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Flight Schools in B.C. See Market Opportunity by Training International Students

Matt Gauthier | JUN 26, 2014

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The demand for commercial pilots, especially in Asia, continues to grow and overseas students are heading to North America in order to get their training

Countries like India and China are in need of pilots, however training schools in those countries face poor weather and airspace regulations that can slow down the process of training a student pilot. In China for example, the airspace is controlled by the military and in order for a plane to take off it needs to get permission first. A teacher can schedule a flight with a student but there is no guarantee that the plane will get off the ground that day if the military says no. Instead students are looking into flight schools in North America.

As a training ground for pilots from these countries, B.C.'s South Coast holds certain advantages. The airspace is more realistic to what students can expect when they work as commercial pilots. Everyday, aircrafts are flying to and from over 20 airports around the South Coast; this creates a more congested airspace than some flight schools experience. The weather can vary between sun and rain between the U.S. border and the Coast Mountains, making the South Coast a challenging but more realistic location to train.

The market to sign up students coming from overseas is also quite competitive, with over 60 flying schools in B.C. Daniel Lai is V.P. of operations at Sea Land Air Flight Centre at Boundary Bay Airport, one of those schools, and he acknowledges that flying a plane is no easy task. He says that it is not so much about a student reaching a certain amount of hours and saying they are ready for the next step, but ensuring that the student is developing the correct habits, which builds confidence in their flying ability. "In the flight training industry it's not like you spend 10 hours and get 10 hours... When you fly there are a lot of things you have to handle at the same time".

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