

# China's Qingdao Airlines reaffirms commitment to connectivity

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China-based carrier, Qingdao Airlines, has announced that it is fully committed to expanding and accelerating the deployment of high-speed inflight satellite internet across its aircraft fleet. This announcement follows the successful evaluation of the first commercial high-speed internet flight trial in China, which was launched by Qingdao Airlines in July 2020.

The inflight connectivity system is the product of a collaboration between the airline and FTS – which is supplying its Xstream high-speed satellite inflight system – while TD Link Technology is providing internet service operations.

The Xstream system comprises FTS's XstreamSAT satellite communication system, XstreamLITE cabin WiFi, system and the XstreamOP cloud management platform. It is the first IFEC system developed in China to receive all three major international airworthiness STC certifications from the FAA, EASA and CAAC.

The system is integrated with China Satcom's ChinaSat-16 Ka-HTS satellites and is capable of providing up to 150Mbps bandwidth between aircraft and ground. Over the past 10 months, Qingdao Airlines has flown a trial A320 aircraft equipped with the systems on more than 1,200 flights and reports that the technology operated flawlessly, with inflight connectivity performance equivalent to ground-based 4G performance, enabling services such as movies, social media, live video broadcast, maps and e-commerce (with mobile payment).

China's domestic air travel market is leading the world in terms of recovery from the pandemic, and even growing beyond pre-Covid figures. A spokesperson at FTS commented that the company is seeing more confidence, optimism and interest from domestic airlines on making long-term investments in inflight connectivity. These airlines believe connectivity is a pivotal enabler to drive digital transformation of the passenger service, airline operations and auxiliary revenue, from which airlines could benefit to achieve recovery and long-term sustainability.

Wu Longxue, president of Qingdao Airlines stated, "After Qingdao Airlines launched the high-speed inflight internet flight, it not only won strong accolades from passengers, but also created a new business model of 'Internet + Aviation', making Qingdao Airlines a role model for the domestic industry."

Qingdao Airlines is accelerating its fleet-wide adoption of inflight connectivity systems. In preparation for the accelerated deployment, FTS is ramping up its operations and capabilities and has obtained CAAC PMA certification and Part 145 MRO approvals for its range of components.

By Adam Gavine

