

Airlines add 80,000 new seats with flights to Victoria Falls

According to Africa Albida Tourism Chief Executive, Ross Kennedy, 80,000 more tourists a year could soon fly into Zimbabwe's resort town of Victoria Falls with two large international airlines committing to the destination and a third increasing its capacity.



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On March 1, South African Airways began operating an Airbus A330-200, daily to Victoria Falls from Johannesburg - the largest passenger aircraft ever to land at Zimbabwe's top resort town. The A330-200 has 222 seats, 88 more than the smaller aircraft it has replaced. Inbound flights are already heavily booked till 12 March and demand is growing daily, according to the Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe.

"March 2017 heralds a new dawn for tourism, with the arrival of SAA's A330-200 in Victoria Falls," says Kennedy. "This is the beginning of an exciting and positive period for tourism in the region."

In addition, Ethiopian Airlines will begin four flights weekly from 26 March from Addis Ababa to Victoria Falls, using the latest Boeing 737. Kenya Airways will begin direct flights three times a week from Nairobi to Victoria Falls on 18 May.

"These three airlines alone add 80,000 new seats per annum into Victoria Falls International Airport and the region, offering a huge opportunity for growth, as well as connecting new destinations with the incredible Victoria Falls hub and KAZA tourism region," Kennedy says. Victoria Falls is in the middle of Southern Africa's Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier

Conservation Area (KAZA), which boasts pristine and diverse wildlife areas.



South African Airways Airbus A330-200

The Ethiopian Airlines flight route will be Addis Ababa – Victoria Falls – Gaborone – Addis Ababa, while Kenya Airways will fly Nairobi – Victoria Falls – Cape Town – Victoria Falls – Nairobi.

Access to Africa's iconic tourist destinations

Kennedy, who is also African Travel and Tourism Association chairman, said these routes would create new access to Africa's iconic tourist destinations, with visitors now easily able to visit the Maasai Mara, Serengeti, Victoria Falls and Cape Town in one trip.

"Tourists will be able to combine the history, culture and birding of Ethiopia with Victoria Falls – one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World – which is the gateway to the rest of Zimbabwe, as well as Zambia, Namibia and Botswana. "These new route connections will provide an opportunity to innovative members of the travel industry to create new packages and destination linkages for tourists," he adds.

In addition to the international flights, newcomer low-cost carrier Rainbow Airlines launched its weekly Harare to Victoria Falls flight on 25 January 2017.

The new \$150 million Victoria Falls International Airport – which includes a new 4km long, 60m wide runway – enabling long-haul wide-bodied aircraft to land, was opened by President Robert Mugabe last November.

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