

St Helena almost ready for take off

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Cape Town - With the opening in May of a new airport on St Helena, not only will the remote South Atlantic Island's centuries of isolation come to an historic end, but it could also have a new role: that of a stepping stone for those travelling between South America and Africa.

In recognition of its unique position, St Helena has been welcomed as a member by both the African Travel & Tourism Association (Atta) and the Latin American Travel Association (Lata), becoming the only country in the world to do so.

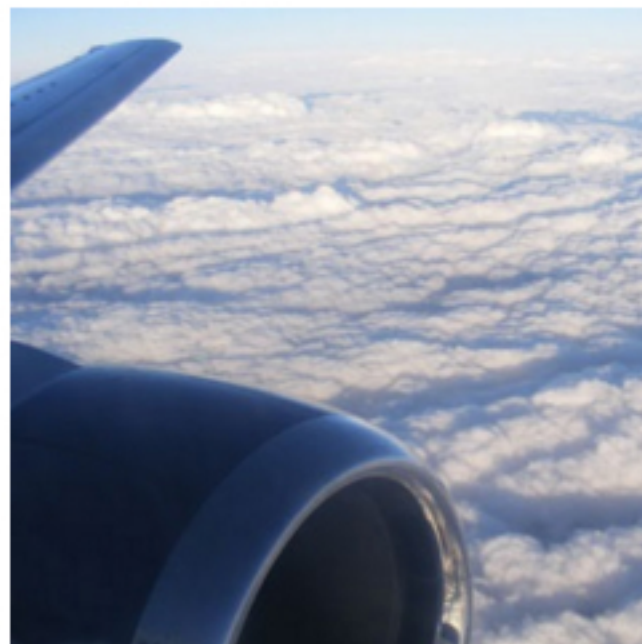
Located 1 200 miles from the South-West coast of Africa and 1 800 miles from the coast of South America, and currently only accessible by boat, St Helena is best known as the final home of the exiled Napoleon Bonaparte.

Director of tourism, Chris Pickard said St Helena is uniquely positioned virtually half way between the two continents.

"Both are seeing significant increases in visitor numbers and we believe that St Helena could, over time, become a twin destination for holiday makers looking for a new experience. Although we have only recently joined them, we have already had several meaningful discussions with organisations from both continents and I am confident that St Helena will soon emerge on Latin America and Africa itineraries," he said.

Although the initial air service provider Comair/British Airways will provide a weekly flight between St Helena and Johannesburg, once the airport is fully operational the island will want to attract other operators.

Annually around 600 yachtsmen and women already stop off on St Helena as they sail between Africa and South America, as well as thousands of passengers on cruise ships travelling between the two continents.



GPS devices are critical to air travel.
(Duncan Alfreds, Fin24)

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