# CHINA EASTERN STARTS SCHEDULED FLIGHTS TO AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

**News / Airports / Routes**

**At 0:50 a.m. on September 26, an Airbus A330-200 of China Eastern Airlines (MU) took off from Shanghai Pudong International Airport (PVG) and headed toward Auckland, New Zealand, marking the airline officially commenced its third scheduled Oceanian service.**

The inaugural flight MU779 arrived at at Auckland Airport (AKL) at 4:30 p.m. local time, which was welcomed by a water salute.

The Shanghai-Auckland service, previously operated as a seasonal flight, now is operated every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, using an Airbus A330-200 aircraft.

In January-March 2016, the service will be increased to seven flights per week, the Shanghai-based carrier said.

The Auckland-bound flight MU779 is scheduled to take off from Shanghai at 0:10 a.m. and land in Auckland at 5:15 p.m., with the return flight MU780 leaving Auckland at 10:00 p.m. and reaching Shanghai at 5:30 a.m. the next day (all local times.)

In recent years, traveling to New Zealand becomes more popularity among the Chinese, with a

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growth of nearly 30% year on year. Shanghai has become the city with the most tourists heading to New Zealand.

China Eastern announced on September 17 that it is set to increase its capacity to Oceania by 20%, by launching Shanghai-Auckland route in September and Shanghai-Brisbane route in January 2016, and increasing the frequency of other Oceanian services.

According to China Eastern, the Shanghai-Brisbane service will be launched in January with four flights a week. In addition, the airline will increase the frequency of Shanghai-Sydney and Shanghai-Melbourne routes to two flights a day to meet the strong demand in the peak travel season in early 2016. Meanwhile, a seasonal service will be linked Shanghai with Cairns, Australia.

With the opening of the new service, China Eastern becomes the second carrier providing schedule flights between Shanghai and Auckland following Air New Zealand. Air China now offers nonstop Beijing-Auckland flights. And the Guangzhou-based China Southern Airlines (CZ), the country's largest airline by fleet size, operates nonstop flights between Guangzhou and Auckland.

China Eastern carried 84 million passengers in 2014, making it the seventh largest carrier worldwide. It expects to transport more than 94 million passengers in 2015. Currently, the Shanghai-based carrier operates a fleet of 550 aircraft, whose fleet size is expected to expand to 800 by 2020. The airline has been strengthening its competitiveness in the international market and has expanded its route network to 1,057 destinations in 179 countries and regions, via SkyTeam network.

**26 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**SOURCE: WCARN**
**ARTICLE LINK:**
https://50skyshades.com/index.php/news/airports-routes/china-eastern-starts-scheduled-flights-to-auckland-new-zealand

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