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China Embraces GA, Opens Airspace



China's State Council and Central Military Commission have announced the nation's low-altitude airspace, below 13,000 feet, will open over the next 5 years for civilian use.

China's State Council and the Central Military Commission announced this week that the country's low-altitude airspace, below 13,123 feet, will be opened for civilian use over the next five years. Under current regulations, aircraft are required to obtain clearance from the military, which are difficult to obtain via a process that is notoriously delayed. Under the new regulations, aircraft flying below 3,280 feet are free to take off and land without this approval; aircraft flying up to 13,123 feet must file a flight plan but are also not required to have the clearance. The announcement also included a circular that details China's plans to develop their civilian aviation system.

The announcement has spawned a gold rush of sorts among potential general aviation operators. The Huaxi Village, which already owns two helicopters, intends to purchase up to twenty more aircraft for flight training and tourism. The village has been waiting for the airspace to open in hopes of boosting tourism income, such as the sightseeing flights they hope to begin next month, to their village.

China currently has about 1,000 general aviation aircraft registered, but they project a tenfold increase within the next two years. The airspace opening has aircraft manufacturers salivating over the estimated \$150 billion market potential created in China. Manufacturers of piston aircraft and helicopters are hoping to grab some of the developing market, but with airspace over 13,000 feet still severely restricted, it is unlikely that jets will see much of an increase in sales.

The announcement highlights the Chinese Government's commitment to driving growth in the aviation industry. While this is certainly good news for giants like Boeing and Airbus now, the rapidly developing Chinese aircraft manufacturing sector will likely see the most long-term benefit. For example, Commercial Aircraft Corp of China announced at the Zhuhai Airshow they have sales agreements with Chinese airlines for 100 aircraft. The company's C919 airliner, a 150-seat aircraft, is scheduled to make its first flight in 2014. Eurocopter is predicting similar developments in the helicopter market as early as 2020.

This is certainly good news for ailing aircraft manufacturers who can look forward to the boost that will likely come as Chinese take to the sky. While companies who already have a presence in China, like Cessna and Boeing, will have an easier time of capturing some of the Chinese market, the projected demand is more than enough for everyone to get involved.

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Sources: [China Opens Airspace For GA](#) and [Large GA aircraft sales to China should follow airspace opening](#)

This article was written by Matthew Everett, a private pilot, aviation writer, and frequent contributor to [AviationSchoolsOnline.com](#). You can follow him on twitter [@leaving_tf](#) or find his blog at <http://leavingterrafirma.com>.

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