

# St Helena expecting influx of tourists with scheduled flights, new luxury hotel

The government of St Helena has announced that South Africa's largest independent airline, Airlink, was the preferred bidder to fly passengers between SA and the island. The only scheduled way to travel to and from St Helena was aboard the Royal Mail Ship St Helena until the airport opened. The ship is likely to be decommissioned in 2018 once scheduled flights are established.



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According to a release on 9 June 2017, the St Helena Government will enter into a period of contractual negotiations with Airlink. It is anticipated that a formal announcement will be made in the coming weeks on completion of negotiations and contract signing. It is at this point SHG will be able to confirm details such as the commencement date, frequency, aircraft type, the international hub and connecting airports.”

## Mantis to meet influx of tourists with new "heritage" luxury hotel

An influx of tourists to the remote destination is anticipated and award-winning hospitality group Mantis have renovated three Georgian buildings to form a luxury hotel.

“We always seek to unearth the exceptional and St Helena is just that,” says Adrian Gardiner, founder and chairman of developers, the Mantis Collection. “Not many people have visited this fascinating, isolated part of the globe. Now, with the announcement of Airlink’s tender success, it will be so much easier to explore the island’s natural wonders, culture, and intriguing history. Mantis is delighted to offer world-class hospitality to those visiting this unique destination, as well as employment opportunities to the Islanders.”

The Mantis St Helena, will comprise 30 beautifully decorated en-suite bedrooms, eight of which will be “heritage rooms” in the original buildings, built circa 1744, and 22 newly constructed “contemporary rooms”. Two attractive terrace areas will cater for al fresco dining and cocktails, while a 60-seater dining room will serve cuisine of international standards. The hotel is wheelchair friendly.

St Helena is 2,000 kilometres from Africa, the nearest landmass, and boasts a variety of landscapes for tourists to discover. With hundreds of endemic species and impressive marine biodiversity, St Helena is on the United Kingdom’s list as a possible future UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is also of important historical significance, being the place to which Napoleon, King Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo and 6,000 Boer prisoners of war were banished.

## Lengthy tender process

While St Helena’s new airport on Prosperous Bay Plain has been open since mid-2016 for private aircraft and medical evacuations, the anticipated launch of regular commercial flights was delayed in order to establish which aircraft would be suitable for the airstrip. Comair, the winner of the original tender, had to re-evaluate its position after test flights with a 737-800 aircraft raised wind-shear and turbulence concerns for larger aircraft. As a result, the tender process was reopened.



### No plane sailing for St Helena

29 Apr 2016



In January 2017, Airlink acquired Embraer E-Jets and entered their tender bid with a proposal for direct flights to St Helena. In May 2017, an Airlink charter flight landed on the island with 60 passengers, who had been stranded in Cape Town due to HMS St Helena undergoing repairs. The Avro aircraft used for this flight had to refuel in Angola on the outward leg, and in Namibia on its return to Cape Town. Airlink’s new Embraer E-Jets are also perfectly suited to conditions at St Helena and, with a greater range than the Avros, present the option of supplying direct flights from South Africa to the island, and possibly to Ascension and the Falklands Islands too.

Apart from its South African destinations, Airlink already flies to Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.

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