

Charity auction for SIA A-380'S inaugural flight

Austrian student bids low, keeps hopes high, and...

WINS CHEAP TICKET ON SIA'S GRAND FLIGHT

By Celine Lim
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MANY people paid top dollar during the Singapore Airlines A-380 charity auction to secure a seat on the superjumbo's first commercial flight.

But not Georg Burdicek.

The 25-year-old Austrian's winning bid was just US\$560 (\$820) for an economy class seat on the 26 Oct return leg from Sydney to Singapore.

That is even cheaper than the regular fare of \$878.

Mr Burdicek, who lives in Vienna, told The New Paper over the phone that he was "very surprised" as he did not expect to win.

In fact, the music sciences student did not even bother to tell anyone he was going to bid.

LIMITED BUDGET

He said: "I was very lucky to have scored a ticket. It just happened. As a student, I have a limited budget. If the bids had gone higher, I wouldn't have been able to get a seat."

He had already lost 10 other economy class seats since the charity auction for seats on the Airbus A-380 started on 28 Aug.

But the part-time recording engineer did not give up hope.

"I was watching all the auctions for a long time. As expected, the bids went very high for the Singapore-Sydney flight on 25 Oct, but not so much for the return flight."

So he tracked its progress for three days.

Mr Burdicek said: "In the last five minutes, everyone would bid and bid and the price would go up like crazy."

"But for this auction, I don't know why the bids stayed low, so I grabbed my chance."

Trying not to get his hopes up too much, he bid US\$10 more than the previous highest for a non-window, economy class seat on 9 Sep – just a day before the auctions ended.

"It so happened that I didn't have to work on the last day of auction so I was

monitoring it," he said.

Mr Burdicek said he could not believe his luck as the auctions that ended 10 minutes before and after his had final bids of more than US\$1,000 for economy class seats.

It was only when the e-mail from SIA arrived the next day that he was "100 per cent assured" that he – and not any of the other 13 bidders – had won.

He said he has followed the "progress and problems" of the A-380 with interest because it is a "European aircraft".

He added: "I must confess that I'm more of a Boeing fan, but I'm excited about flying on the A-380 because of its size and the technology involved."

Has anyone teased him for being cheap because his bid was less than the price of a regular ticket?

After all, the money is meant for charity, with the recipients being Singapore's Community Chest, two Sydney children's hospitals and Doctors Without Borders.

With a laugh, Mr Burdicek said: "No, because people know that's how eBay works. And I'm definitely exceeding my travel budget with this trip."

His air ticket from Vienna to Sydney and from Singapore to Vienna cost 623 euros (\$1,291).

"I'm the only aviation freak among my friends and they say I'm crazy to travel all the way to Australia just to fly on the A-380."

He said this will be his first time to Sydney and the furthest distance he has travelled.

Mr Burdicek said the fact that it's for charity appeals to him.

He said: "It's not just about flying as the money is used for something meaningful."

"I would still have bid if the money didn't go to charity, but I would have viewed the airline in a slightly negative light."

One thing he hopes to do during the flight is to enter the cockpit of the A-380.

He said: "I usually ask to go to the cockpit when I fly, and have visited about 10 cockpits so far. But those were pre-9/11 days and it's very difficult to get into the cockpit nowadays."

"I will make my request and maybe I'll be lucky enough to have it granted."



◆ Mr Georg Burdicek holding his prized ticket.



I'm the only aviation freak among my friends and they say I'm crazy to travel all the way to Australia just to fly on the A-380.

– Mr Georg Burdicek, 25, a resident of Vienna, Austria

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