride was along a new highway and we reached speeds of 140kph, all of a sudden we'd come across a donkey drawn cart in our lane going the wrong way. This was a four-

lane highway, and we're in the fast lane. The driver did not speak English, so when I asked him to slow down, and gestured that we weren't in hurry, he went faster.

One hour later we arrived and once again I started stripping equipment from the aircraft. Only 30 minutes later everyone started leaving and I was told that there was no way back to the small city if I did not go now.

The flight from Shanghai to Australia was the next day. So I remained with the aircraft retrieving my equipment until it was finished. Peter Claeys had gone with the group to secure our rooms and organise a taxi. He arrived back at the aircraft shortly before I'd finished, it was approximately 11pm.

The airport was a long way from town, as we headed back Peter Claeys told me that the taxi driver was partially blind, and that he'd stopped on the edge of town to pick up a friend who could drive in the dark, but when we got back to the edge of town near the lights, he'd be hopping out again.

After a quick feed of Chinese (of course), for dinner we were into bed. We'd asked the taxi driver if he knew where there was a good Chinese restaurant, but he did not understand the question, no-one over here asks for a Chinese restaurant.

The next day a car arrived for the drive back to Jinan, where I'd catch a flight to Shanghai and meet the Qantas flight home to Australia.

The driver insisted he be paid cash before leaving the accommodation, reluctant to part with any cash he took all the back streets and side alleys to avoid paying tolls.

When I arrived at the Jinan International Airport and presented my credit card to pay for the ticket back to Shanghai, I was told they only accepted Chinese credit cards. That's right Mastercard has a Chinese version. I asked the girl behind the counter to accompany me to the eftpos machine to get cash out, because I could not read Chinese and she just gave me a strange look and could not speak English all of a sudden as she walked away.

A few hundred metres down the terminal centre was a machine, by making the same entries on the machine as I did usually, I was able to get several hundred Chinese dollars from it. Did not understand anything it said, or a word that appeared on the screen.

After making my way back to the counter and paying, breathing a sigh of relief as I was going to make the flight, not for a second thinking about security. Yes the dreaded security guard, as I walked through they gestured me to a special area where three guards would make negative gestures regarding my life jacket and life raft. After screwing the bottles of both and showing them that I'd disarmed all the CO₂, they allowed me through.

As I hurried of the arriving flight into Shangai, a driver met me and quickly ushered me through to his car, half an hour later I was standing at the Qantas counter in Shangai, glad to be standing amidst familiar surroundings.

You'd think that would be the end of the story, but I was seated next to a group of Australians who'd spent a week in Shangai at a conference. All the way home they told me what a great time they'd had and what they'd seen and done. Remember I was stuck in Binjo, and arguing with customs in Jinan.

Ferrying aircraft is hard and at times arduous work it's no picnic in Shangai.

Cirrus Jet

Cirrus's Very Light Jet seems closer to reality now as the factory invites interested buyers to place deposits for a slot on the production line. Invitations have gone out to thousands of potential buyers asking for a \$100,000 USD deposit, to ensure their position within a long list of interested buyers.

Cirrus believes their emerging class of personal jet will both create and fulfil an exciting market sector – the realm between high performance single-engine airplanes and the very light jet (VLJ) class. The personal jet follows the Cirrus philosophy path to grow and enhance the entire personal aviation industry.

It will be a single engine, they claim inexpensive to own, and uncomplicated to operate. Able to fly at FL250, cruise easily at 300kts, and have a range of 1000nm.

Cirrus will not release any further details, but we'll keep you informed, as more information is forthcoming. You can visit www.the-jet.com for more marketing information.

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