

South African Airways Improves Beijing Flight Times

JOHANNESBURG. 30 April 2014. South African Airways (SAA) has made considerable improvements on its flights to Beijing, which promises customers a much improved travel experience.

SAA introduced three weekly non-stop flights to Beijing in January 2012, following a comprehensive strategic partnership forged between the two countries - South Africa and China are high-profile members of BRICS, a trade grouping of countries along with Brazil, Russia, and India.

Following recent extensive negotiations with the Chinese authorities, the airline's schedule to Beijing now offers improved arrival and departure times to and from Beijing, effective 1 May 2014, with the flight departing about four hours earlier in Johannesburg and arriving four hours earlier in Beijing. The first flight following the improved schedule will depart from Johannesburg today, Wednesday, 30 April 2014.

Flying time between Johannesburg and Beijing is about 15 hours.

The Beijing route is strategically important to SAA and the country, as demonstrated by bilateral trade between China and South Africa which has increased significantly over the previous five years. Foreign Direct Investments have grown significantly between 2010 and 2013. According to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) the total trade between South Africa and China has been increasing significantly for the previous five years from R118b in 2009 to R263bn in 2013.

Tourism has also grown and China is now the fourth largest inbound tourism market to South Africa, after Germany and the fastest growing market with approximately 134,000 arrivals in 2013. China last year recorded more than 80 million outbound travellers with South Africa only having a tiny market share demonstrating considerable potential for growth.

"The airline's network, alliance and fleet strategy form a key pillar of our Gaining Altitude Strategy, and we are continuously seeking ways of improving our network offering.

"We were therefore most pleased to be afforded better arrival and departure times for our Beijing flights which will make it easier for our customers to catch connecting flights to other destinations within China and into the rest of Africa.

"The route between Johannesburg and Beijing will continue to play a strategic role within our network strategy," says Kendy Phohleli, SAA General Manager Commercial (Acting).

SAA is also in the process of expanding its code share relationship with its Star Alliance partner airline in China, Air China, after introducing this code share in March 2012 between Johannesburg and Beijing.

“We are working closely with our Star Alliance Partner Air China for enhanced cooperation on our existing code share and interline which will expand our presence in the Chinese market. The new arrival and departure times in Beijing will allow SAA passengers connectivity to additional cities in China,” says Phohleli.

The code share agreement between SAA and Air China complements the non-stop service between Johannesburg and Beijing. The agreement enhances flight choices for customers, whether originating in Africa or China, through seamless connections and frequent flyer mileage opportunities.

This initiative is in keeping with SAA’s close cooperation with BRAND SA, the South African Department of Tourism and -the mission in China to increase trade and tourism to South Africa.

An initiative which is seemingly showing results, as visa applications for Chinese residents wishing to travel to South Africa increased by 20% for 2013, in comparison to the previous year.

China is one of South Africa’s largest trade partners and the establishment of aviation links between nations nurtures economic activity, with domestic and regional benefit within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as many traders from Africa travel to China via Johannesburg.

The improved schedule is as follows:

Days of operation	SA288 (Johannesburg – Beijing (PEK))		SA289 (Beijing – Johannesburg)	
	Depart Johannesburg	Arrive Beijing	Depart Beijing	Arrive Johannesburg
Monday	20h15	16h45+1	Tuesday 23h00	08h15+1
Wednesday	20h35	17h05+1	Thursday 23h00	08h15+1
Friday	20h35	17h05+1	Saturday 23h00	08h15+1

About South African Airways

South African Airways (SAA), Africa’s most awarded airline, operates to 40 destinations worldwide.

In its domestic market SAA has an extensive schedule operating 554 flights in total per week between Johannesburg – Cape Town, Durban, East London and Port Elizabeth, from its Johannesburg hub, as well as code-shared flights between Lanseria – Cape Town and Durban. SAA offers more frequencies than any other airline in South Africa.

Regionally, SAA offers 24 destinations across the African continent including Abidjan, Accra, Blantyre, Brazzaville, Cotonou, Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Douala, Entebbe, Harare, Kinshasa,

Lagos, Libreville, Lilongwe, Livingstone, Luanda, Lusaka, Maputo, Mauritius, Nairobi, Ndola, Pointe Noire, Victoria Falls and Windhoek.

SAA's international network creates links to all major continents from South Africa through 10 direct routes and code shares, with daily flights from Johannesburg to London (Heathrow), Frankfurt, Munich, Mumbai, Perth, Hong Kong, Beijing, New York, Washington, and Sao Paulo. SAA has codes share agreements with 29 other airlines across the markets it serves. The airline has extended its code share agreement with Mango, its low cost operator, to also include coastal cities in South Africa (between Johannesburg and Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth and George), as well as Johannesburg – Bloemfontein; Cape Town - Bloemfontein and Cape Town - Port Elizabeth.

SAA's core business is the provision of passenger airline and cargo transport services together with related services, which are provided through SAA and its four wholly owned subsidiaries: SAA Technical; Mango its low cost carrier; Air Chefs, the catering entity of SAA and South African Travel Centre (SATC).

SAA is a Star Alliance member which offers more than 21,900 daily flights to 1,328 airports in 195 countries. SAA is the winner of the 'Best Airline in Africa' Award in the regional category for eleven consecutive years. Mango and SAA hold the number one and number two successive spots as South Africa's most on-time airlines.

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