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亚洲私人飞机 起飞

私人飞行作为一种另类的生活方式，在欧美已经盛行，但在亚洲却刚刚起步。随着亚洲经济的蓬勃发展，越来越多的人拥有了经济实力，但对该领域的陌生及各种飞航难题，往往令他们望而却步或无法尽情享受飞行乐趣。

新加坡近期出现了一家名为“展翅亚洲”的飞行俱乐部，专门为会员提供类似酒店业的全方位礼宾服务，为付费会员免除飞行的后顾之忧；俱乐部的网站则免费为网上会员提供飞行资讯，让想进入私人飞行领域的普通人有机会入门。

报道/黄少伟
封面设计/何宏章

(WingsOverAsia.com提供部分照片)

排列在泰国北部Pai地区的私人飞机等待起飞。

(文接封面)

酒店业有一种称为“conciierge”的礼宾服务。这类服务特别贴心，会帮房客安排去机场的交通、介绍并预订当地特色餐厅的座位、安排旅游节目等。不管房客的要求有多复杂，礼宾部都会尽全力满足，让客人感受到一种无微不至的关怀。

新加坡近期出现了一家名为“展翅亚洲”(Wings Over Asia)的飞行俱乐部，专门为会员提供类似酒店业者的conciierge服务；它也是亚洲第一家提供这类服务的俱乐部。

“展翅亚洲”在本地和泰国设有办公室，有80多位付费会员及1000多名网上会员。将近七成会员是生意人或专业人士，44%拥有私人飞机驾照执照，25%拥有私人飞机。

任何人都能免费成为俱乐部的网上会员，他们能在网上论坛里交流，并获得实用的飞行信息，但是只有付费会员才能享受俱乐部所提供的conciierge飞行服务。这些服务包括：提供买卖飞机的专业意见；办理各国机场的飞机降落手续；飞机保养和维修；外国酒店住宿安排等。会费目前定在一年500美金(推介价，近650新元)，服务项目的收费另计。

创办人黄耀明说：“俱乐部面向的是一个小众市场。私人飞行是另一种生活方式，我努力地为人机师和机主提供良好的服务和体验，解决他们的各种飞行难题，让他们不必烦恼地享受飞行乐趣；他们也因此愿意为这些方便付费。”

建立飞行爱好者的交流平台

38岁的黄耀明是在机缘巧合下创立这个俱乐部。原来他曾经在本地通用集团担任亚太区的网络科技经理。有一次，他被派到美国的通用飞机引擎公司工作8个月。留美期间，他对飞行产生了兴趣，便开始学习驾驶飞机。

回到新加坡后，黄耀明对飞行的热忱不减。由于飞机租金较便宜，他便常到马来西亚驾驶飞机，享受翱翔天空的快感。但不久他便开始觉得独自驾驶飞机有点无聊和寂寞，于是在6年前设立了一个博客，取名“展翅亚洲”，把自己的飞行体验和感想放上网，希望能同亚洲的其他飞行爱好者交流。

他说：“传统的飞行俱乐部和学校很少接触自己圈子以外的人。很多私人飞行员也不认识其他飞行爱好者，不知道要如何驾驶飞机到其他国家。我想通过博客提供一个社交平台，让大家能够跨越国境交流，结交朋友。”

由于工作的关系，黄耀明必须经常出国公干。他便借此同居住在各国的博客网友会面，渐渐地和他们熟络起来。经过几年，“展翅亚洲”的社交网络慢慢扩大，俨然成为亚洲一般航空飞行(general aviation)爱好者的“面簿”。

2009年，黄耀明正式成立了Club WOA俱乐部：“展翅亚洲”从虚拟的网络世界开始迈向蔚蓝的天空。“那个时候，亚洲只有商务机(business jet)服务，根本没有一个组织专门为一般航空飞行员提供服务。许多网友纷纷要求我成立一个俱乐部来满足私人飞行员的需求。”

转变业者观念是一大挑战

成立俱乐部的初期，黄耀明面对了许多挑战。



黄耀明(左前)经常在俱乐部大厅内为会员举办社交活动或飞行讲座，大厅到处可见同飞行有关的书籍和装饰。(摄影/邵福梁)

结伴翱翔

“展翅亚洲”飞行俱乐部，专门为会员提供类似酒店业者的conciierge服务，它也是亚洲第一家提供这类服务的俱乐部。会费目前定在一年500美金(推介价)，服务项目的收费另计。

“展翅亚洲”在本地和泰国设有办公室，有80多位付费会员及1000多名网上会员。将近七成会员是生意人或专业人士，44%拥有私人飞机驾照执照，25%拥有私人飞机。

乐事一桩



一架会员的飞机从柬埔寨的Ratanakiri机场起飞。

私人飞行在欧美盛行，但是在亚洲却才刚起步，各国的民航局对这类飞行不甚了解，也没有任何支持的计划。黄耀明笑说：“我必须花很多时间同机场及民航局人员解释私人飞行到底是什么。亚洲的民航局往往把私人飞行当成商业飞行活动看待。我搜集了很多资料让他们了解，其实私人飞行不像波音或空中巴士一样需要很大的资源协调。”

另外一项挑战是要改变人们认为“私人飞行是昂贵的”刻板印象。黄耀明表示，许多亚洲人都对飞行感兴趣，或者曾经在欧美驾驶飞机，但是他们往往觉得要在亚洲参与私人飞行活动一定非常昂贵，因此打消了飞行念头。

“私人飞行其实没有想象中贵。例如飞到柔佛士丹，一架单引擎螺旋桨飞机只需要付大约10新元的降落费和50新元的燃油费。飞到泰国，当地民航局也不会向私人飞行员收取导航费，因此你只需要支付降落费和燃油费，价格介于几百元至几千元之间，视情况而定。”

经过黄耀明这些年的不懈努力，一些国家的民航局已渐渐了解私人飞行的性质，不再把它当成一种牟利的商业活动看待。这一点让黄耀明感到相当欣慰。



黄耀明(右一)和会员在柔佛练习空中飞行表演。

让更多人了解私人飞行活动

为了联络感情，俱乐部经常会为会员主办外国飞行之旅，如飞到马来西亚、菲律宾、泰国等。黄耀明一个月前就和另外15名会员驾驶了5架飞机，浩浩荡荡从新加坡出发，途经曼谷飞到老挝首都永珍。黄耀明兴奋地说：“整段飞行很顺利，天气晴朗。由于很少私人飞行员到过老挝，所以大家都非常期待。我们住在湄公河畔的一栋别墅，风景优美，感觉真是太棒了！”

俱乐部将于明年在新加坡举办年度亚洲飞行员大会，邀请亚洲各地的飞行爱好者前来参加讲座和交流。

日都忙于工作，这是一个很好的机会让各国私人飞行员聚在一起联络感情。”黄耀明谈到主办目的。

对于俱乐部的未来，黄耀明充满信心。他计划在马来西亚设立下一个服务据点，并慢慢在亚洲各国扩张业务。

除此之外，他也将不断改进和更新“展翅亚洲”的网站内容，让更多人能了解私人飞行活动。“希望大家不要把私人飞行看成是有钱人的玩意儿，是一项遥不可及的清闲活动。其实，我们的活动中经常会出现一些小孩子，他们都是随着家长来了解飞行知识。我欢迎任何对飞行有兴趣的公众人士来参加俱乐部的活动。”



会员在老挝琅勃拉邦(Luang Prabang)的别墅享用早餐，背景是景色优美的湄公河。

飞行途中为善社会



来自英国的约翰吉登斯热爱飞行探险活动。(摄影/邵福梁)

来自英国的约翰吉登斯(John Giddens)是一家跨国企业的总裁，拥有两架飞机。在大约6年前，吉登斯通过朋友的介绍，开始接触“展翅亚洲”的论坛，并成为俱乐部会员。对于俱乐部的成立，他给予了很大的肯定。

51岁的吉登斯说：“这是本地私人飞行界的一件大事，我们终于有了一个统一的声音。我认为耀明真的做得很不错，把私人航空领域发展得比别人出色。他在东南亚有很好的联络网，能把这区域的私人飞行员聚集在一起，并扩大俱乐部的服务版图。”

吉登斯拥有10年的飞行经验，经常驾驶两架飞机参与俱乐部的各项飞行活动，最近一次便是参与老挝的飞行之旅。热爱飞行探险的吉登斯更曾随同黄耀明一起开着飞机往返英国和新加坡。在遥远的飞行途中，两人会选择在几个国家休息，也顺便在当地大玩一番。他说：“这里的会员关系没有那么正式，我们都是是一群喜爱探险的好朋友。这是我喜欢的一点。”



程恒望驾驶直升机到泰国华欣(Hua Hin)出席俱乐部活动。

和吉登斯一样，程恒望医生(Dr Mathew Cheng)也拥有10年的飞行经验。不过比较特别的是，程医生除了

会驾驶普通飞机外也会操作直升机；他同时也是一架直升机的机主。程恒望是在几年前参与“展翅亚洲”所组织的泰国飞行活动后，对俱乐部有更深入的了解。

程恒望说：“我以前都是一个飞行，现在能和一群朋友一起驾驶飞机，感觉比较好玩。假如我们聚集在一起，便可以做多件事情，组织更远的飞行活动。和一群好朋友在天空翱翔真是一件乐事。”

有一段经历让程医生印象非常深刻。“两年前，俱乐部组织了一项活动，就是到印度尼西亚的峇达岛去帮助当地贫困人士建房。我特别享受这段过程，因为除了可以驾驶自己的飞机到那里外，也可以为当地社会作出一点贡献，感觉非常有意义。”

程恒望对俱乐部的未来抱乐观态度。“成立俱乐部只是一个开始，它绝对可以帮助推动和支持本地私人飞行活动。我认为俱乐部还有很大的发展空间。”

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English Translation

Asia's Private Aviation Takes Flight

Private flying may be uncommon in Europe and the United States, but in Asia, it is still an unusual hobby. While growing affluence has given many in the region the means to take up private flying, the unfamiliar operating environment and myriad requirements involved often put them off.

A flying club, named WingsOverAsia, has been set up in Singapore to help private pilots take care of the administrative aspects of flying. Members pay an annual membership fee to enjoy concierge service, much like that offered in five-star hotels, while anyone interested to take up flying can obtain relevant information on its website, at no cost.

Winged Camaraderie - A Thing of Joy

The hotel industry offers what is termed "concierge" service to hotel guests. The concierge is much like a personal assistant: he will arrange airport transfers, recommend and make reservation at restaurants specialising in local cuisine, suggest travel itinerary, etc. The concierge sees to the guests' every need, however complicated, so that they may experience impeccable hospitality during their stay.

Recently, a flying club – WingsOverAsia - based in Singapore has started offering such concierge service to its members. It is the first of its kind in Asia.

WingsOverAsia, which has an office in Singapore and Thailand, currently has more than 80 paying members and about 1000 online registered members. Of these, about two thirds are businessmen or professionals; nearly half hold private pilot's licence; and a quarter owns a private plane.

Anyone can be an online registered member for free. As a registered member, they can exchange ideas and information with fellow members at the members' forum. They will also be privy to practical information relating to private flying. The concierge service, however, is only for paying members, who have access to specialised services such as professional opinions regarding a purchase or sale of aircraft; aircraft maintenance and repairs; obtaining landing permits for the countries of visit; hotel arrangements, etc. Membership fee is currently 500 USD (about 650 SGD) per annum, services provided are charged separately.

Founder Ng Yeow Meng says, "Club WOA serves a niche market as private flying is an alternative lifestyle. We work hard at providing excellent support service to private aircraft owners and pilots, including handling any difficulties relating to their flights. Not needing to fret over the administrative details allows the pilots to truly enjoy the pleasure of the flights. Hence, they are willing to pay for the conveniences."

Building a Communication Platform for Flying Enthusiasts

Setting up Club WOA was fortuitous for 38-year-old Ng Yeow Meng. He was previously an internet technical manager for Asia-Pacific region at General Electric (Singapore). On an occasion, he was posted to GE (US) Aircraft Engines business for eight months. While in the United States, he developed an interest in flying and began taking lessons.

Yeow Meng's enthusiasm for flying did not abate with his return to Singapore. He continued flying regularly in Malaysia, which offered cheaper aircraft rental. But soon he was bored with flying alone.

So he started a blog named “Wings over Asia” in which he shared his flight experiences and thoughts on flying, hoping to connect with other avid private pilots in Asia. That was six years ago.

“Traditional flying clubs and schools tend to be insular. Many of the pilots also do not know one another, or how to go about flying to other countries. I was hoping the blog could provide a social platform to promote trans-border exchange of ideas and friendship,” he says.

Yeow Meng used to travel often for work and made use of the opportunities to meet up with WOA’s members residing in the countries he was visiting, strengthening the friendships. WOA’s social network gradually widened over the years, becoming the ‘facebook’ for Asia’s general aviation enthusiasts.

In 2009, Yeow Meng formally established Club WOA, transporting “Wings over Asia” from the virtual world of the internet to the brick and mortar world. “At that time, there were only entities providing services to the business jet sector, but none specialising in attending to the needs of the general aviation sector. Many of the WOA bloggers asked that I set up a flying club that caters to the needs of GA pilots.

The Challenges of Changing Industry Mind-set

In the early days of Club WOA, Yeow Meng faced numerous roadblocks. General aviation may be commonplace in Europe and the US, but it is only emerging in Asia. There is a lack of awareness of the functions and roles of GA among civil aviation authorities in the region. Infrastructure and other support system are also underdeveloped. “We have to spend lots of time explaining to the airport and civil aviation authorities what exactly general aviation is about. Asian civil aviation authorities often look upon general aviation as commercial aviation. We gather and share informational materials with them, convincing them that general aviation does not require tremendous resource commitment needed for the likes of Boeing and Airbus.”

Another challenge is to correct the widely held perception that private flying is costly. Yeow Meng laments that while many Asians are interested to take up flying, or have in fact done private flying in Europe or the US, they have the impression that private flying in Asia is exorbitant and so dismiss the thought.

“Private flying is not as expensive as one imagines. Flying to Johor Bahru’s Sinai airport on a single engine propeller plane would only cost you S\$10 in landing fee and S\$50 in fuel. If you fly to Thailand, where GA pilots do not have to pay navigation charges, you would only need to pay for the fuel and the landing fee, which costs would range from a few hundred dollars to several thousands, depending on circumstances.”

Club WOA’s perseverance has paid off. Some civil aviation authorities now have a better understanding of general aviation; they no longer see it as a commercial pursuit. Yeow Meng is encouraged by the development.

Raising Awareness of General Aviation

To foster camaraderie, Club WOA regularly organise flight tours for its members; destinations have included Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. A month ago, Yeow Meng and 15 Club WOA members took five planes and did a round trip from Singapore to Vientiane via Bangkok. “The flight went well and the weather was pleasant. Many of the members had not been to Laos and were very excited about the trip. We stayed at a villa by the charming Mekong River. It was a memorable visit.

In 2012, Club WOA will hold its annual Asian Pilots' Conference in Singapore, where flying enthusiasts in the region will get to meet face to face and exchange ideas and experiences. Yeow Meng shares that the objective of the event is to bring its members together and bond through interaction.

Yeow Meng is confident about Club WOA's future. He plans to establish a service base in Malaysia and from there gradually extends operations to the rest of Asia.

In addition, he will continuously improve WOA's website content so that more people will understand and be interested in general aviation. "I hope people will not see general aviation as a play thing for the rich, or a luxury beyond the reach of the ordinary man. Occasionally, children would attend our events with their parents to learn more about flying. I welcome anyone interested in general aviation to participate in Club WOA's activities.

Englishman John Giddens, CEO of a multi-national corporation, owns two planes. About six years ago a friend introduced him to "Wings over Asia" forum and is now a Club WOA member. John is very supportive of Club WOA and what it is trying to achieve.

He says "it is great for local private flying scene; we finally have a voice. I think Yeow Meng is doing a good job at developing the general aviation sector. He has very good network in South-east Asia, which helps him to rally GA pilots in the region and extend the reach of Club WOA's services.

John, who has been flying for ten years, is an ardent supporter of Club WOA's activities. His plane was one of the five aircraft that took part in the Singapore-Vientiane flight tour. John and Yeow Meng have also flown together on a few UK-Singapore flights, during which they stopped over at some places of interest for rest and some sightseeing. John says "WOA members are a relaxed batch. We are good friends with a love for adventure."

Dr Matthew Cheng has also been a GA pilot for ten years. But in addition to planes, he also flies a helicopter. Some years ago, he participated in a Club WOA tour to Thailand and gained a deeper understanding of the club as a result.

Matthew says "I used to fly alone, but now I fly with a bunch of friends. And it's great fun. In a group, we are able to do more things and make trips to places further away. It is very enjoyable to fly with friends who share the passion."

Matthew speaks fondly of a Club WOA trip to Batam about two years ago: "We participated in a home-building community project on the island. I particularly enjoyed the trip as I felt our contributing to a good cause added to the joy of the flight."

Matthew is hopeful of Club WOA's future: "The setting up of Club WOA is only the beginning for the promotion and support of local GA activities. I believe Club WOA has immense potential."