

Ethiopian Airlines' new Victoria Falls route a catalyst for tourism growth

When its Boeing 737 touched down on 26 March 2017, Ethiopian Airlines became the first new international airline to launch flights into the new Victoria Falls International Airport which opened last November. Chairman of the African Travel and Tourism Association and director of ceremonies at the event, Ross Kennedy hailed the launch of Ethiopian Airlines' new route as "a significant catalyst for tourism growth in Zimbabwe and across the region."



Traditional Zimbabwean dancers welcome Ethiopian Airlines's inaugural flight into Victoria Falls International Airport

Ethiopian Airlines, one of Africa's "heavyweights", will fly to Victoria Falls from Addis Ababa four times a week, enabling tourists from major cities in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa to enjoy hassle-free connections via Addis Ababa. "American tourists can now fly from Washington to Victoria Falls, for example, with a less than two-hour stopover in Addis Ababa," explained Kennedy, Africa Albida Tourism (AAT) chief executive.

"It's another historic day for the aviation industry in Africa – and the African travel and tourism sector – with additional airlift and new route linkages open."

Increased resources to meet increased international activity at the airport

Kennedy added that Victoria Falls International Airport had prepared and increased resources for the arrival of the new international airline with more staff, training, immigration officials and enhanced IT systems in order to handle the increased arrivals more efficiently and smoothly. There had been a huge commitment from all departments, authorities, and individuals at the airport to make it a shining success story for the Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe and the country, with tourism at the heart of it all, he said.

Kennedy called upon the private and public sectors to work together to ensure new flights were supported and promoted and the destination and region were grown by marketing the new access routes and connectivity offered by the aviation sector.

Increased international activity into the airport includes South African Airways boosting its capacity by 88 seats, by launching an Airbus A330-200 to service its daily route between Johannesburg and Victoria Falls; Kenya Airways to launch direct flights from Nairobi to Victoria Falls and on to Cape Town (1 May 2017); and SA Airlink to launch direct flights between Cape Town and Victoria Falls six days a week from 2 July 2017.

These four flights airlines' activity could bring as many as 80,000 additional tourists a year into Victoria Falls, said Kennedy earlier this month.

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