



David Chua, co-founder of military plane photography website MAPHOTOSG, seen here at the NATO Tiger Meet in Norway in 2012. PHOTO: DAVID CHUA

Meet the plane spotters

We talk to two camera-toting military plane enthusiasts

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SINGAPORE – When the Singapore Airshow opens its doors to the public today, David Chua and Eric Chang will definitely be there. In fact, they've already been there the entire week, with their DSLRs, ready to take the perfect aerial shot.

Their obsession with military planes is only equalled by their passion for photography, which can be seen on the website MAPHOTOSG or Military Aviation Photography Singapore, which Chua co-founded.

Suffice to say the biennial event is an important one for these avid plane spotters, whose love of these winged metal beasts began at a young age.

Chua's early exposure was through Singapore Airshow's predecessor, the Asian Aerospace back in the early 1990s. "From then on, I've been going to every one (up until the Singapore Airshow)," said the 40-year-old who works in IT.

He sometimes plans his holidays around airshows and exhibitions elsewhere, such as the annual Tiger Meet by NATO in Norway back in 2012, and a showcase by the Swiss Air Force marking its 100th anniversary in 2014.

But most of the time, it's all about the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF). And in between the Airshow and other big public events such as the National Day Parade, you'll find him hanging out with his friends "somewhere around Punggol" to see planes taking off from the Paya Lebar Air Base (on the western side, you'll have plane spotters zooming in on the Tengah Air Base).

"We maintain a close relationship with the RSAF. We don't post anything that's sensitive and don't hang around the perimeter fences. We've even shared our pictures with them," he said.



“It's all about the whole feel of the airshow, not just the aircraft.”

Eric Chang (above)
MEMBER OF
MAPHOTOSG

HOT TIPS

Best vantage point outside the venue:

"The aerial displays are in the northern part of the island so East Coast Park has no vantage point. The best location is still Changi Beach, from Carpark 6 onwards. You'll just have to walk," said David.

Best time to take a photo:

"Focus on those turns during the aerial display. That's where you'll see vapour collecting on the wings of the aircraft, and then on the wing tips, you'll see two streaks of white lines," said Eric.

Meanwhile, Chang only began taking his aerial photography seriously during the previous two editions of the Singapore Airshow. The 38-year-old manager of a company warehouse said his own fascination also started early, thanks to movies such as Top Gun and growing up near Paya Lebar Air Base.

"I'm not crazy about the technical aspects, I'm a guy who just wants to see them in flight — that's where I get my kick."

That said, he sheepishly admitted it was only last year when it dawned on him he could take photos from his block. But for this weekend, he'll certainly be ready at the Changi Exhibition Centre.

Chang said he'll be heading for the morning aerial display first ("the static displays are not going away"); and when he's not snapping away, he'll be admiring them (Chang is also keen to check out the display model aircraft and the military equipment).

For an airshow veteran like Chua, there have been quite a few changes since the Asian Aerospace. "Singapore Airshow is a much more commercial set-up," he said.

While he described the first couple of editions (2008 and 2010) as "pretty messy", he said it has since improved quite a lot.

"As for the flying displays, the Airshow has tried to do its best in terms of the air space limitations that we have."

Chua has been in enough Airshows to know that it's not just an event for hardcore enthusiasts. "It's a family event!" he laughed. "Even if you're not really into planes or photography, it's still a good day out. It's something that comes every two years and here's one weekend you can bring your family to enjoy the space, the stunts."

And what about those keen on taking nice photos but only have their iPhone to rely on? "Shoot a video. We do that, too," he laughed.

Changi Village eats

SINGAPORE – While most of our attention will be taken up gawping at some of today's most sophisticated flying machines, we're pretty sure we'll get hungry during the day. If you're not interested in the culinary options offered at the site, we've compiled this handy guide to some of the areas around the Changi Exhibition Centre, where you can satiate your appetite after spending your day there.

There are of course, several options for you to choose from. If you're shuttling back to Singapore Expo, you can head to Changi City Point across the road. Or even take the MRT to Changi Airport (if you're still in the mood for more planes). Or perhaps head out to Changi Coastal Walk for some seaside dining. However, a mere 10-minute taxi ride away is Changi Village, surely a hotbed for diners who like the simple but filling fare. Here are some options for your delectation. **DON MENDOZA**



LITTLE ISLAND BREWERY CO
(Block 6 Changi Village Road, #01-01/02, Tel: 6543 9100)

This 270-seater all-day diner and microbrewery is the latest addition to the neighbourhood, adding to its growing selection of western eateries. Highlights on the dinner menu include a sumac spiced grilled spring chicken served with garlic butter, smoked Balinese pork ribs, and a short rib burger with aged cheddar and smoked ham. There is even a mini Angus burger with fries on the kid's menu.



CHARLIE'S CORNER
(2 Changi Village Road, Changi Village Market and Food Centre #01-70, Tel: 6543 1754)

This stalwart continues to attract diners with its no-fuss Western dishes, with the popular pick being its fish and chips. That said, the lamb chop isn't too bad either. This is also a good option for an early lunch as it opens at 11.30am.



JUBILEE COFFEEHOUSE AND BAR
(580 Netheravon Road, Tel: 6543 0060)

Located a five-minute drive down from Changi Village, this was opened by the folks behind The Coastal Settlement. This cosy cafe offers a mix of Asian and Western dishes but with a focus on coffeehouse favourites such as chicken chop and American breakfast, as well as hor fun, chwee kueh and carrot cake. A good late-breakfast option.



LA CANTINA IN VENEZIA
(Changi Village Hotel, 1 Netheravon Road #08/09-02, Tel: 6546 9190)

Two things make this work: Air-conditioning, which you'll want after a full day in the sun, and a sea view. At this unique rooftop restaurant, highlights from its mains include the rack of veal with a mushroom sauce, and tenderloin in gorgonzola cheese sauce.



MIZZY CORNER
(2 Changi Village Road, Changi Village Market and Food Centre #01-26)

Come here for some of the island's best nasi lemak. If the queue is too long (which it mostly is), we suggest that you head to International Muslim Food Stall Nasi Lemak or even Sri Sujana. A good option is to head there in the morning and you can do a take away to bring to the airshow.



PUNGGOL CHOON SENG SEAFOOD RESTAURANT
(23A/B Turnhouse Road, Tel: 6546 5251)

It may have left its original Punggol Point location where it first began in 1956, but fans still flock to this nostalgic hot pick for its signature dishes; whether its famed chilli and pepper crab, to classic renditions of crispy baby squid, ngoh hiang and crispy duck, and its specialty, Punggol mee goreng. And nothing beats a nice seafood meal after a big day out.



THE COASTAL SETTLEMENT
(200 Netheravon Road, Tel: 6475 0200)

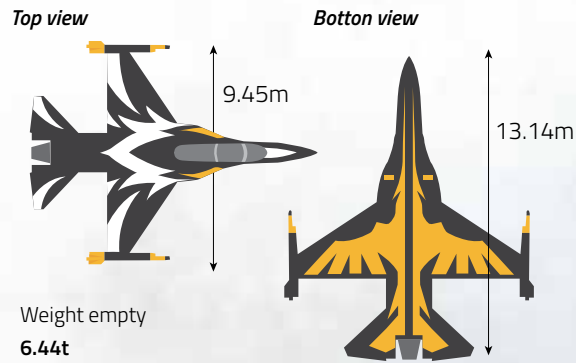
This breezy eatery and bar, stylishly appointed with charming artefacts from Singapore's past, serves a mix of Asian and Western favourites — whether it is nasi lemak and/or crab pesto spaghetti that you crave. This casual option (yes, flip-flops and berms are welcome) boasts some satisfying renditions on its all-day menu. There is also a selection of thin crust pizzas for the children.

The Black Eagles over Singapore

The Black Eagles is the flight display team of the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF). Although the ROKAF had formed a display team in 1953, the Black Eagles were designated as the official aerobatic team of ROKAF in 1994. These days, the team flies the Korean-built KAI T50B Golden Eagle jets for their aerobatic performances.

The aircraft

KAI T-50B Golden Eagle (South Korea)



Weight empty
6.44t

Maximum speed	Mach 1.5 (1,640 km/h)
Range	1,851km
Service ceiling	14,630m
Rate of climb	198m per second

The Black Eagles show takes about 30 minutes from take-off to landing

Rolling combat pitch

The aircraft fly in formation before breaking up and rolling back



The smoke-generating system

The thick smoke trails of the Black Eagles aerobatic team are made by releasing diesel and oil into the exhaust nozzle

There are two smoke tanks in the aircraft, each designed to carry about 230L of smoke oil. The smoke system can control the quantity of oil released, so each aircraft can trail smoke for seven to 20 minutes

Smoke trail

Diesel and oil mixture immediately oxidise, leaving a white (or coloured) smoke trail

Pitch up landing

Six aircraft fly in formation before doing a sudden turn



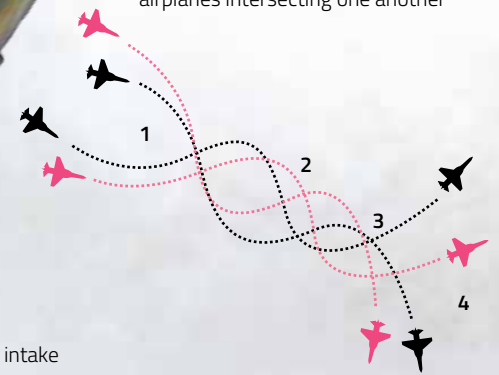
G-force 8-9

During an aerobatics display, pilots experience G forces up to 4 to 5Gs, and when performing the aerobatic manoeuvre 'max turn and loop', G forces of up to 8G (the structural limit of the aircraft)



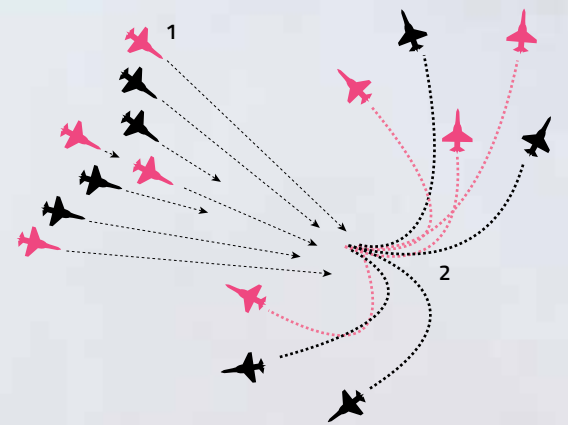
Double helix

A difficult and risky manoeuvre with airplanes intersecting one another



Blooming break

The eight aircraft converge at the same point and break its formation in a spectacular manner



Taegeuk manoeuvre

Two jets form the Taegeuk – the prominent symbol displayed on the South Korean national flag – in the sky

