

## FEATURE

# China Eastern Flight MU5735 – Everything We Know So Far

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[China Eastern Flight MU5735 - Everything We Know So Far - Thatsmags.com](#)



Cover image via [flightradar24.com](#)

Tragedy struck yesterday, Monday, March 21, when China Eastern Airlines Flight 5735 with 132 people on board crashed in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, South China. Here's what we know about the crash so far.

### The Flight

China Eastern Airlines Flight 5735 was a scheduled domestic passenger flight from Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province, to Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province.

The aircraft departed from Kunming Changshui International Airport for Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport at 1.15pm China Standard Time (CST). It was due to land at 3.05pm.

### The Crash

According to the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), contact with the aircraft was lost over the city of Wuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

At 2.22pm CST, while preparing to descend into Guangzhou, the aircraft entered a

sudden steep descent, from 29,100 feet (8,900 meters) to 3,225 feet (983 meters) in three minutes, with a descent rate of 8,625 feet (2,629 meters) per minute, according to flight data recorded by Flightradar24.

The plane was caught on film by the CCTV of a local mining company, with footage depicting it rapidly descending, nearly fully vertically.

The aircraft crashed in the mountainous regions of Teng County at 350 miles per hour at about 2:38pm, erupting into a fireball and causing fires to break out. The wreckage was subsequently discovered there.

Many smaller pieces of wreckage were located scattered around the surrounding area.

Wuzhou Fire and Rescue Department reported that 450 firefighters were dispatched to the scene of the accident, with firefighters from nearby Tangbu Town, as well Guilin, Beihai, Hezhou, Laibin and Hechi brought in to help the operation.

The fires were extinguished by 5.25pm.

Rescue crews initially had difficulty accessing the site because of the fire, but by the evening, 117 rescuers of a total of 650 dispatched had managed to gain access to it.

There are now hundreds of rescuers on the scene, scouring the area.

### The Passengers & Crew

There were a total of 132 people on board the flight – 123 passengers and 9 crew members



Screengrab via Flightradar24

– according to the CAAC. All 132 were killed on impact.

All 123 passengers were Chinese, according to China Central Television (CCTV).



Flight 5735 filmed by the CCTV of a local mining company, descending nearly fully vertically (L); fires in Teng County (R)

the plane for various reasons. This is not the case.

“There are many false reports on the internet now, and many people have personally attacked me. Maybe because I am a Taobao shopkeeper. But my mood is very sad and complicated.

“I want to clear this matter up. I hope people will pray for our compatriots on the flight instead of focusing on

me.”

### The Aircraft

The aircraft involved was a Boeing 737-89P with the registration B-1791 and serial number 41474. It was powered by two CFM56-7B26E turbofan engines.

It had first flown on June 5, 2015 and was delivered new to China Eastern Airlines on June 25, 2015. It was painted in the airline's Yunnan Peacock livery.

The CAAC and China Eastern Airlines are in the process of retrieving the names of passengers and crew onboard.

A hotline for family members of the passengers and crew members on board the ill-fated aircraft has also been publicized (400 849 5530).

### The 133rd Passenger

It was initially reported that 133 people were on board the flight. That was because one fortunate soul canceled her flight, as reported by [南方PLUS](#).

The passenger who had not boarded the flight, named as Ms. Xin, was contacted by reporters, and issued the following statement:

“There are many people who have stolen the screenshot of my flight information, but they are not me. They used my flight information to pretend to be me, saying that they were on this flight and did not board



Image via [Weibo/@C科技](#)

China Eastern Airlines has grounded all its Boeing 737-800 aircraft following the crash, canceling over 80% of its scheduled flights.

The 737-800, belonging to the 737NG (or 737 Next Generation) aircraft family, is one of the mainstream single-aisle passenger aircraft operated by domestic airlines, and one of the most popular narrow-body aircraft in the world.

Many were quick to clarify that there is no connection between the airplane model involved in the accident and the safety issues surrounding the MCAS system which had grounded the 737 MAX (a more recent design), following the accidents of Lion Air Flight 610 in 2018 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 in 2019.

“Before the cause of the accident is known, the suspension is a common occurrence to prevent risks,” explained Li Xiaoguang, a professor at Qingdao University and a civil aviation expert.

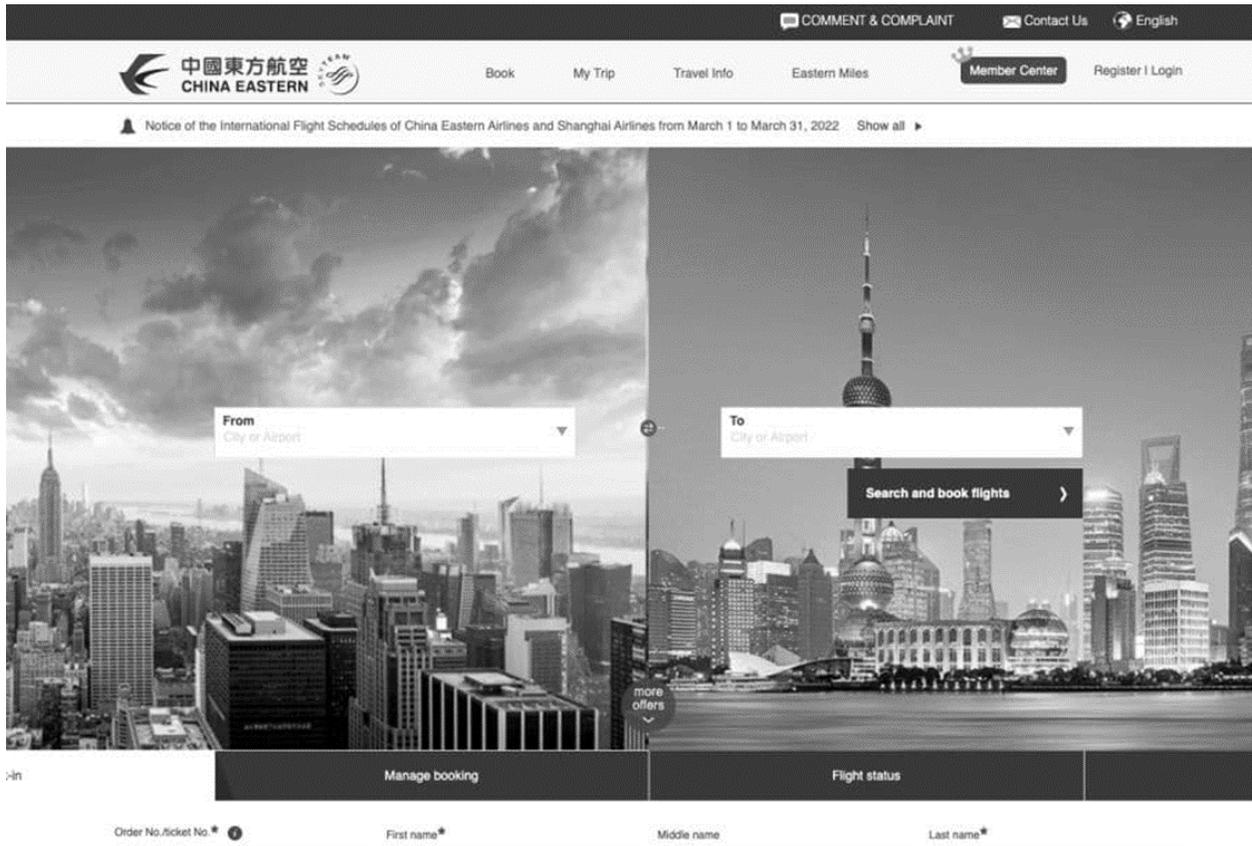
China Eastern operates 291 Boeing 737 series airliners with an average operation age of seven years. In total, domestic airlines operate about 1,400 Boeing 737NG aircraft, about 37% of their total fleets.

### The Reaction & Investigation

“China Eastern deeply condoles the loss of lives in the crash,” the carrier said in a statement. Their website and Twitter page was converted to black and white following the crash.

Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed his “shock” over the incident, and called for investigators to determine the cause of the crash as soon as possible and to ensure “absolute” aviation safety.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang emphasized the need to reassure and serve the families of the victims.



Screengrab via [China Eastern](#)

Liu Ning, Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, went to the scene of the crash and ordered an “all-out” search and rescue operation.

On US stock markets, Boeing shares initially fell 7.8% and China Eastern shares 8.2%. In Hong Kong, China Eastern shares were down 6.5%.

It is not yet clear what forced the sudden dip and crash, but aviation experts have speculated it may have been a loss-of-control event, possibly following a high altitude stall of the aircraft or a sensory failure in the cockpit.

### China Flight Safety



*China's last fatal air crash, Henan Airlines Flight 8387, took place over a decade ago*

China's safety record of civil aviation has remained among the best in the world over the

past decade, and Flight 5735 is the country's deadliest air crash in nearly 30 years.

The last fatal air crash in the country took place 12 years ago, on August 24, 2010, when a Henan Airlines Flight 8387, an Embraer E-190 regional jet, crashed on approach near Lindu Airport, Yichun, Heilongjiang Province in Northeast China, claiming the lives of 44 people out of 96 on board. The crash was later attributed to bad weather and pilot error.

“As of the end of February, China's civil aviation record for safety stood for 138 months, handling 5.11 billion passenger trips safely,” Wu Shijie, deputy director of the administration's safety office, told a monthly routine news conference last week.

Back in March 2019, China became the first country to ground its fleet of 97 Boeing 737 Max jets, following the accidents of Lion Air Flight 610 in 2018 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 in 2019.

China Eastern Airlines has also refuted an online claim that the aircraft maintenance costs were slashed due to losses amid the pandemic; according to the company, maintenance spending on its fleet has increased by 12% in 2021

compared with 2019.