

Living and working in China



There is a lot to consider before starting a new job or changing an employer. This flyer intends to provide information on what to really expect and how to perfectly prepare for working in China.

Do you know FORDEC? What has proven to be a helpful tool for decision making in the cockpit can now also be used in career decisions.

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Facts

Rumours and truths:

There are a lot of reports from pilots working in China on the Internet. Most of them write about exhausting application procedures, the Chinese medical or the working conditions which differ from those in Europe and America.

Just this much in advance: the Chinese ATPL can be passed and working in a Chinese airline is different but far better than often described on the Internet. The most important requirements to be successful in China are a good preparation and the right attitude.



Why to fly in China

There are different reasons for deciding to fly in China.

Talking to colleagues, most of them named the following reasons:

Income:

Compared to all other regions, China provides the highest income worldwide.

Moreover, there are many different part-time contracts (commuting roster), which can't be found anywhere else.

The combination of a high income and a great number of non-working days is unique! This is a real work-life balance. In most cases the income is twice as high with half as many working hours.

Security:

The security situation in China is far better than in a lot of other parts of the world. Many cities the world over can be quite dangerous. However, Shanghai is very safe! The pilots who live there will be happy to verify it!

Flying experience:

I know some pilots wishing for a change. Flying to Palma every day for 30 years ... great. But at some point it gets boring. A big number of the pilots from the West flying in China are very experienced and searching for a new challenge. China provides great variety in its climate and landscapes. From the subtropical island of Hainan to the Himalaya Mountains, from the Gobi desert to the tundra at the Mongolian border. They enjoy these many challenges and it is very fun flying here.



Living in China

It is out of the question that there are cultural differences.

The pilot who lives in China has a Chinese working contract and works with people who maybe know Europe and America only from television and movies.

It is helpful to show a high level of empathy, respect, serenity and curiosity. In any case, you shouldn't feel like a teacher but act as an ambassador of another culture. Patience is a virtue. Don't attempt to compare or improve.



We are often used to evaluating, examining or optimizing situations. This is not necessary in China. Here, orders are executed and that's it. This results in an unusual serenity.

Working in China

A gigantic and emerging market awaits you here. In the next 10 years, approximately **1200 new airplanes** will be approved in China. This requires more than **5500 captains!**

It has been lately reported in the media, that the economic situation of the country has slowed. No need to worry: this hasn't significantly impacted the development in the aviation sector as prosperity rises and the Chinese have more money to spend on travel. Airplanes run at 95% passenger capacity and new routes are approved immediately.



For example: on the national holiday in October 2015, 750 million people travelled in China. Imagine all the inhabitants of North America and Europe traveling during one week...

Flying in China

In recent years, the quality of ATC improved considerably. By now, air traffic controllers at big airports speak with an American accent. The air traffic controllers help where they can!



There are only two restrictions you have to get used to:

The airspace is used and controlled by the military. Only small areas of the airspace are permitted for civilian use. This sometimes results in significant delays.

In China, there can sometimes be a cultural bias against taking responsibility, as a wrong decision has consequences and will result in "losing face".

As long as there is no **decision** to make, life in China is fun. Everyone fulfills tasks and duties conscientiously. Nothing more is expected from the pilots.

All of the airplanes are new and technical problems are extremely rare. Almost all of the airports are new too and very modern.

Flight operations run smoothly. When you get to the airplane, everything is already prepared. Everyone fulfills his duties. In Europe and America, captains often get the feeling that they are simultaneously the loadmaster, ramp agent, lawyer, catering manager, and/or check-in personnel. In China, you have only one job – to be the captain! This saves a lot of stress and is very relaxing.

INSIDER INFORMATION:

- In China, copilots have to pass six different levels (A1 – C2) until they become a captain. Only from **level B2** the copilot is allowed to fly and land as PF. Furthermore, you are limited to work as PF as a new captain. You can expect to fly **as PF for 90% in the first year**. This is also an advantage. You have enough time to get used to the airplane and to concentrate on the SOP as PF.
- The aeronautical authority CAAC requires **a supervision of 200 hours**. This is an extraordinarily long period of time. This enables you to learn all about the workflow in China while receiving full salary and having no responsibility.
- In China you receive a completely new **CAAC** (Civil Aviation Authority of China) license. Only the flying experience is recognized. Nothing else. It is in any case recommended to maintain your previous license during your work in China, otherwise problems will occur when deciding to fly somewhere else. Should you have further questions or need help regarding an **LPC** for your EASA license, don't hesitate contacting **PILOT4PILOTS** welcome@pilot4pilots.com.

Options

Southwestern Asia or China

The working conditions in Southwestern Asia and China are more attractive than in Europe. If you have to decide between Southwestern Asia or China has to consider the following:

- The climate in China is more tolerable – especially in summer, a lot of part-time work contracts are available.
- If you work in Southwestern Asia, you must live there.
- If you work for a Chinese airline instead, you can choose working full-time in China and earning a great deal of money or earning a bit less and living back home.

Waiting for better days in Europe

There are also vacancies for pilots in Europe. Nonetheless, aviation in Europe is "saturated". Everyone who wants to fly, already flies.

Competition is immense and there will be a lot of reorganisation over the next few years.

New ideas like "Pay to fly" or payment depending on working days are non-existent in China!

The pilot who dares take the plunge now, can experience a standard in China which was common in Europe 30 years ago.



Risks

How to minimise my risk:

Every job change causes insecurities and risks. Working in a new company may involve being confronted with new and difficult colleagues, having a bad day in the flight simulator, disliking work processes, or suffering from homesickness. This is pretty normal and can happen anywhere in the world – including China.

It is important to look forward to the opportunity with optimism. A new company is like a new life. You will sometimes feel a little "out of place" but the rewards are much greater than the challenges!!

Being properly prepared for the tests is indispensable for a good start and reduces stress. PILOT4PILOTS will give you all the practical advice and support you require.

Finding a suitable alternative (plan B)

One possibility would be to ask your current employer for unpaid leave. This is possible in many companies. Especially in economically difficult periods, employers approve of personnel leaving the company for a couple of years. This would be your backup in case something goes wrong.

Another possibility is **building up self-employment** during your professional assignment in China. The roster "**4 work weeks / 4 non-work weeks**" provides plenty of time and the financial possibilities to build up a second secure income.

Unemployment insurance:

The work contract in China remains in effect initially for three years. Those who are already entitled to unemployment benefits in their home country should register as unemployed once for a short period of time during these three years. After the end of contract, this may entitle you to receive an unemployment allowance for a maximum period of 12 months.

Health insurance:

There is no welfare system in China. A lot of companies pay a lump sum for a private health insurance.

- One possibility would be to ask a European or American health insurance company for a foreign insurance coverage.
- Furthermore, you can change the European health insurance into a private insurance policy. The reinstatement of health care coverage comes after suspension and conclusion of an international health insurance policy.

This offers you the possibility of a reinstatement directly after returning to Europe.

Medical:

If you passed the Medical in China once, you have to renew it every 6 months.

In order to reduce the risk of the Chinese Medical, there is the possibility of a **Loss of License Insurance** policy which also includes the Chinese Medical.

PILOT4PILOTS answers all questions regarding this insurance.



Decision

Which agency shall I choose?

Our agency was founded by experienced pilots. We ourselves have been placed by agencies and know your problems.

We received a lot of information on the contract and requirements from the agencies but didn't receive the experienced advice of local pilots.

This is why we founded an agency which provides information for pilots from pilots, supports you during the application procedure and afterwards.

What we offer:

- The best possible preparation for the application procedure including questionnaire and free ATPL revision as a seminar and a free ATPL preparation seminar
- Assistance in obtaining the necessary documents
- On-site assistance during the screening
- Comprehensive and honest advice about living conditions and for personal questions
- Easy accessibility and fast feedback
- First-hand information. We only support airlines providing a pilot as contact person



Airline in China

There are a lot of airlines in China looking for pilots. Deployment takes place in different cities.

A small secret: the income is the highest in non-appealing cities as the airlines lack personnel in these areas.

How good does it sound to be based on Hainan Island. Subtropical climate, a great beach, plenty of sunshine. But unfortunately, you may find yourself to be the only English-speaking foreigner in many situations, which can sometimes feel a little awkward. The return flight to Europe or America always takes place via bigger cities. This costs precious time you would rather spend at home and not at the airport.

Important:

It is important to recognize that in China you are bound to an airline as soon as the airline company paid an invitation for screening.

Once you are bound to an airline, it is very difficult to apply somewhere else. The entire process (including tests you have already passed or the Medical) must then to be passed again as the previous airline won't forward the documents. As the case may be, a change of job in China might only be possible after the end of contract.

Interesting:

Chinese airlines are not allowed to poach pilots flying in China. If a Chinese airline wants to employ a pilot from another airline, they have to pay transfer fees like in European soccer.

Execute

The application procedure:

The application procedure lasts longer than usual and takes 3-4 months.

This is your chance to test two important abilities for flying in China: **patience and tenacity!**

What many pilots like about China: During the application procedure the focus is on your flying skills and knowledge instead of psychological characteristics.

No psychological questions, no role-playing, no assessment center. The interview also focuses on flying experience and not on your assumed weaknesses.

Abbreviated version:

The application procedure is divided into different levels and time periods.

Level 1:

- Deciding for an airline and choosing an agency
- Submission of documents
- Invitation to screening week with Medical, interview, ATPL test and simulator check (for the company)

Level 2:

- Approx. 1-2 months after successful completion of level 1
- CAAC simulator check (for the issuing of the ATPL)

Level 3:

- Approx. 1-2 months after successful completion of level 2
- Further documents are required.
- Start of ground training

Explanation:

PILOT4PILOTS provides you with all necessary information in every phase of the application procedure, offers advice and support regarding test preparation, and there is a contact person for your questions.

Level 1:

Required documents:

- Copy of ATPL licence
- Copy of valid Medical (class 1)
- Copy of passport
- Copy of last 6 pages of flight log
- Completed application form

The documents are checked by the company. Thereafter you are (hopefully) invited to the screening week. You can choose from the dates below:

The costs for flight and accommodation are paid.

Visa:

When invited to a screening, the next step is to apply for a visa at the Chinese embassy or consulate. The visa has to be valid for a multiple-entry (double entry) and is applied for as tourist visa.

Please note: the embassy needs your passport for issuing a visa. For pilots who steadily need a passport for work, this might cause problems.

The only solution is a second passport or a week of flying in countries where no passport is needed. The application takes approx. 5 working days and costs around 100 euros.

Screening procedure:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| • 1st + 2nd day | CAAC Medical |
| • 3rd day | interview |
| • 4th day | ATPL test |
| • 5th day | simulator check |



CAAC Medical:

The CAAC Medical is the biggest hurdle in the first level.

Beforehand: the Chinese Medical can be passed when you are well prepared! In principle, it is a normal aeromedical examination with a few differences.

In addition to the common examinations in Europe and America, there are a few differences:

- Ultrasound of the organs
- EEG
- Examination of body scars
- If you are older than 40: MRT of the head and 10-minute exercise ECG

For preparation:

The following tips will help to drastically increase your chance of passing the Chinese Medical. 30 minutes of endurance training daily approx. one month before the Medical.

Request a general check-up from your doctor. He can diagnose bigger problems and treat them in time.

If your cholesterol level is too high, the intake of omega-3 tablets can increase the level of good cholesterol. This improves the quotient of good and bad cholesterol. If your cholesterol level is extraordinarily high, a fasting cure of several days' duration may help too. Undertaking a fasting cure may sound hard when you're not sick but it is a cleansing treatment for body and soul and worth the effort.

If you have scars or if surgeries were carried out, your doctor has to issue a medical certificate in English stating the reason for the scar/surgery and, if possible, the medical treatment. You should be well rested for the Medical. If you arrive at the Chinese Medical exhausted and with jetlag, this may result in high blood pressure even if you normally don't suffer from it. Prevent stress at least one week before the Medical and arrive in China maybe 2 days before the Medical. This works wonders.

Approximately two weeks before the Medical, your medication should be set. It is not recommended to try new medication shortly before the Medical.

Insider Information:

Chinese medical practitioners follow their rules just like European and American doctors do.

While Western physicians also evaluate the overall impression, Chinese doctors adhere to the strict rules for each value. If a value doesn't meet the standard you fail the Medical and you have to undergo another examination.

Interview:

The interview is usually very short. You will be asked, for example, if your last company flew in accordance with Airbus procedures. A bigger emphasis is put on your experience as a captain (where did you fly, did any problems occur, incidents or accidents) than on a psychological report of the applicant.

CAAC ATPL:

There are a lot of rumours concerning the Chinese CAAC ATPL theoretical exam and a lot of pilots are afraid of failing. To overcome this fear, please pay attention to the following information:

- The Chinese ATPL theoretical exam is 80% identical to the FAA ATPL questionnaire (significantly clearer than the EASA ATPL and there are published study guides).
- The test takes 2 hours with 100 questions. Best of all: there are only the answers a, b, c (the probability of choosing the right answer is 33%) and you pass the test when you answer at least 70% correctly!
- Those who fail the ATPL test can repeat it after 28 days. If the second attempt is successful, the company still PAYS the airfare for the second arrival!

A preparatory period of 4 weeks is realistic. **PILOT4PILOTS** provides you with all documents necessary for an effective preparation.

This includes:

- The up-to-date Chinese questionnaire
- The Chinese ATPL textbook
- Preparatory training (approx. every 2 months) as a weekend seminar



Simulator Check:

The simulator check during the screening is demanding but is very similar to the simulator screenings for other airlines. Basically you can expect a one hour simulator check with standard Airbus SOP procedures, memory items and a dual failure (eg. dual hydraulic). Pilot4Pilots provides good material and gives you a lot of useful tips for preparation. Apart from that Pilot4Pilots is in contact with experienced Airbus Type Rating Instructors with proper **TRTO** for your questions and requests.

Do you need an LPC or do you want to prepare for the screening in the simulator? Contact us! We will help you!

Check

Tests and examinations passed – what's next?

There is a lot to consider before starting your work abroad – in private and professionally. It is important to discuss the situation thoroughly with your family and friends. The different work time options offer the possibility to find an individual solution.

There are still a lot of questions:

Shall I take my family with me? If your partner decides to move with you, they will have to quit their job and probably won't work in China. This may lead to conflicts.

What do your children think about staying abroad? Many children are very thankful for the experience of having been able to attend an international school abroad and still talk positively about it.

Should your family or partner decide to not leave their home, cheap call rates and video-telephony make this decision more bearable and easier than 10 years ago. Many pilots opt for the work schedule where they leave home for 4 weeks but then return home for 4 weeks without interruption.

This sounds good. Nevertheless, the partner or family has to come to terms with your 4-week absence and a lot of things have to be prepared. Tasks such as dealing with insurance companies and public authorities, vehicle inspection, etc. may sometimes have to be delayed or delegated. This requires making arrangements and a possible extra work load for your partner and family.

We hope that this brochure made a contribution to your decision to fly in China. There is a lot more information that didn't fit into this brochure.

Should you have further questions, don't hesitate contacting us.

If you haven't made a final decision yet, think of the Tibetan saying: "Nothing will ever be perfect by a 100% and nothing will ever be bad by a 100%. It is only important to choose the better option."

If you decide to take the plunge and work in China, send us your application (welcome@pilot4pilots.com). We won't cajole you into taking that step but if you want to fly in China, we are the best agency and we will do our utmost to accomplish your goal!

Last but not least, feedback of a Spring Airline pilot:

"At first I had serious concerns when I applied for China. It went way better than expected. The airbase in Shanghai and my labor contract with 4 working weeks/4 non-working weeks was a huge advantage and the main reason for my application at Spring Airlines. My time in Shanghai is anything but boring and passes very quickly. PILOT4PILOTS has its own personnel on the spot and I can still count on their support."



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