THE VALUE OF AVIATION
CHINA

The economic impact of aviation in China

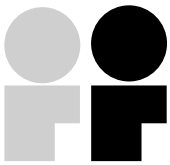
The aviation sector and its quantifiable economic effects made up 2.0% of China's GDP and 1.8% of the country's employment in 2025. This covers the sector itself, its supply chain, employee spending, and overseas air transport-enabled tourism to China.

GDP and employment created by aviation in China in 2025



388.7
USD billion

2.0%
of GDP



13.7
million jobs

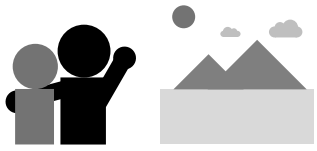
1.8%
of employment

Included economic impacts:
***Direct** – within aviation sector, **Indirect** – aviation supply chain,*
Induced** – employee spending, **Overseas tourists arriving by air

Breakdown of GDP and employment created







Airlines	Airports, ANSPs, civil manufacturing	Overseas tourists arriving by air
USD 135.6 billion	USD 157.2 billion	USD 95.9 billion
3.7 million jobs	5.5 million jobs	4.6 million jobs

Source: Air Transport Action Group, 2026. Aviation Benefits Beyond Borders report based on data from Oxford Economics.
Note: Economic impacts are calculated using Oxford Economics' Aviation: Benefits Beyond Borders methodology with inputs sourced from publicly available statistics and recognized industry datasets wherever possible, with modelling-based estimates applied where direct data are not available. Estimates do not include domestic tourism spending, nor the wider catalytic benefits of aviation on trade, investment, productivity gains, and enhanced connectivity, among others.
Note: Average 2025 exchange rate: USD 1 = CNY 7.19

Air transport brings millions of people safely to global destinations

Around 714.3 million air passengers departed from China in 2025, based on Origin-Destination(O-D) traffic, making China the 2nd largest air passenger market globally.

Air travel from China in 2025, Origin-Destination (O-D)

714.3
million
passenger departures

GROWTH

68.8%
10-year growth

3.6%
year-on-year growth

RANK

2nd
Global
No change since 2015

1st
in Asia
No change since 2015

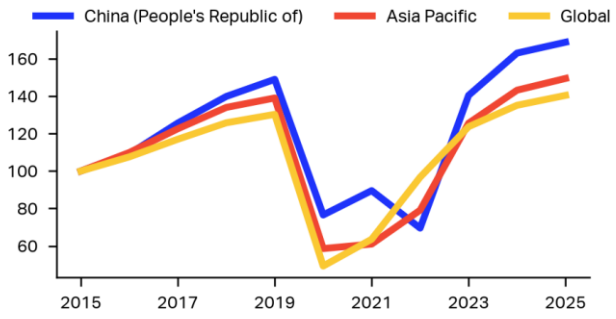
SHARE

16.7%
of global departures

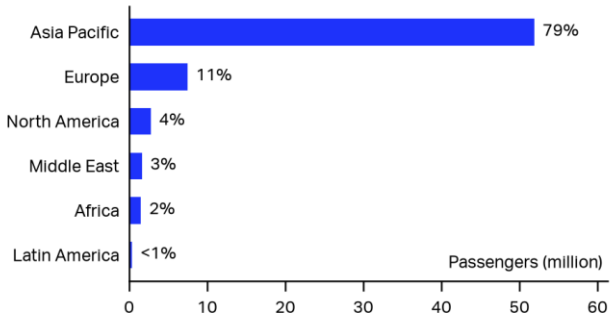
44.7%
of Asian departures

Overseas: 65.8 million passenger departures, 21.2% 10Y growth, 17.5% YoY growth
Domestic: 648.5 million passenger departures, 75.8% 10Y growth, 2.3% YoY growth, % share of total market: 90.8%

Total passenger departures, O-D, 2015-2025, index 2015=100



Overseas passenger departures by destination region, O-D, 2025



Top air travel markets Inbound & outbound	Top origin cities Inbound	Top destination cities Outbound
1. Japan	1. Seoul	1. Osaka
2. South Korea	2. Taipei	2. Tokyo
3. Thailand	3. Singapore	3. Singapore
4. Hong Kong (SAR)	4. Hong Kong	4. Bangkok
5. Malaysia	5. Kuala Lumpur	5. Hong Kong

Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics using IATA DDS data.
Note: O-D (origin-destination) departures measures passengers beginning their journey in China, to their final destination, excluding transfer and transit passengers.
Top air travel markets based on total O-D passenger traffic between China and other markets in 2025. Top outbound and inbound cities are based on round-trip passenger journeys.
IATA DDS data are derived from ticketing and sales transactions using IATA methodologies and estimates; therefore, results may not exactly match officially reported traffic statistics.

Air transport directly connects China to 85 different countries

In 2025, there were 249 airports and 166 operating airlines in China, providing a total of 9558 regularly scheduled commercial passenger routes for China, connecting to 85 countries with about 990 daily overseas departures.

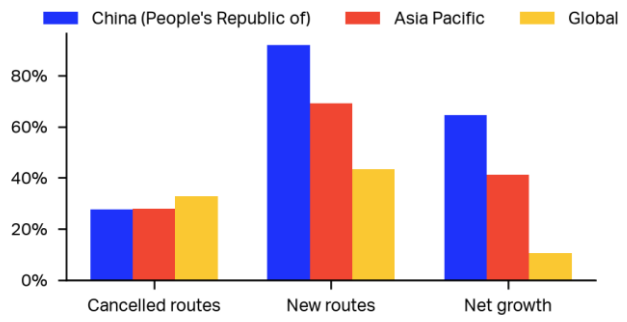
Air Connectivity in China

249
Airports in 2025
204 in 2015

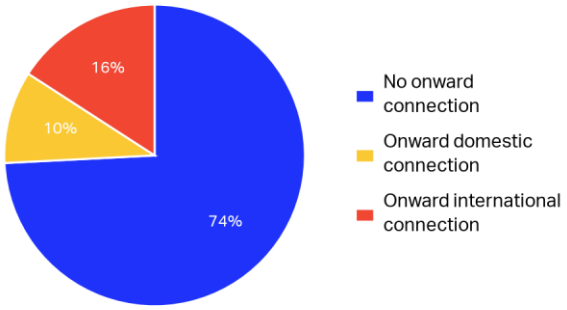
166
Airlines in 2025
147 in 2015

		Total		
		Available routes	Connected countries	Daily int. departures
2025	Total	9558	85	990
	Global rank	2nd	11th	8th
	Asia rank	1st	1st	1st
2015	Total	5811	72	963
	Global rank	2nd	13th	7th
	Asia rank	1st	1st	1st

Route network change, 2015 to 2025, % of 2015



Onward connections of overseas arrivals, 2025

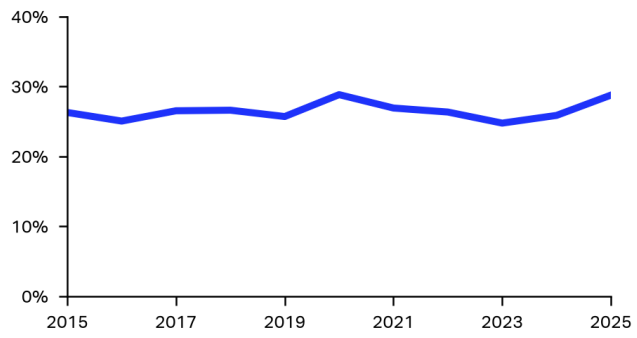


Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics using OAG & IATA DDS data.
Note: Airport, airline, and route counts include only those with regularly scheduled passenger services from China. Airports with fewer than 1,000 regularly scheduled seats in 2025 are excluded.

Air Cargo provides China timely and safe access to global markets

Although air transport accounted for an estimated 0.7% of China's traded goods by weight, it carried 29.0% of their total value.
China's airports handled around 21.9 million tonnes of air cargo in 2025, ranking China as the world's 2nd largest air cargo handler market and the 1st largest in Asia.

Chinese air cargo, value, % of total, 2015-2025



Chinese air cargo, share of trade, 2025

0.7%
of trade by weight

29.0%
of trade by value

Air cargo handled in China, 2025

21.9
million tonnes
air cargo handled

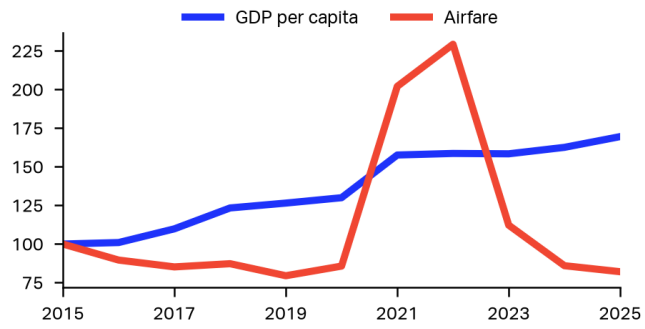
2nd
Globally
1st in Asia

Source: Airports Council International (ACI) for air cargo handled, Global Trade Tracker (GTT) for imports and exports by air.
Note: China's trade by air includes imports and exports. It is based on a sample of 50 countries that report their trade by means of transport in 2025, which represents around 40% of the total global goods trade.

Overseas air travel from China has become more affordable over the past decade

China's nominal GDP per capita increased by 69.6%, while the average nominal airfare for an overseas ticket from China decreased by 17.9%, over the past decade. Therefore, overseas air travel has become more affordable for local residents over this time period.

Nominal GDP per capita & average overseas fare, China, 2015-2025, index 2015=100



Source: IATA DDS, World Bank. Nominal GDP per capita and fare developments measured in USD terms.