

BUSINESS



Flight attendants from Cathay Pacific Airways demonstrate emergency safety training procedures in Hong Kong on Jan 11, 2024. CHEN YONGNUO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Cathay Pacific to recruit more people from Chinese mainland

Hong Kong-based carrier aims to fill a variety of positions this year

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Hong Kong-based carrier Cathay Pacific Airways has said that it plans to hire more flight attendants and pilots from the Chinese mainland as the airline continues to increase the number of flights connecting the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong with overseas destinations.

The airline is working to attract more Chinese mainland talent to support its future development plans. Currently, the group has more than 30,000 employees from some 70 countries and regions, including about 3,000 employees from the Chinese mainland. By the end of this year, it aims to raise the number of Chinese mainland employees to 4,000.

With operating bases in Beijing and Shanghai, Cathay Pacific plans to mainly hire flight attendants in the Chinese mainland, as well as more pilots, aircraft maintenance engineers, ground crew members and information technology personnel.

In Shenzhen and Guangzhou of

Guangdong province, the company has two offices that focus on the technology side of the business and it hopes to soon expand these teams to about 200 people in total.

“In the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, there are many excellent digital talent and research companies, providing a great platform for Cathay Pacific to attract more outstanding Chinese mainland talent,” said Patricia Hwang, director of people at Cathay Group.

“The total number of flights operated by Cathay Pacific has rebounded to the pre-pandemic level. This year, we aim to increase the number of destinations that we fly to 100 worldwide and continue to increase investments. We are confident in our growth potential,” Hwang said.

Cathay Pacific announced last year that it would invest more than HK\$100 billion (\$12.87 billion) in the next seven years for its development strategy. This includes increasing investment in its fleet, cabin products, lounges, digital upgrades and sustainable development, the company said.

Meanwhile, the group reported

an attributable profit of HK\$9.9 billion last year, higher than a profit of HK\$9.8 billion in 2023, driven by stronger cargo demand, higher passenger volumes, lower fuel price and higher cost efficiencies, according to its annual report released in mid-March.

For new flights to the Chinese mainland, Cathay Pacific recently announced that it plans to launch direct flights connecting Hong Kong and Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, starting from April 28. The new four-flights-per-week return service will bring the airline’s passenger network in the Chinese mainland to 20 destinations.

“Urumqi is an exciting new addition to our network, directly connecting our home city with an important Belt and Road hub in Northwest China,” said Lavinia Lau, chief customer and commercial officer at Cathay Group.

This summer, Cathay Pacific and the group’s low-cost carrier HK Express will together operate over 290 return flights per week between Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland.

Besides, the International Air Transport Association recently released data showing global passenger demand in January. Total

demand, measured in revenue passenger kilometers, climbed 10 percent year-on-year, while total capacity, measured in available seat kilometers, grew by 7.1 percent year-on-year. The January load factor was 82.1 percent, an all-time high for the month.

In particular, Asia-Pacific airlines achieved a 21.8 percent year-on-year increase in demand. Capacity increased 16.5 percent year-on-year and the load factor was 86.7 percent. Traffic from Northeast Asia was particularly strong, said IATA, which represents some 340 airlines comprising over 80 percent of global air traffic.

“We have seen a notable acceleration in demand this January, with a particularly strong performance by carriers based in the Asia-Pacific region. The record high load factors that accompany this strong demand are yet another reminder of the persistent supply chain issues in the aerospace sector,” said Willie Walsh, IATA’s director-general.

“The strong growth in demand aligns with the results of our latest passenger survey done in November 2024, in which 94 percent of travelers indicated that they planned to travel as much or more in the coming 12 months than they did in the past year,” Walsh added.

Smart greenhouses lift winter jujube industry

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With China’s “No 1 central document” for 2025 calling for technical advancement and all-around rural vitalization, Chinese farmers are showing more enthusiasm in using the latest technology to boost their incomes.

In East China’s Shandong province, winter date grower Guo Ning expressed a myriad of emotions while looking at the thriving winter jujube trees growing at the Guo Ning Winter Jujube Demonstration Park in Xiahe Town.

In order to usher in an early harvest of his winter dates and sell them for a good price, Guo has introduced “smart temperature control” technology to the greenhouses in the park, set up by the local township government with an investment of 1.6 million yuan (\$221,270).

At Guo’s demonstration park, a key industrial project in the town, controlling greenhouse temperatures is conducive to maintaining the activity of the root system and boosting the revival of seedlings in early spring, said Xu Lin, government head of Xiahe town in Zhanhua district.

In recent years, Zhanhua, which is part of the prefecture-level city of Binzhou, has vigorously developed its winter jujube industry and bolstered modern agricultural technology, helping jujube growers raise their income and become prosperous.

Zhanhua, sitting on the lower reaches of the Yellow River in northern Shandong, governs two sub-districts, seven towns and two townships with a total population surpassing 331,800.

Guo said the air-powered heating equipment in his greenhouses — consisting of a main unit, a water storage tank, water connections, air outlets and other parts — can drive water circulation through a heat pump and uses 12 air outlets to deliver warm air into the entire greenhouse, achieving intelligent control of inside temperatures.

“This device can help winter jujubes to mature earlier and usher in a harvest in late June, three months earlier than traditional cultivation,” said Li Bing, Party secretary of Xiahe.

“The No 1 central document has been giving us much strength each

year, offering a new guide in technical advancement and new direction in rural vitalization,” he said.

“In the next step, we will fully leverage the advantages of our characteristic agricultural industries such as greenhouse winter jujube, organic fruits and vegetables, and introduce advanced management technologies, improving the quality and efficiency of these industries, and bolstering farmers’ income,” Li added.

As the winter jujube industry is starting to become more developed through the use of smart technologies, efficient use of air-powered heating equipment is the future development path for the industry, said Meng Xianggui, a local expert in greenhouse winter jujube cultivation.

To reduce the growth cycle of winter jujubes and seek early harvests, Xiahe has helped upgrade 8,000 *mu* (533 hectares) of winter jujubes in the town and turned them into greenhouse cultivation.

“This year, with our newly installed air heating equipment in the greenhouse, the interior temperature can reach 25 C during daytime and remain around 10 C at night,” Guo said, noting that he was pleased to see his winter jujube trees sprout during the Spring Festival holiday.

However, the smooth running of the new equipment cannot happen without ample power, as the increased equipment makes the power load rise sharply and aging power lines can be a risk, he said.

As the unstable voltage can lead to frequent failures in temperature control, Guo reached out to the State Grid Binzhou Power Supply Co for timely help.

Du Zuyin, director of Xiahe Town Power Supply Station, led his team to replace a 200 kVA (kilovolt-ampere) transformer for Guo’s park, and renewed the previous bare aluminum wires with insulated cables to ensure stable power transmission.

He also introduced an inspection mechanism to check the park’s power facilities on a monthly basis to prevent potential hazards.

“Now with stable electricity and precise operation of the temperature control equipment, my winter jujubes can be harvested about 15 days earlier than usual, hiking my sales significantly,” Guo said.



Workers of State Grid Binzhou Power Supply Co measure temperatures inside a greenhouse at Guo Ning Winter Jujube Demonstration Park in Zhanhua district, Binzhou, Shandong province. JIA SHUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY



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