

Chengdu special

CITY INCREASES STRENGTHS AS TRANSPORT HUB

Shuangliu International Airport exceeds 40m annual passengers

By LI YU and PENG CHAO

Chengdu, a hub city in Southwest China, is rising to become an international aviation hub.

The passenger throughput of Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport reached 40 million by Dec 10, making it the fourth airport on the Chinese mainland to handle more than 40 million passengers a year, after Beijing Capital International Airport, Shanghai Pudong International Airport, and Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, according to official data.

The passenger throughput of Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport increased 12 percent year-on-year in the first 11 months, higher than the average rate in the nationwide.

The airport is expected to handle 42 million passengers this year, making it among the world's top 30 in terms of passenger volume. The number of overseas passengers is expected to reach some 4 million, according to the airport.

Backed by the Belt and Road Initiative and Chengdu's opening up, Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport has seen rapid development in recent years.

It has opened a number of international routes since 2013, connecting Chengdu to cities including San Francisco, London, Moscow, and Melbourne. Its airline network has covered the major hub cities in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Oceania and Asia.

By the end of November, the airport had 165 domestic and 84 international routes, enabling passengers to travel to 192 domestic and overseas destinations.

On Dec 12, Air China launched a non-stop route between Chengdu and Paris. It is the fifth non-stop route connecting Chengdu and Europe.

Chengdu plans to open three international non-stop routes in each of the next five years, which will enable the city to have 55 international non-stop routes by 2020, according to an official at the Chengdu Port and Logistics Office.

"We will strengthen the city's status as a national-level aviation hub and gateway city in China's central and western region, building it into an ideal transfer station that connects Europe, Africa and the Middle East to Southeast Asia, Oceania, and North America," the official said.

The city is scheduled to build a new airport southeast of Chengdu and 31 miles from the Shuangliu airport, which will make it the third city on

the Chinese mainland to have a second civil airport, after Beijing and Shanghai. The Tianfu International Airport, designed to be larger than the Shuangliu airport, will mainly serve international routes.

According to the plan, the first phase of the new airport will finish by 2018, with annual capacity to handle 40 million passengers and 700,000 metric tons of cargo. The long-term goal is to handle 90 million passengers and 2 million tons of cargo annually.

Express rail service

Located at the intersection of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the city also boasts an advanced rail transport system. Railway lines starting from Chengdu not only connect to cities all over China, but also to Central Asia and Europe.

In accordance with China's national Belt and Road Initiative, the city opened the Chengdu-Europe Express Rail in April 2013. It is currently the fastest and most frequently used direct freight service from China to Europe.

The weekly service departs from the Chengdu Railway Container Logistics Center and heads to Lodz, Poland. The train transports laptops, iPads, auto parts, home appliances, clothing, shoes and toys produced in Chengdu and other Chinese cities.

It takes about 10 days for the cargo to reach Lodz. Then, within three days, the shipments can be delivered to customers in London, Paris, Berlin or Rome via the widespread European rail and road networks.

The express rail started a return service in late August. The two-way cargo train service is expected to hit 300 journeys in 2016, according to city officials.

The city is becoming a key transport hub for Asia and Europe as more and more cities are linked to the express rail system.

The railway has expanded to eastern coastal cities including Shenzhen, Xiamen and Ningbo, and will soon connect to Kunming, Nanning and Wuhan. In Europe, the railway is connected to Germany and the Netherlands.

Transportation hub

In line with the Belt and Road Initiative and national plans to develop the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the Chengdu government announced that it would build the city into a national gateway, a leader in opening up to the world among China's inland cities, and western China's economic and inno-

15

rail lines

the city has by 2020 that stretch out through the country from Chengdu

55

global non-stop routes

the city will have by 2020

vation center.

"To achieve the goal, the city will improve transportation and communication infrastructure, expand international cooperation, upgrade local industries, and deepen innovation and entrepreneurship," said an official at the Chengdu Development and Reform Commission.

According to the official, Chengdu will expand and optimize its airline, railway and highway networks, making the city an international logistics hub and a gateway to Asia and Europe.

Chengdu is the fifth-largest railway hub in China. By 2020, the city will build an extensive railway system with a total of 15 rail lines stretching out through the country from Chengdu. By taking an inner city express train, passengers can reach any part of the city in less than 30 minutes.

By 2020, the railway network will make it possible to travel between Chengdu and Chongqing and other nearby cities within an hour; major cities such as Xi'an, Kunming, Guiyang and Wuhan within four hours; and to the Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta and the Bohai Rim area within eight hours.

In the next five years, the length of highways in use is expected to surpass 1,000 km. According to the Transport Committee of Chengdu, the city is improving its highway network to better connect with other regions covered in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Tianfu International Airport and Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport will together make the largest regional aviation hub in western China. The city plans to become a comprehensive transportation hub where transport of various kinds will be integrated, offering greater convenience to passengers.

In addition, Chengdu plans to expand exchanges with countries and regions along the Belt and Road by developing cooperation platforms such as the Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone and Tianfu New Area, encouraging companies to go global, and establishing sister relationships with major cities.

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The cabin crew and passengers of the flight CA4194 took a group photo in Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport on Dec 10. The 156 passengers brought by the flight from Beijing made the total amount of passengers throughout the airport reach 40 million.



A vibrant modern city in West China, Chengdu offers a beautiful living environment for residents and visitors in the city.



The Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport had 165 domestic and 84 international routes by the end of November.



The Air China flight is emblazoned with the iconic panda.



Passengers of the flight CA4194 walked off the plane and were welcomed by airport staff on Dec 10.

Chengdu to create shopping heaven for global consumers

By LI YU and PENG CHAO

When consumers think of famous shopping destinations, they often think of New York, Paris or Hong Kong. They soon might be adding Chengdu to that list.

A large hub city in western China, Chengdu plans to transform itself into an international shopping paradise.

According to the city's plan, the added value of Chengdu's service sector will reach 900 billion yuan (\$139.6 billion) in 2020, the annual retail sales of consumer goods in the city are forecast to reach 850 billion yuan. The amount of mobile payment users among the city's population will account for 50 percent, and the income generated by tourists' shopping activities will take as much as 30 percent of the total tourism revenue.

City officials also expect Chengdu to take a lead in the country in introducing the international brands, cultivating local brands, and upgrading the time-honored brands.

Behind the development plan is the city's need to boost consumption and its ambition to regain its historical status as one of the country's most prosperous commercial hubs.

Since China's reform and opening-up in the late 1970s, inland cities have been slower to develop economically than cities on the east coast. But after the introduction of the Western Development Strategy in 2000, Chengdu has risen to become one of the most dynamic cities in China.

The city is home to 268 Fortune Global 500 companies, and its economic growth has consistently taken the lead nationwide. Despite the continuing downturn in the global economy, its GDP passed 1 trillion yuan last year, up 8.9 per cent on the previous year.

The city set up the general goal for its 13th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) on Dec 4. according to the plan, Chengdu is to build into a comprehensive well-off society with high standards, a core growth pole of western China, and an international regional center by 2020. Its GDP is expected to triple that in 2010, and the residents' income is to double.

Development strategies

To upgrade the shopping environment and draw more visitors, the city has been introducing high-end shopping and tourism projects, as well as international brands from home and abroad.

With a proposed investment of



Chengdu International Finance Square at downtown Chengdu, opened in January 2014, has brought about 300 brands specializing in luxury goods, jewellery and fashion to the Sichuan provincial capital.

55 billion yuan, construction on the Wanda Cultural Tourism City started in September in Dujiangyan, Chengdu. According to Wang Jianlin, chairman of Wanda Group, China's largest private property developer, the project will create 30,000 jobs, be able to host 30 million visitors and generate revenue of 5 billion yuan annually when it opens for business by the end of 2018.

Wharf Holdings, a listed property and infrastructure company based in Hong Kong, opened Chengdu IFS in the city's downtown in January last year. Chengdu IFS, which comprises a large shopping mall, office towers, a residential complex and a hotel, has brought about 300 brands specializing in luxury goods, jewellery and fashion to the Sichuan provincial capital.

Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li Chengdu, a new 100,000-square-meter shopping center developed by Sino-Ocean Land and Swire Properties in the city's downtown area, is a combination of ancient buildings and streets, traditional and modern architectural style, and international fashion and lifestyle brands.

It boasts more than 100 top international fashion brands including Gucci, Cartier and Ralph Lauren, and lifestyle brands like Fangsuo bookstore, the Beast Shop, and Michelin Star restaurant.

Including Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li Chengdu and Chengdu IFS, the city's central business district has attracted more than 400 international first-and second-line brands and nearly 600 regional flagship stores, ranking first in the central and western regions.

In the meantime, Chengdu will promote the development of the logistics, tourism, finance, culture,

exhibition, catering, and health care sectors to complement and provide services for the shopping boom, according to the plan.

Taking advantage of its rich cultural and natural resources, Chengdu will develop a series of famous local product brands, cultural projects, and international activities.

The city also plans to implement a tax-refund policy that will allow overseas tourists to apply for rebates on purchased goods when they leave the city.

Unique advantages

Chengdu has many advantages to help build itself into a shopping paradise. It is home to the remains of the Jinsha civilization that dates back more than 3,000 years. With the world's largest giant panda breeding and research center, it is a paradise for panda lovers.

It is also home to the Qingcheng Mountains and the Dujiangyan irrigation system. Qingcheng has long been recognized as the birthplace of Taoism, China's ancient indigenous religion, while Dujiangyan is considered to be the oldest functioning water-control project in the world.

Named by UNESCO as a "city of gastronomy," Chengdu is known for its spicy and diverse cuisine. Many famous Chinese dishes, including mapo tofu and kungpao chicken, come from Chengdu.

The city was named one of the "52 places to go in 2015" by The New York Times.

The MasterCard 2015 Global Destination Cities Index, released in early July, placed the city in its top-10 list of must-see Chinese cities.

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