

South African Airways Improves Beijing Flight Times

Written by Australian Business

(PRLEAP.COM) June 11, 2014 - Johannesburg, South Africa – After extensive negotiations with the Chinese authorities, SAA's schedule of flights to Beijing was reconditioned to offer improved arrival and departure times for customers travelling to the capital city. As of 1 May 2014, flights out of Johannesburg began to depart four hours earlier, arriving four hours earlier in Beijing. The first official flight following the improved schedule departed from Johannesburg on Wednesday, 30 April 2014.

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

Over the past five years the increasing popularity of bilateral trade between China and South Africa has placed strategic importance on this route. Between 2010 and 2012, Foreign Direct investments have grown significantly. According to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) the total trade between South Africa and China has been increasing significantly from R118b in 2009 to R263bn in 2013. Aside from trade considerations, tourism has also been growing. China is now the fourth largest inbound tourism market to South Africa after Germany. With 134 000 arrivals in 2013, it is also the fastest growing. Last year, China recorded more than 80 million outbound travellers. South Africa only contributed to a small market share of this figure, 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. 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.

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The code share agreement between SAA and Air China complements the non-stop service between Johannesburg and Beijing, enhancing 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 China's mission to increase trade and tourism to South Africa. This initiative seems to be showing results, as Visa applications for Chinese residents wishing to travel to South Africa increased by 20% in 2013 in comparison to the previous year.

About South African Airways [South African Airways is a Star Alliance member that offers flights to 38 destinations worldwide](#). Domestically, SAA operates 544 flights a week between Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, East London and Port Elizabeth. [Regionally, SAA offers 24 destinations across the African continent](#) and its international network creates links to all major continents from South Africa through 10 direct routes. In the regional category, SAA has received the Skytrax 'Best Airline in Africa' Award for 11 consecutive years.