

First Hong Kong- China Cross Border Helicopter Flight December 2010

When I first made my Hong Kong helicopter license in 2005 I pretty soon learned that it is restricted to Hong Kong territory only and cross country is not allowed. I asked around how to fly on mainland China and was told that this is impossible. So I decided to do it.

It took me a year to find out how to make my Chinese PPL and I successfully got it in 2008. Flying around in China is quite a challenge, especially with lots of high tension wires, lot's of haze and very dense building developments.



But it's also lot's of fun. So naturally I looked into the possibility of not only flying in China but also flying INTO China from Hong Kong. Again I was told that this is not possible.

It took me another two years work, tons of meetings from Beijing down to Guangzhou and on December 29th 2010 my copilot Kenny Choi and me finally took off from Kai Tak towards Chek Lap Kok.

After a quick flight through the harbour and around Lantau south we got immediate clearance to our parking area at Chek Lap Kok. The immigration department was already waiting and we got our passports stamped right away next to the helicopter. This gave us 20 mins ahead of our planned schedule and this diversion from the original timeplan was immediately punished by Shenzhen ATC by not giving us the clearance to enter Chinese airspace. After exactly 19 mins of idling time we finally got the clearance and took off into the haze of south China waters.

Proper planning, two GPS, floats and life vests and last but not least a full fuel tank gave us the confidence to go on this venture. We flew along the given route, all over water, right in the middle of the Pearl River delta and finally approached Shenzhen airport. On the way to the airport we already spoke to at least five different controllers in Zhuhai and Shenzhen and all of them gave us different instructions. At the final approach the controller asked us if we are in sight with the plane 12 miles away which we confirmed as negative. The next we heard from the controller was that the visibility is 4.3 km and if we are visual with the runway. How could we possibly have seen that traffic?? On approach we were given three different parking spots and had to juggle around with the latest Jeppesen charts all the time. Funny enough our parking spot H02 was NOT on the Jeppesen chart. After getting a follow me car we finally safely landed our helicopter on the dedicated spot and felt great already that we entered the mainland without being shot down. Immigration went smooth, to our big surprise we needed to get the helicopter disinfected but after some paperwork this was also done. Funny enough a fuel truck appeared and offered to refill our R44 with Jetfuel. Apparently no piston engine helicopter ever landed in Shenzhen before...

However, our **first goal**, to **land on a registered mainland airport** was successfully accomplished.

We took off again to the second destination, a piece of government land in Jiangmen area. On the way to there we found that all the green areas on our map where already highly populated and the one high tension wire on the map in the meantime got accompanied with several hundred new ones. Our route led us right over highly populated areas, something that would never have been allowed in Hong Kong.



We arrived at our target location and proved the **second goal** as possible: **landing a private foreign helicopter on government land** in China.

After a quick stop and handshake with the local majors we took off again to our last target, a private spot from one of my friend somewhere in Heshan.

A few minutes later we landed safely and the **third goal** was accomplished: **landing on private land** in China.

From there we returned to Kai Tak via Shenzhen and CLK and managed to shut down just within the legal time.



Both of us agreed immediately after that: it was sooo exhausting, we will never do it again!

BUT: Never say never!

The next cross border flight is in preparation already...

Wolfgang Bern

Special thanks to the Hong Kong Aviation Club for allowing us to take B-KMA, to all related authorities in Hong Kong who were all very supportive and xixie to our friends on the mainland who agreed to let us in and out ☺