

Low-cost airline expands routes to African countries

Fin24.com reports that low-cost airline 1time aims to become the first regional airline offering low-cost model flights between various African destinations. 1time's strategy would limit domestic flights where heavy competition impacts profitability while improving access to destinations in Africa.

Introducing direct flights to Mombasa in Kenya, 1time Chief executive Blacky Komani said further expansion to countries with which bilateral agreements exist could follow in the next three months. 1time already has two flights a week to Tanzania's Zanzibar island group and five flights a week to Livingstone in Zambia.

From next month the airline will fly twice a week from Johannesburg's OR Tambo Airport to Mombasa. 1time hopes to transport South African tourists - who, because of the tight economy, have abandoned plans to travel to the US and Europe - to Kenya, where the South African rand currently buys more than 11 Kenyan shillings. The airline expects to carry 200 to 300 passengers a week to Mombasa, Komani said, initially operating only one-direction flights to the Kenyan city. With a marketing drive focused on business travellers to Mombasa, however, Komani envisioned full flights in both directions established within six months.

According to Fin24.com, the airline plans to use its low price and the fact that travellers will cut out connecting flights as a unique selling proposition (USP), helping it gain a larger market share. Earlier, Business Day reported that 1Time is cutting flights in the so-called "golden triangle" between Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, as it moves to abandon non-profitable flights. It appears that airport taxes, fierce pricing competition between operators and weak demand from cash-strapped consumers contributed to 1Time's decision.

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