

Air Côte d'Ivoire opens new route to SA

Air Côte d'Ivoire will be launching a new route between Johannesburg and Abidjan, in Côte d'Ivoire. The Johannesburg-Abidjan via Kinshasa route will launch on 29 June 2022.



Source: Supplied

The airline will be introducing four flights per week between Johannesburg and Abidjan. Bookings opened on 1 June 2022.

The new route also offers ease of access to 16 West and Central African countries: Congo, Gabon, Niger, Ghana, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, Liberia, Benin, Senegal, Cameroon, Togo, DRC, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau.

Strategic partnership

Last year, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa signed nine cooperation agreements with his Ivorian counterpart, Alassane Ouattara. During the Ivorian-South Africa economic forum in December 2021, Ramaphosa said the West African nation is an attractive investment and trade destination for South African companies, and that African countries can fully reap the benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) if they work together.

"Côte d'Ivoire is a strategic trading partner for South Africa, and there is tremendous potential to further increase trade in value-added products between our two countries. Having greater and direct access to each other's markets is a catalyst for investment," Ramaphosa said at the forum, held at the Sofitel Hotel in Abidjan.

Côte d'Ivoire's GDP in 2021 stood at \$70.99bn and statistics from the African Development Bank show that the country's GDP could grow by 6.5% in 2022, with the transport, construction, agriculture and petroleum sectors expected to drive much of that growth.

Air Côte d'Ivoire CEO Laurent Loukou believes the new route between Abidjan and Johannesburg will be key to opening up opportunities for investment and improving bilateral trade between the two countries.

"Of course, the timing of the new route has been strategic as we lead up to IATF2023. Africa is gearing up to become a strong economic bloc and Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa have a massive role to play in that growth. Intra-Africa trade is key to unlocking industrial opportunities for many African countries, including between Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa," he says.

Driving new business

"We believe in the future of Africa just as we believe in the future of our airline. We are making bold new plans for our future and that includes this new route to connect South Africa with Côte d'Ivoire. Africa is open for business and we want to make it easier for business to happen."

Côte d'Ivoire will host the 2023 Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF2023), the continent's key event for trade, which actualises the vision of the AfCFTA.

The organisers of the fair, the African Export-Import Bank in collaboration with the African Union and the AfCFTA Secretariat, are expecting deals to well exceed the \$36bn in business deals signed at last year's event.

"Côte d'Ivoire is one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa and offers great investment opportunities West Africa. It makes sense to do business with us. Air Côte d'Ivoire wants to be part of this economic growth in our country.

"We are excited about this opportunity to drive new business between Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa. The possibilities for cooperation and business are endless," says Loukou.

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