



VICTORIA FALLS



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New airport nears completion

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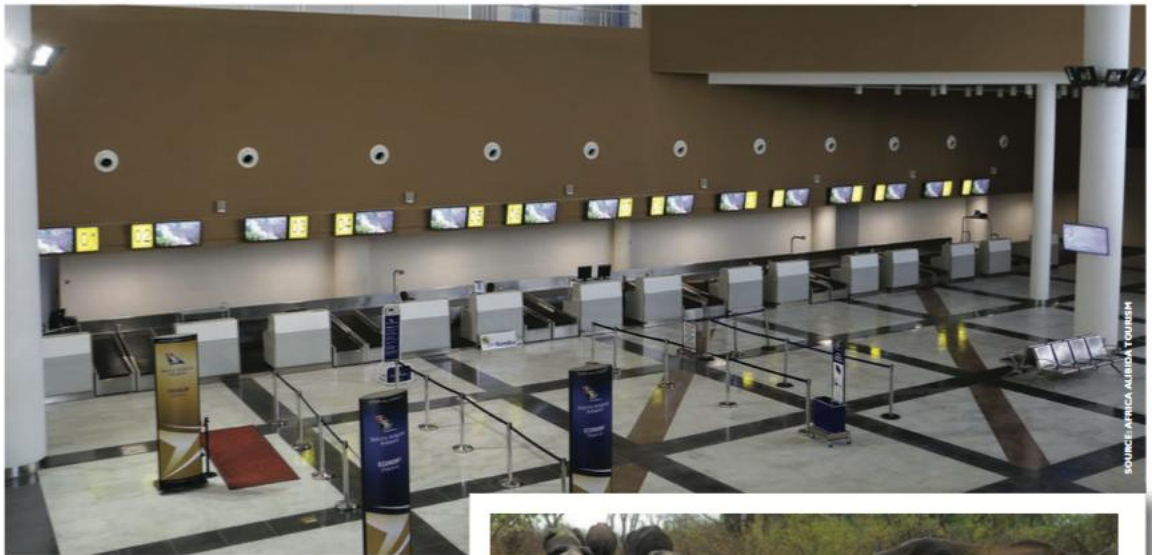
The new \$150 million Victoria Falls International Airport is almost complete, while predictions for visitor numbers to Zimbabwe's top tourist attraction look positive for 2016, compared to previous years.

Budget airline Fastjet announced the launch of a twice weekly flight between Victoria Falls and Johannesburg in March, and there has been interest from a number of international airlines looking to include the resort town on their flight routes.

Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe PR and communications manager, Annajulia Hungwe said work still to be done included the refurbishment of the old airport building, which used to house both the international and domestic terminals and would now become the domestic terminal. Other areas to be completed included the new car park, fire station, the aerobridges used to unload large passenger planes and the installation of a perimeter fence.

"Works are now in progress, and our target is to finish up by the end of May, with the official opening to be held sometime after June," Ms Hungwe explained.

Africa Albida Tourism chief executive, Ross Kennedy



The new airport is very close to completion and poised to cater for the increased number of visitors who are making this their holiday destination

commented: "As the Victoria Falls International Airport project gets closer to completion it is evident that there is potential for significant positive impact on Zimbabwe and regional tourism.

"As with any project of this scale, it requires international airline partners to come and inspect facilities and services and agree with the authorities what other elements may be required to ensure their commitment. This of course includes requirements to meet IATA (International Air Transport Association) and international airline safety and insurance standards.

"Realistically, we should look at mid 2017 for the benefits of this new airport to become evident and perhaps the first long haul flights arriving. But of course any time before that would be wonderful to see. Apart from adding capacity and new routes, the airport has the potential to lift the current low season in Victoria Falls, being January to June, into a much busier period as we open access to new markets."

Kennedy concluded: "This year has started off positively, compared to the previous few years, and 2015 was



There is so much more to Victoria Falls than just the Falls themselves – the Zambezi National Park has abundant wildlife and excellent guides; visitors will not be disappointed

particularly tough for the tourism industry in Zimbabwe. The forecast for the next three to six months is looking above average, and it is hoped that it will be the start of a real and positive uplift for tourism. This in turn should give

international airlines additional positive signs and statistics that will encourage them to see Victoria Falls Airport as a viable route with real potential to be the tourism hub for the region."

The new terminal building, a state-of-the-art control

tower and the 4km runway capable of landing wide-body aircraft were commissioned in December. The new airport has a combined capacity of 1.5million passengers per year, tripling previous capacity.



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