

# President Bongo launches Gabon FlyAfrica.com

The President of Gabonese Republic, H.E Ali Bongo Ondimba announced the launch of Gabon FlyAfrica.com, a Pan-African low-cost airline aimed at enhancing air connectivity across Africa and reducing the cost of doing business in Africa.



The announcement was made during the New York Forum Africa, one of the largest gatherings of politicians, investors, entrepreneurs and NGOs in Africa, hosted under the patronage of President Bongo. Other heads of state and key political figures attending the Forum include the President Alassane Ouattara from Ivory Coast, former President of Colombia Andres Pastrana, former President of Poland, Lech Walesa and former President of the European Union, Jose Barosso.

The affordable low-cost model which has worked successfully in Europe and Asia by contributing significantly to the economic growth of those regions, is expected to herald in a revolution in Africa's airline industry, unlocking the continent's potential by boosting the economic mobility of its citizens, and encouraging increased trade as a result of the airline's unprecedented low fares for passengers and goods.

Announcing the launch of the Pan-African airline, President Bongo says: "My vision for Africa has always been that of an integrated continent. An Africa where every citizen has the opportunity to afford air travel and take advantage of the benefits of being economically mobile. The launch of Gabon FlyAfrica.com, a Pan African airline, is an important step in implementing this vision."

## The cost of doing business in Africa

"One of the biggest obstacles to Africa's growth and development is the cost of doing business in Africa. Moving goods and people between African states are still too complicated and expensive and remains a major obstacle to the prosperity of the continent. One of the biggest contributions that we as Africans can make to Africa's development is to open the skies for direct affordable travel between African states."

The President called on African countries to improve connectivity across Africa in order to reduce the cost of doing business and facilitate air travel. He urged African countries to implement the Yamoussoukro Declaration (YD), which is the basis for creating a single airspace market for Africa.

President Bongo continues: "Aviation is the next infrastructure growth frontier for Africa. Enhancing air connectivity can help raise productivity and create jobs by encouraging investment and innovation, improving business operations and efficiency.

Air transport is indispensable for tourism, where convenient air service facilitates the arrival of larger numbers of tourists."

The Pan-African low cost airline is the vision of President Bongo. Inspired in Gabon, FlyAfrica.com was launched 13 months ago in Southern Africa where the business model was tested and refined with the successful establishment of airlines in Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

FlyAfrica.com has significantly shaken up the airline industry in Africa by offering the lowest airfares on the continent and proving that the low-cost model is sustainable. On the Johannesburg to Harare route the airline has reduced fares between 50-70%.

The second phase of the airline's roll out will include Gabon and other countries in East and West Africa.

## **Strategic partnerships**

The announcement outlines a strategic partnership in between the Government of Gabon and African industrialist, venture capitalist and philanthropist, Ivor Ichikowitz.

Ivor Ichikowitz says: "One of Africa's huge resources is its ability for innovation which continues to generate new products, ideas and services that places Africa at the forefront of emerging technologies and solutions. The launch of FlyAfrica.com is such an innovation and will be the game-changer for Africa's aviation industry.

"I have been truly inspired by President Bongo's vision for the transformation of the economic prospects of Africa by creating better linkages between African countries and their people. I too believe that this continent's future lies in the hands of Africans who by working together will ultimately succeed in our common ongoing struggle against poverty. By coming together and investing in each others economies we will create jobs and in so doing eliminate poverty."

Ichikowitz adds: "We are very privileged to be part of this vision. The aim of FlyAfrica.com is to break down the barriers and costs that currently exist to travel across Africa. Prohibitively high fares, poor or non-existent services are playing their role in slowing down the development of this continent. FlyAfrica.com is designed to change that. FlyAfrica.com will lead the charge for unlocking Africa's business and tourism potential by delivering world-class standards and low fares traditionally associated with airlines in Europe and Asia."

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