



A trip to the new SportCruiser SC3D factory and China Airshow

Anton Meier of Aerosport Aviation, distributor for SportCruiser aircraft in the Pacific region, was in China at the end of 2012 for the opening of a brand new state-of-the-art, dedicated factory for production of the new SportCruiser SC3D. During the opening ceremony attended by numerous dignitaries and significant political guests, Anton placed an order for 10 of the new aircraft, most of which have been pre-sold throughout Australasia. The trip also coincided with the China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition. Noel Bailey attended both events with Anton and contributed this report to KiwiFlyer on what was a fascinating trip.

MOST readers will know of the SportCruiser by Czech Aircraft Works (CZAW) which is an attractive, comfortable, solid performing light aircraft. Many will also recall that Piper Aircraft USA selected the SportCruiser as their choice of LSA aircraft, but differing business philosophies brought that relationship to an early end.

Slow supply of the SportCruiser out of the Czech Republic has led to a shortage of aircraft for the Australasian market and for some time there have been rumours of a new SportCruiser being manufactured in China. The American designers have indeed now built a new factory in China which is completely independent of the Czech Sport Aircraft (CSA) operation and the PS28 version of the aircraft that this company produces. American ownership

of the new facility in China ensures control of aircraft grade materials, components and production quality of the aircraft, with several of the original Czech staff moving to China to further ensure that a high standard of workmanship is maintained. The new factory is situated in South China, just a short trip from Hong Kong airport.

Arriving in China

Having arrived in Hong Kong and caught a ferry to Jiuzhou in South China, we were met by our hosts the American designer, Chip Irwin, and the factory owner Tom Hsueh, who drove us through the hustle and bustle of the downtown port of Jiuzhou to our nearby accommodation.

After a hotel breakfast of spicy bamboo sprouts, lotus roots, rice and noodles, our hosts picked us up at Starbucks for a van ride to the factory. The main roads were generally modern and the variety of road users was amazing; pedestrians, taxis, coaches, cars, bicycles, scooters, trikes, trucks, tractors, etc., all going at different speeds and directions. Never though, did we witness any road rage or anger.

The factory and aircraft

The new SportCruiser SC3D factory is large, currently occupying 3500m² of a 10,000m² building which is one of the first in a huge industrial block that is planned to include an airfield and sea plane base, with a security moat around the perimeter.

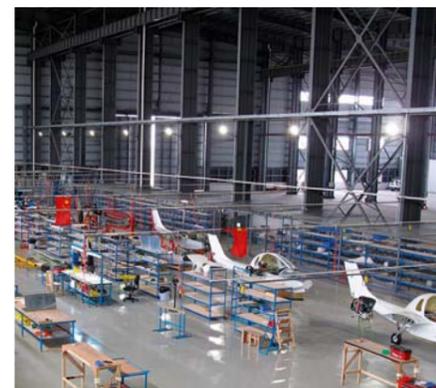


Anton Meier (2nd from left) and team with the new SportCruiser SC3D at the China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition.

Equipment already installed when we arrived included precision manufacturing machinery, CNC punch presses, lathes and mills, welding plant, numerous sub assembly jigs, painting facilities and then assembly lines where the larger pre-built modules come together. Dedicated 3D aviation design and manufacturing applications control many of the machines and processes as well as tracking and recording all componentry for traceability and quality control.

We met many of the staff and learned of their training and the procedures that they are operating under. Their enthusiasm for their work was obvious and my clear impression was that the factory is well set up with resources and machinery to produce a high quality product.

There are more than 50 upgrades in the new aircraft, the most significant being the installation of the new Rotax 912 iS fuel injected engine as standard (with 20% less fuel burn giving an 8 hour range). The



The assembly line in the new SportCruiser SC3D factory in South China. Much of this new aircraft is produced on automated CNC machinery.

nosewheel is now steerable with individual brakes remaining and Dynon D1000 SkyView Twin 10" screens with synthetic vision are standard. There are new ailerons and alterations to the elevator to achieve harmony between all flying surfaces and with a major redesign of structural strength in some areas of the aircraft, the new SportCruiser SC3D is assured of being a very reliable flight trainer.

At the airshow

Our second day was spent at the Trade Day of the 9th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition. We took a coach trip to the show and endured chaos to get through the gates due to many local vendors with all manners of street stalls selling food, souvenirs and more. We then passed through a long row of security x-ray machines, checking our bags and ourselves for unknown contraband.

The Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition is jointly sponsored by about a dozen different Chinese organisations with very official sounding names and includes trade negotiations, academic conferences and displays, and the airshow itself. It has become one of the major aviation and aerospace exhibitions in the world.

The exhibition halls were impressive, representing the aviation disciplines of civil, commercial, defence, search and rescue, border patrol and in particular the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation. Boeing, Airbus, Rolls-Royce, Sukhoi and other well-known manufacturers were there, as well as Bombardier, Rotax, Dynon, and many more. There wasn't a lot of recreational stuff, as this end of the industry is only just getting underway in China, as airspace gets 'opened up' in the very near future.

This was the venue for the first exhibition of the new business venture



Anton Meier signs an order for 10 new SportCruiser SC3D aircraft at the factory opening ceremony.

between, Triton Aero Marine Industries (China) and Aerosport Aviation of NZ. It was a proud occasion to be situated in the Exhibition Hall among well known aviation manufacturers of the world.

Between the exhibition halls and flight line were static displays of all manner of aircraft, ranging from Russian military, through all sizes of commercial and private jets to small recreational autogyros, and electric powered LSAs, many never seen in the southern hemisphere. Of course the new SportCruiser SC3D was there too. Communication was tricky for us, but it was easy to see the locals were very interested and impressed with the SportCruiser SC3D.

Signing the deal for 10 SportCruisers

Day 3 at the show was the highlight of the trip, being the signing ceremony for Aerosport Aviation's purchase of 10 new SportCruiser SC3D aircraft. This was witnessed by several aviation manufacturing dignitaries and press with speeches and many flashing cameras.

One of the things I wanted to see was the J-10 Vigorous Dragon F-10 Vanguard multi role fighter. I wasn't disappointed - it looked great and put on a grand flying display. Also flying at the airshow was the 'Warrior' Aerobatics Team of the Russian Air Force with their five Su-27 Flanker air superiority fighters who put on a great formation and exciting manoeuvres such as the Cobra, Blooming Tulip, Kulbit, etc. The Breitling Jet Team was also there with their L-39 Albatros'. It was a great show.

Days 4 and 5 were consumed with other local events, then it was onto the A380 for a relaxing flight home. What a week!

For more information

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