

# RwandAir launches flights to London

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RwandAir will today, 26 May 2017, take off for the first direct commercial flight to Gatwick International Airport in London.



The first European destination of the airline will be serviced by a brand new Airbus A330 aircraft that boasts in-flight connectivity.

The addition of Gatwick, London takes the airline to 22 destinations served currently. The airline will fly to the English capital three times a week.

This direct flight, according to aviation experts, is an important milestone towards improving trade relations between Rwanda, the region, and Europe. It also makes the route more competitive and more efficient which will ultimately benefit passengers.

## Opportunity for exporters

Rwandan exporters say they are excited and looking forward to taking full advantage of the opportunity.

"We anticipate increased volumes in terms of exports to the European market through the UK," said Epimaque

Nsanzabaganwa, the horticulture division manager at the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB).

RwandAir has already offered to cut freight charges for exporters to as low as \$0.95 per kilogramme.

Donatille Nibagwire, the managing director of FLORIS Export Company, said the new developments are very likely to change the dynamics of the country's export business.

## **Boosting tourism**

Meanwhile, experts say the flights will boost tourism between the UK and Rwanda. And, according to Osborn Kinene, the Rwanda Eco-Tours country manager, the flights will lead to increased number of tourists visiting the two countries.

"Rwanda is counting on tourism to boost its exports, therefore creating a seamless connectivity between Rwanda and other markets means people can now find it easier to travel between destinations," he told The New Times.

Connecting Kigali to markets in Asia, Europe and later America, means an increase in volumes of trade as well as enhanced tourism which will drive economic development and sustainability, Kinene added.

In addition, Rwanda has recently become one of the countries that offer tourists a 'Big 5' experience, having reintroduced both lions and eastern black rhinoceros into Akagera National Park.

Last month, the airline launched direct flights to Mumbai, India's financial capital.

## **More flights in the offing**

Meanwhile, RwandAir is scheduled to launch flights to New York as well as other Asian destinations.

On the African front, the airline plans to fly to Conakry in Guinea, Bamako in Mali, as well as Dakar, Senegal, Lilongwe in Malawi, and Durban in South Africa.

Last year, the airline acquired its first A330-200 and A330-300 Airbus planes, boosting its fleet to 11 aircraft and capacity to compete globally.

It is also scheduled to take delivery of another brand new Boeing before the end of the month.

Patrick Gakuru, a Kigali-based aviation expert, says: "The growth of aviation business in Rwanda is a reflection of the general economic performance which has showed resilience under the good leadership of President Kagame."

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