

# St Helena's new airport to welcome first plane

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ONE of the remotest places on earth, St Helena island, will be a little less isolated this week when the first aeroplane lands at its new airport.

A KingAir plane from South African TAB Charters took off yesterday for the historic flight. It was expected in Ondangwa, Namibia, in the afternoon and will today fly onwards to Namibé on the Angolan coast.

After that, a six-hour flight over the Atlantic will bring the plane to St Helena's Prosperous Bay airport, where its landing, weather permitting, will help test the airport's systems.

The island has been served by the world's last regular mail ship and by cargo ships that sometimes anchor there, but the journey took a week from Cape Town and meant that "Saints" have not had regular contact with their relatives in SA, many of whom live in Pietermaritzburg.

The island's isolation made it a perfect prison, and Britain sent Napoleon Bonaparte there after his defeat in the early 1800s, as well as thousands of captives from the Boer War, and Zulu King Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo.

The airport has been built by the South African construction company Basil Read, which

received a world engineering award, according to the island's website, [sainthelenaaccess.com](http://sainthelenaaccess.com)

Finishing work is still being done at the airport, which is expected to receive its operation certificate in November and start welcoming regular flights from SA in February.

The island's website reports that hundreds of the 5 000 inhabitants are expected at the airport to welcome the flight, and the five policemen will be hard at work controlling the crowds. The airport and the end to the island's lost-in-time isolation, are expected to allow islanders to start economically sustainable projects, the website said.