



China Eastern Airlines Lands in Austria for the First Time: Vienna Airport Welcomes New Direct service to the Historic City of Xi'an

Vienna Airport is continuing to expand its connectivity to Asia: Yesterday, 20 April 2026, China Eastern Airlines inaugurated its first-ever service from Xi'an to Vienna. This marks the first-ever direct connection between the Austrian capital and one of China's most captivating metropolitan centres, operated by one of the largest airlines in the People's Republic of China. Known as one of China's most important cultural and economic hubs, the historic imperial city of Xi'an is globally renowned above all for the Terracotta Army. Effective immediately, the new route will operate year-round, three times per week, using an Airbus A330-200, further strengthening Vienna's access to the fast-growing Asian market. The new service was officially inaugurated today in the presence of Mei Qi, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Austria; Ye Li, Executive Vice President of China Eastern Airlines; Norbert Kettner, CEO of Vienna Tourist Board; Georg Zanger, President of the Austrian Chinese Business Association; Ernst Woller, former President of the Vienna Parliament and Member of the Board of Trustees of the Austrian Chinese Business Association; and Julian Jäger, Joint CEO and COO of Vienna Airport. Austrian State Secretary for Energy, Startups and Tourism Elisabeth Zehetner also addressed guests via video message. The launch was marked by an official photo opportunity at Vienna Airport and a ceremonial evening reception at Palais Auersperg attended by senior representatives from politics, aviation, business and tourism.

„For Austrian travellers, Xi'an has until now only been accessible via connecting flights — that changes today. In just under eleven hours, one of China's most significant cultural and economic regions can now be reached directly. Demand for flights to Asia has risen by around 20% since the beginning of the year, and with China Eastern Airlines we have gained a strong partner to help unlock this potential. This new route strengthens our role as an international hub between Europe and Asia while creating fresh momentum for tourism, business and international partnerships in both directions“, states Julian Jäger, Joint CEO and COO of Vienna Airport.

„Direct flight connections are the lifeblood of international tourism. With the launch of the new nonstop Vienna–Xi'an service, we are sending a clear message: Austria is open to growth, to exchange, and to the economic potential of the Chinese travel market. Every new direct connection is an investment in the future of our tourism industry. With Xi'an, we are opening up a market that was previously not directly accessible. This route is a major gain for Vienna, for tourism, and for Austria as a whole. I congratulate Vienna Airport and China Eastern Airlines on this important milestone“, says Elisabeth Zehetner, State Secretary for Energy, Startups and Tourism.

„This year marks the 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Austria. The official launch of the direct flight route between Xi'an and Vienna has opened up new opportunities for cooperation in various fields between the two regions. This is also a witness of the latest development of the friendly strategic partnership between our two countries. China has implemented the 30-day unilateral visa exemption policy for Austrian nationals and citizens of 44 other countries, and recorded over 82 million inbound foreign tourist arrivals in 2025. We look forward to seeing more people embarking on memorable journeys between East and West along this new route“, explains Mei Qi, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Austria.

„Vienna is one of Europe's richest cultural capitals, and Xi'an is one of China's most historically significant cities. This connection is long overdue. China Eastern Airlines is proud to be the first airline to link these two world cities directly, opening up a new corridor between Europe and the heart of China. We are delighted to offer Austrian and Chinese travellers this unique connection“, states Ye Li, Executive Vice President of China Eastern Airlines.



„In times of uncertainty, connectivity has become a key strategic currency. The new nonstop service to Xi’an creates additional opportunities in a strong economic market with a culturally engaged audience that generates significant value for our city. China is one of our most important strategic long-haul markets, which we are targeting specifically in the luxury segment. Based on accommodation revenue, the country ranks among our top ten source markets and therefore makes a substantial contribution to Vienna’s visitor economy and to the consistent implementation of our strategic objectives. I wish this new connection every success and look forward to the positive impact it will bring to Vienna“, added Norbert Kettner, CEO of Vienna Tourist Board.

Ceremonial Evening Reception at Palais Auersperg Highlights International Partnership

Following the inaugural landing at Vienna Airport, the new route was celebrated at a festive evening reception at Palais Auersperg attended by around 200 invited guests from political, aviation, business and tourism sectors. In a video message, State Secretary for Tourism Elisabeth Zehetner extended her greetings, while Mei Qi, Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to Austria; Ye Li, Executive Vice President of China Eastern Airlines; Norbert Kettner, CEO of Vienna Tourist Board; and Julian Jäger, Joint CEO and COO of Vienna Airport, jointly recognised the new direct service as a major milestone in relations between Austria and China. A symbolic exchange of gifts and a ceremonial cake-cutting were followed by personal networking and exchange.

Nonstop Flights from Vienna to Xi’an Three Times per Week

China Eastern Airlines will now operate flights between Vienna and Xi’an three times weekly — on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The departing flight will take off from Vienna at 1:30 p.m. and arrive in Xi’an at 5:50 a.m. on the next day. The return flight from Xi’an will leave at 01:30 a.m. and land in Vienna on the next day at 6:10 a.m.

Xi’an – Historic imperial city and international cultural centre

Xi’an is one of China’s oldest cities and served as the starting point of the legendary Silk Road for centuries. This metropolis is well-known across the globe, especially thanks to the Terracotta Army, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which attracts millions of visitors each year. Today Xi’an is a significant cultural, educational, and technological centre in Western China and is increasingly gaining in economic importance internationally.

Further strengthening Vienna’s air cargo hub

Alongside passenger traffic, the new direct service to Xi’an also further enhances Vienna Airport’s cargo business. Connections to Asia are particularly important for time-sensitive shipments such as high-tech goods, industrial components, e-commerce consignments and pharmaceutical products. As the leading air cargo hub for Central and Eastern Europe, with more than 30 cargo flights per week, Vienna is further strengthening its role as a strategic logistics gateway between Europe and China through the new Xi’an route. The connection creates additional capacity for both imports and exports and generates valuable economic benefits for Austria as a business and logistics location – the first flight has already delivered 12 tons of air cargo to Vienna.

China Eastern Airlines: One of the largest airlines in the People’s Republic of China and SkyTeam member

China Eastern Airlines, one of China’s biggest airlines, maintains hubs in Shanghai and Beijing, and operates an extensive route network of global destinations from there. At present, China Eastern Airlines has a fleet of over 800 aircrafts, including the youngest and biggest fleet of widebody aircraft featuring leading commercial and technical models, serving over 150 million passengers annually and ranking among the world’s top ten airlines. The airline is a member of SkyTeam, the second largest



airline alliance in the world. More information on China Eastern Airlines and booking possibilities are available at <https://de.ceair.com/de/>.

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