



# THE WINGED ALLIANCE

WINGS OVER ASIA

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by Katrina A. Balmaceda

## BLAZING A TRAIL FOR GENERAL AVIATION PILOTS IN ASIA

**AT A CORNFIELD-FLANKED AIRFIELD IN THE USA IN 1998, SINGAPOREAN NG YEOW MENG**, then a General Electric Aircraft Engines employee, learned to fly a plane. As with many first-time pilots, it was an epiphany for him: “I discovered a three-dimensional blue-sky world where science and nature combined gave an experience of freedom most intimate to your senses,” he recalls. On his return to Asia, though, he felt a vacuum — a lack of a network to share adventures with, peers to learn from, and an infrastructure to support his passion. He soon discovered that this sentiment was shared across the region.

Instead of waiting for a solution to materialise, Ng devised one. He created WingsOverAsia, an online networking platform that he hoped to complement with aviator lounges around the continent where flying tales would be told. As more pilots joined, though, the vision evolved. Gregory Ang, managing director of Singapore’s GangTV Pte Ltd, recalls that he didn’t know of any community in the region that organised activities like flying tours at the time. He says: “Yeow Meng did it out of his own passion and all of us just tagged along. It became bigger; just a natural growth.”

Today, WingsOverAsia is a dedicated aviation concierge, with services ranging from acquisition support and owner-pilot training to flight planning and ground handling. “We provide a true one-stop shop for anyone’s aviation lifestyle needs,” says Ng. The network now has licensed FBOs in Singapore and Malaysia, member lounges in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and China, and hopes to open new bases in Indonesia, Philippines, Korea and Japan within the next two to three years. It defines its value proposition by representing multiple brands and models, and of a crew that knows its industry and market well, so that it can advise you on whether to purchase a Gulfstream G450 or a Piper *Warrior*, or whether to rent an aircraft instead.

But its biggest draw remains its ability to connect pilots with like-minded enthusiasts in the region and organise flying tours. Some trips are more luxurious, such as a February 2015 flying tour to the Maldives. Others are educational, such as the network’s annual Asia Aviators Gathering, which typically involves a social networking itinerary. More challenging trips include a trans-Asia flying tour scheduled for July 2015.

FROM TOP

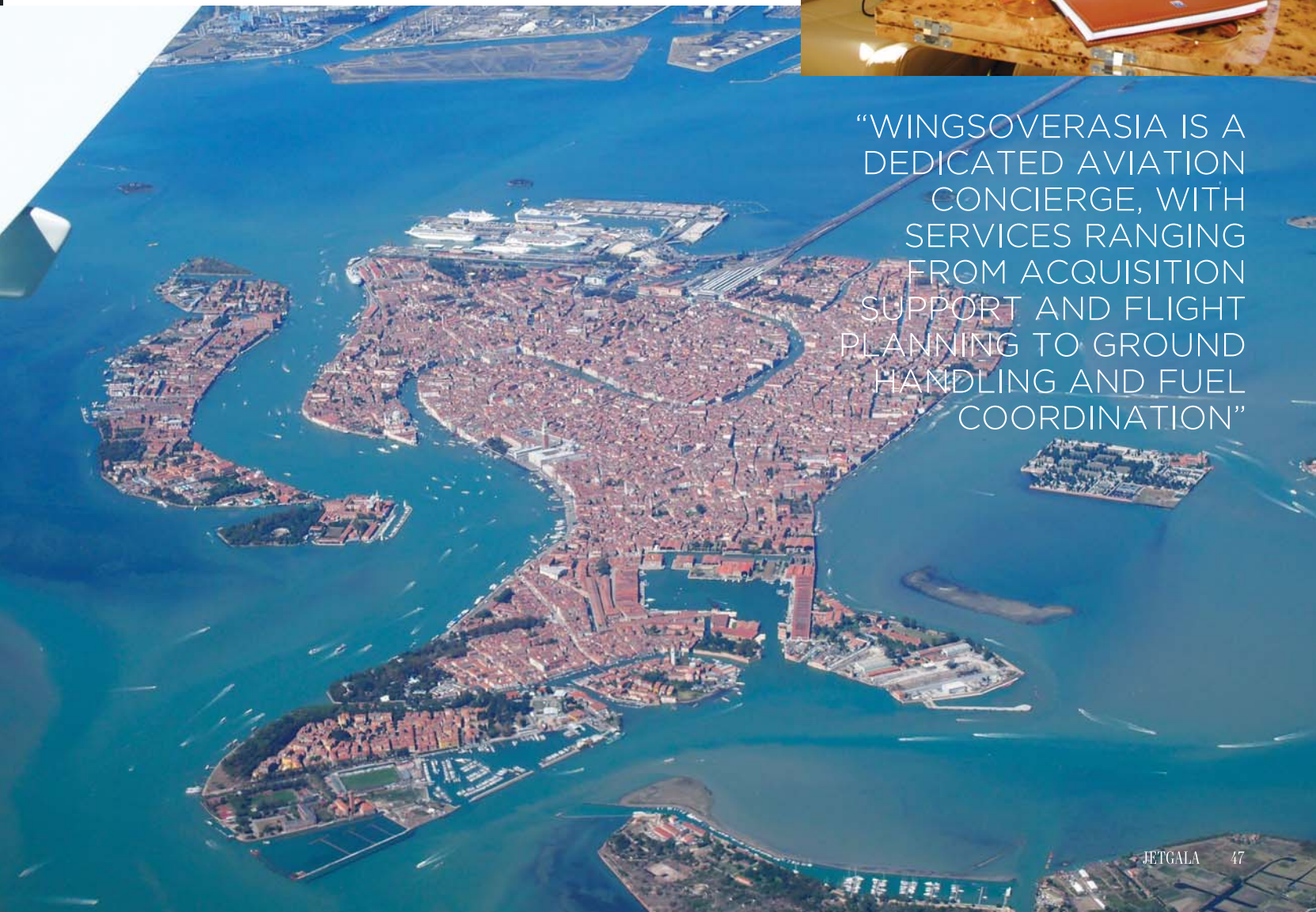
WingsOverAsia’s Singapore team on a corporate beach retreat in Bintan, Indonesia

Ng in a Daher-Socata TBM over the skies of Australia en-route to Singapore

Aerial view of Venice, Italy on a departure climb

OPPOSITE PAGE

Ng in formation light over Tioman Island with Ang’s aircraft in the background



“WINGSOVERASIA IS A DEDICATED AVIATION CONCIERGE, WITH SERVICES RANGING FROM ACQUISITION SUPPORT AND FLIGHT PLANNING TO GROUND HANDLING AND FUEL COORDINATION”



“WE WERE PROBABLY THE FIRST SINGAPOREANS TO BRING A SINGLE-ENGINE PISTON LIGHT AIRCRAFT OF STANDARD CONFIGURATION ACROSS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN”

For new pilots, Ng recommends “a flight up to Penang for its famous local gastronomical spread, then to Krabi in Thailand for some beach outings to the world-famous James Bond island, and back via Kuala Lumpur for its cosmopolitan nightlife and shopping”.

In certain cases, the owner may fly along in the delivery of his newly purchased aircraft. Such flights are often adventures in themselves — the company’s lengthiest delivery flight to date was an Atlantic crossing from San Francisco to Singapore. “We were probably the first Singaporeans to bring a single-engine piston light aircraft of standard configuration across the Atlantic Ocean and halfway across the world,” says Ng.

While general-aviation pilots continue to face hurdles in the region typically resulting from authorities’ lack of understanding of private flying, WingsOverAsia continues to encourage new and potential aviators through its logistical and networking support. Ang, who obtained his flying license in 2006, says: “Without WingsOverAsia, I would have probably stopped flying by now.”

[www.WingsOverAsia.com](http://www.WingsOverAsia.com) 

FROM TOP  
Ng on a flying outing weekend in Redang Island, Malaysia  
Ang in his Diamond DA42 aircraft



## PERSONAL TOUCH

More than 1,200 WingsOverAsia online members are invited to join the network’s seminars and gatherings and to use the lounge on weekends. They may use the network’s online resources on [WingsOverAsia.com](http://WingsOverAsia.com), such as, such as destination information, flight ops, weather information, and flight planning tools. ClubWOA concierge members, like Ang (left) — comprising more than 70 individuals and corporations predominantly from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and China — get to use the lounges 24/7 and enjoy personalised concierge services, expert advice, and aircraft sharing schemes. They also join pilot proficiency programs and flight tours and all members are offered aircraft acquisition support.