

Cape Town's new air routes to change the face tourism

Delegates at the Tourism, Hotel Investment, and Networking Conference ([THINC Africa](#)), currently taking place in Cape Town, applauded the news that Cape Town has five new air routes and four expansions. According to the CEO of Wesgro, Tim Harris, 400,000 new two-way seats are now available as the result of collaboration between the City of Cape Town, Cape Town Tourism, the Airports Company of South Africa (Acsa), Wesgro and the private sector.



Tim Harris

“This is only a start,” he said. “We’re changing the face of business and tourism in the Western Cape.”

Harris told delegates – including hoteliers, representatives from major global hotel groups, hotel investors, tourism operators and consultants – the routes included British Airways flying three times a week to Gatwick outside London, Lufthansa going to Frankfurt three times a week, Kenya Airways flights to Nairobi and Livingston, as well as an Airlink route to Maun in Botswana. Ethiopian Airways, KLM, and Emirates have expanded their flights.

Harris told delegates that he took an 18-month sabbatical after running the former leader of the Democratic Alliance, Tony Leon’s elections office in 2006. But instead of touring Europe, he visited 18 countries in Africa. During that trip, he realised that unlocking Africa’s tourism potential would help sustain the continent. From January to February in 2016, Africa had the second highest growth among all tourism regions, he said. And in the first quarter of 2016, South Africa ranked third out of all African countries.

Job creation

This meant it had enormous power to create jobs. “Tourism is one of our top three priority sectors to develop jobs,” he said. Developments in the Western Cape would contribute to job creation, he said. Tsogo Sun was building a hotel in the CBD while the V&A Waterfront was developing the Silo district, a mixed-use sustainable development that included a mid-range hotel.

Business tourism

Harris said the city was also contributing to business tourism with the increased capacity of the Cape Town International Convention Centre and the Century City Conference Centre adding another 1,900 places for guests.

Disruptors

He touched on the impact of “disruptors” such as Uber and Airbnb. “Airbnb is doing well in Cape Town with over 130,000 guests in 2015, a 250% increase on 2014. It shows young tourists are coming to South Africa and adopting new technology,” said Harris.

“But,” he added. “From talking to Airbnb, it seems they’re helping grow tourism and not cannibalising the hotel trade. Young tourists are looking for authentic experiences and Cape Town is a place to innovate.”

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