



VICTORIA FALLS NEW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT OPENING COUNTDOWN

THE new \$150 million international airport at Victoria Falls, which is set to change the face of the region, is just four months away from opening.

Africa Albida Tourism chief executive Ross Kennedy said it had become very clear in the last few months that the travel industry now understood the importance of this development.

“The positive impact of the new Victoria Falls International Airport is still a long way from being measured, but the trade is excited at the potential of long haul direct routes, instead of via Johannesburg.

“The potential impact on tourism in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe and the region is huge. Simple arithmetic shows that just three wide-bodied jets a week will make a dramatic positive impact to the destination.

“This includes, of course, employment as occupancies rise, and all of the downstream benefits that this will bring with it,” Mr Kennedy said.

The airport would also create its own “mini economy” with increased staffing throughout and support facilities - which included more duty free and retail space, as well as new restaurants and coffee shops, he said.

A Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe (CAAZ) spokesperson said the new airport, which will accommodate 1.7 million passengers per year - more than three times the current number - would be completed by the end of September 2015.

The finishing touches, such as electrical and navigational fittings, were now being put in place on the new 4km runway, which will be capable of landing the world’s largest passenger aircraft, he said. The existing runway will become a taxiway.

The new international terminal building was nearing completion, and the current one was being rehabilitated into a domestic terminal, the CAAZ spokesperson said.

A new control tower with state of the art equipment has almost been completed, and work has begun on the construction of a fire station, he said.

The aircraft parking area was being extended, and a new car park built to accommodate 400 vehicles, as well as provide for long term parking.

The CAAZ spokesperson said there had been strong interest from both the airlines already using the airport to increase flights, and also from new carriers wanting to come in, but nothing had been confirmed yet.

The airport is used by Air Zimbabwe, South African Airways, BA Comair, Air Namibia, Fly Africa and charter flights, and it is hoped the commercial airlines will increase flight frequency to the iconic destination.

It is also anticipated the likes of British Airways , Qatar Airways, Etihad, Emirates, Kenya Airways, Fast Jet and Air Botswana will introduce the Victoria Falls route to their flight itineraries.

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