

## Getting to Africa - Tourism's Critical Success Factor



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Air transport is perceived as a major constraint to Africa's tourism development. Many argue that high airfares are a handicap to destinations while others point to the inconvenient and insufficient service of scheduled or even charter services.

Still others argue that Africa's airspace and planes are unsafe. So! This time, we bringing you a limelight on a joint report prepared by the World Bank and the Africa Travel Association (ATA) on the state of tourism in Africa. This particular edition takes a look at a specific issue perceived as a major constraint to the Africa's development. A recent research on North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) air transport trends highlights some useful findings for tourism stakeholders fo your attention in this edition.

Decisions on airline routings are driven by a mix of domestic, interregional, international and cargo demands. They are also affected by air transport liberalization, ease and cost of doing business (landing rights, baggage handling) and fuel cost. In late 2007, the report indicated that 280 of Africa's 2,900 airports had regularly scheduled services.

The World Bank analysis in November 2009 found 66% of Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries either lack major carrier connections or depend on one airline. Limited airline service translates into limited flights and frequency and an invitation for prospective leisure travelers to go elsewhere. Further 2009 research concluded that the number of available runways and their general condition is not a constraint for North Africa. Runways at 60% of the airports were found to be in excellent condition in comparison to 17% in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

North Africa airports are handling today's passengers with ease while SSA airports are challenged by insufficient apron space, limited use of taxi ways and terminal space for high volumes of passenger traffic is limited. Rather than runways being the greatest challenge the quality of land based airport infrastructure is a significant constraint, especially for SSA. Sub-Saharan Africa air traffic can be better understood in context to other areas. For example (SSA) air traffic reached roughly 72.3 million seats in 2007 just ahead Madrid's total air traffic volume of 68.5 million.

The combined domestic traffic for (SSA) (27.5million) was twice the overall traffic for the French city of Nice at 13.1million. North and Sub-Saharan African markets combined totaled about 122.4 million seats, while the US city of Atlanta, Georgia alone posted 103.9 million in 2007.

The report further indicates that despite a small base, Africa's growth rates are impressive. Africa's air transport industry grew at a robust rate of 5.76 percent per year, between 2001 to2007 (as measured in seat kms). For air transport in Africa to compete with other regions, the inconsistent quality of land-based infrastructure can be addressed first by updating airports and terminals rather than building new airports, the report indicated.

To address safety concerns, increasing safety oversight , pooling resources and capacity building is necessary. Finally, improving data collection on the air transports sector at all airports is encouraged in

order to assist both the public and private sector in planning for success.

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