



St Helena  
Government



ST HELENA  
AIRPORT

## **AIR SERVICES TO ST HELENA AND ASCENSION ISLAND**

### **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS – UPDATED FEBRUARY 2018**

#### **General**

St Helena Government and SA Airlink ('Airlink') are pleased to announce that they have today signed an agreement for Airlink to provide scheduled commercial air services to St Helena Island. Airlink will also operate a monthly charter service between St Helena and Ascension Island. This follows a period of contractual negotiations with Airlink.

#### **Scheduled Air Services**

- ***When is the commencement date for scheduled air services?***

Following the necessary approvals and proving flight, SHG will be able to announce the commencement date for a service between St Helena Airport and OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa.

- ***Where will the service operate from and to?***

The St Helena Air Service will operate from OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa (JNB). There will be a stopover at Windhoek International Airport in Namibia (WDH) before the flight continues to St Helena Airport (HLE).

On the return route, the flight will stopover at Windhoek before returning to Johannesburg.

In summary, the route is as follows:

JNB – WDH – HLE – WDH - JNB

- ***What will be the frequency of the flights?***

Initially, the flight will operate on a weekly basis on a Saturday. There is scope for Airlink to lay on an additional mid-week flight as demand grows.

- ***How many seats will be available on each flight?***

Initially, the maximum number of seats available on each flight will be 76.

- ***How much does a ticket cost?***

Fares will be announced when ticket sales go live.

There will be a number of fare bands, for example, depending on whether a passenger wishes to travel in economy or business class and how far in advance the passenger is making his/her booking. We expect child fares will be 50% of the adult fare price.

Further information will follow prior to tickets going on sale.

- ***When will tickets go on sale?***

This will be announced in due course.

- ***How can I book a ticket?***

Tickets will be available online via the Airlink website and through all normal IATA global distribution systems. Passengers are advised to contact their IATA travel agent.

For those passengers that are resident on St Helena, Airlink proposes to also use local agents who will be able to manage ticket bookings.

Further information will follow prior to tickets going on sale.

- ***What are the flight times/schedules?***

The proposed flight schedule is shown below. All times are shown in UTC (co-ordinated universal time):

Operation from JNB							
Flight Number	Day of	Aircraft Type	Config	Departing Time	Departing Station	Arriving Station	Arriving Time
SA8131	-----6-	E90	C6Y92	*07:00	JNB	WDH	*09:00
SA8131	-----6-	E90	C6Y92	*09:30	WDH	HLE	*13:15
SA8132	-----6-	E90	C6Y92	*14:30	HLE	WDH	*18:05
SA8132	-----6-	E90	C6Y92	*18:40	WDH	JNB	*20:30
<b>Once a month</b>							
SA8131	-----6-	E90	C6Y92	*07:00	JNB	WDH	*09:00
SA8131	-----6-	E90	C6Y92	*09:30	WDH	HLE	*13:15
SA8131	-----6-	E90	C6Y92	*14:30	HLE	ASI	*16:30
SA8132	-----7	E90	C6Y92	*11:15	ASI	HLE	*13:15
SA8132	-----7	E90	C6Y92	*14:30	HLE	WDH	*18:05
SA8132	-----7	E90	C6Y92	*18:40	WDH	JNB	*20:30
* All times UTC - Zulu							

Night stop

- **Will passengers from St Helena be able to catch connecting flights on the same day?**

Ultimately this will depend on the passenger's intended destination.

Connections via Johannesburg

OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg offers connectivity to over 80 airports around the world.

A General Point on Connectivity

Passengers should allow sufficient time to connect with onward flights. There is a minimum one hour connection time at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg. If in doubt, passengers may wish to consider an overnight stop.

- **Why was Johannesburg chosen over Cape Town as the destination hub in South Africa?**

An in depth analysis was undertaken which considered a number of issues, including but not limited to: local preference; airline preference; connectivity; destinations served; seasonal fluctuations in service; fares for direct flights from European destinations and their flight times; access to medical facilities; potential for two centre tourist destinations. It was agreed that the initial service should originate from Johannesburg.

**Background**

- ***Who are Airlink?***

Airlink is a privately owned airline registered in South Africa. It is a franchisee to South African Airways. Airlink is a member of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and as such is IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) accredited. Airlink is a well-established South Africa domiciled airline operating on a comprehensive scheduled network with domestic and regional passenger and cargo services offering more than fifty thousand flights annually.

Airlink is headquartered at Greenstone Hill in Johannesburg and has its main base of operation at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa.

- ***What does the agreement with Airlink commit them to?***

The St Helena Government and Airlink have signed an agreement for Airlink to provide a minimum weekly scheduled flight to/from St Helena. There is provision for the number of flights to increase as passenger demand increases.

- ***What term does the agreement stipulate?***

The agreement covers a three year period, with the option to extend for a further two years.

- ***What needs to happen before the service can start?***

Airlink has already started the process to obtain the final regulatory approvals for the service. In order to comply with the requirements of the SA CAA (South African Civil Aviation Authority), Airlink will need to carry out an ETOPS (Extended Range Twin Engine Operations) Proving Flight and more information will follow in due course.

In addition to formal regulatory approvals, there is a great deal of practical planning required and this is already underway. For example, Airlink and SHG are in discussion regarding fares and ticket distribution systems.

## **Passenger Information**

- ***What is the baggage allowance?***

For checked or hold baggage, the general free allowance on Airlink flights is 20Kg in Economy Class and 30Kg in Business Class per adult passenger.

In addition to the checked or hold baggage, passengers may carry the following cabin or hand baggage. Each piece should not exceed 8kg.

Economy Class: 1 Piece plus 1 slimline laptop bag  
Business Class: 2 Pieces plus 1 slimline laptop bag

- ***What is the freight/cargo allowance?***

SHG has reached agreement with Airlink that in the first instance the priority for cargo/freight will be given to essential services for the Island. A typical example is the Island's mail which will be given priority over other types of cargo.

Any remaining cargo/freight capacity can then be made available. Cargo transport is currently charged at GBP £1.88 per Kg from Johannesburg or St Helena respectively. Note that this fee will be subject to change from time to time.

- ***Can pets be transported on the flight?***

We are working with the airline to put in place the practical arrangements. Further information will follow.

- ***Can Airlink carry patients with additional requirements, for example, medical referrals, wheelchair customers and stretcher cases?***

Residents on St Helena should note that emergency medical cases will be transported using the aeromedevac flight service in place with ER24 - emergency cases will not need to wait for the Airlink weekly scheduled air service.

However, in future the Island's medical referrals (i.e. non-urgent cases) will travel to South Africa on the St Helena Air Service. Airlink is applying for a Part 138 licence in order to facilitate this.

Airlink already has the capacity to carry passengers who are wheelchair bound. Persons with reduced mobility may carry free of charge one wheelchair and/or other assistive devices upon which they are dependant.

Airlink is also developing its capacity to carry stretcher cases and this service will be in place in the first quarter of 2018.

- ***What if I want to take a particular item on the plane?***

Further information on items that can be carried onboard can be found at <https://flyairlink.com/information/baggage-policy#/>

- ***Is there a frequent flyer programme?***

Yes. Airlink is a member of the South African Airways Frequent Flyer Programme 'Voyager'. Frequent fliers are rewarded with air miles every time they travel with one

of the member airlines on the Voyager scheme. These miles can be redeemed for free flights, upgrades and other benefits.

## **Aircraft**

- ***What type of aircraft will be used?***

Airlink plan to carry out the St Helena Air Service using an Embraer E190-100IGW.

- ***What is the range of the aircraft?***

The payload range of the Embraer E190-100IGW aircraft is suited to the St Helena service with the proviso that a refuelling stop is required at either Windhoek or Walvis Bay in Namibia. As aircraft performance varies in accordance with meteorological conditions, in particular ambient temperature, specific payload and range will be determined in accordance with the prevailing meteorological conditions at the time.

- ***Is the aircraft ETOPS certified?***

The aircraft is type certified for ETOPS 120 operations. However, ETOPS approval is also required of the operator of ETOPS certified aircraft. Airlink has engaged with the SA CAA (South Africa Civil Aviation Authority) on this matter and has received temporary ETOPS (Extended Range Twin Engine Operations) operator approval. Final ETOPS approval will be confirmed following an ETOPS Proving Flight to St Helena.

- ***Will there be a proving flight before the scheduled service starts?***

Yes. In order to comply with the requirements of the SA CAA (South African Civil Aviation Authority), Airlink will need to carry out an ETOPS (Extended Range Twin Engine Operations) Proving Flight and more information will follow in due course.

- ***What about training for the crew?***

A training programme has been put in place for the Airlink crews. All Airlink pilots operating at St Helena will have training and experience in flying to Category C airports as well as ETOPS training.

- ***Will the aircraft operate on Runway 20?***

For planning purposes, Airlink has designed its service to St Helena based on the use of Runway 02 with a 15 kt tailwind.

On the day of operation the crew will select the most appropriate runway for landing as per the weather prevailing on that day.

It is intended that over time sufficient data will be accumulated with regards to actual landings and the environmental conditions experienced at the time. This data will be analysed and used to establish the viability of normal use of Runway 20 given the known prevailing wind situation. Based on the data accumulated from the 12 landings that pilots have experienced at St Helena so far (11 during the Embraer EJet trials that took place during December 2016 and 1 on 3 May 2017 during the Avro RJ85 charter), Airlink is optimistic that the data accumulated from future landings will prove that normal landings will be able to be performed on runway 20 when prevailing winds at the time of landing so require.

- ***What about the aircraft maintenance programme?***

Airlink is a licensed Aircraft Maintenance Organisation. It is the only Embraer approved maintenance provider for commercial airline aircraft on the African continent.

Airlink has entered into an agreement with Embraer to provide ongoing support during the aircraft entry into service.

An Airlink Aircraft Maintenance Engineer will be on board every flight should there be a need for minor maintenance. A spares pack will be held at St Helena Airport to facilitate this.

- ***Is there any back up if the aircraft breaks down?***

Airlink has additional Embraer E190 aircraft together with a standby crew available to deploy on the St Helena route in the event of technical or other delays.

- ***What will be the diversion airport?***

Wideawake Airfield on Ascension Island has been nominated as the diversion airport.

However, Airlink also plans to use island hold reserves as part of its ETOPS protocol. In this case, if conditions are not favourable at St Helena Airport at the time of departure from Windhoek the aircraft will not depart Windhoek until landing conditions at St Helena Airport so permits.

In the island hold scenario, there will be a flight time related decision making point along the flight path between Windhoek and St Helena at which the aircraft will ascertain from the St Helena Airport that the meteorological conditions at St Helena Airport remain conducive for landing and that conditions are not trending such that a

landing will not be assured. In the event that unfavourable conditions are reported to the aircraft by the St Helena Airport at or before the decision making point, the aircraft will be compelled to return to Windhoek. If favourable conditions for landing are reported and the flight continues beyond the decision making point, it will be compelled to land within two hours of arriving overhead St Helena Airport.

## **The Procurement Process**

- ***How many people tendered?***

There were a number of interested parties in the tender process and we thank all bidders for their participation. It would be inappropriate for SHG to comment any further on this matter due to the commercial nature of our discussions with bidders.

- ***Was there a delay in the process?***

SHG had advised that a result would be made available during the UK summer and this was delivered.

- ***Is the service being underwritten?***

Airlink will operate the St Helena Air Service as a commercial venture. Financial support might be required in the initial stages but there is every expectation that as demand grows, so too will the profitability of the venture.

## **Other**

- ***How long will the RMS operate for?***

Further information will follow.

- ***Can I transfer my ticket from the RMS to the flight? Will charges apply?***

Passengers booked to travel on the RMS St Helena at the time that tickets become available for the St Helena Air Service will be able to transfer their ticket to the St Helena Air Service. No transfer fees will apply.

The full details on how to go about this will be published nearer the time.

- ***When will the MV Helena service commence?***

The MV Helena will commence its freight service to St Helena when the RMS St Helena is withdrawn from service. Further information will follow on this.

- ***Are other air services able to operate to St Helena?***



Yes. The St Helena Airport operates an open skies policy and approval will be given to all flights that meet the regulatory and technical requirements. All flights are on a prior permission required basis and interested operators should contact Gwyneth Howell, Head of Operations at St Helena Airport, via email [hoo@airportsthelena.com](mailto:hoo@airportsthelena.com) or on tel. +290 25175.

- ***What about the Comair service?***

Comair had planned to operate a B737-800 to St Helena, however, as a result of the severe wind shear experienced on Runway 20 from the initial test flights and the new requirement to primarily make use of Runway 02 this aircraft type would not provide an optimum payload if it were operated in tailwind conditions. Discussions are underway with Comair to reach mutual agreement on the termination the original air services agreement.

Comair has remained very much engaged with SHG and has been a helpful source of advice. SHG extends its thanks to the team at Comair for their support.

## **Ascension**

- ***Will there be a monthly service to Ascension Island?***

Yes, there will be a monthly service to Ascension Island.

- ***When will the service to Ascension commence?***

It is expected following the anticipated commencement of the main service that the monthly service between St Helena and Ascension Island will start soon after and operate on the second Saturday of each month.

- ***Can a flight still land there even with the runway repairs?***

Wideawake Airfield at Ascension Island is open. Whilst it is not possible for heavier aircraft such as the A330 to land there, other regular aircraft services continue as normal.

- ***What will the costs be for a flight between St Helena and Ascension Island?***

Fares will be announced nearer to the commencement date for the air service to Ascension Island.

**SHG**  
**21 July 2017**

**Airlink**  
**21 July 2017**