

Air Seychelles to drop Paris, Madagascar flights, re-focus on domestic market

Seychelles' national carrier has announced the cancellation of two international flights in April, including its Paris flight, which accounts for 30% of the airline's passenger revenue.



The scaling and pivot to the domestic market means an unspecified number of employees will lose their job

As of 24 April 2018, Air Seychelles will suspend all flights to Paris, the French capital and Antananarivo, Madagascar.

The national carrier faces more international competition. British Airways is expected to start operating to Seychelles in March. This will be followed by Air France's subsidiary - Joon - and Swiss Edelweiss Air in May and September respectively.

The chief executive of Air Seychelles, Remco Althuis, said that these new operations, coupled with the nine other airlines already operating in the island nation, "will create an overcapacity of inbound seats to Seychelles, leading to reduced airfares and this will put a lot of pressure on our Paris operation."

"This represents a major challenge to the company as Paris accounts for approximately 30% of our total passenger revenue at air Seychelles," said Althuis.

The flight to Antananarivo will be discontinued due to its high dependence on the Paris feed. Additionally, Air Seychelles will stop leasing two Airbus A330 aircraft.

Reducing workforce

With these cancellations, the airline will have to reduce its workforce in cabin crew and pilots. Expatriate pilots are expected to be affected first.

"This has been a difficult choice for us to make but it is necessary if Air Seychelles is to continue to serve the people and economy of Seychelles in a way that is both profitable and sustainable," said Althuis.

The exact number of staff to be affected is yet to be announced. During the coming months, the airline management team will be working closely with the Supervisory Board, Etihad Airways and the Government of Seychelles to preserve as many jobs as possible and provide assistance to staff.

Air Seychelles will concentrate on developing its domestic operations and regional flights to Mauritius, Johannesburg, Abu Dhabi and Mumbai.

"Doing so will enable us to concentrate on more profitable areas of the business, while people in Seychelles will continue to have non-stop access to France and wider Europe through airlines that can operate at more efficient international scale than Air Seychelles," said Althuis.

The airline will also focus on domestic services mainly the inter-island flights between Mahe and Praslin, scenic flight packages and island charters. Air Seychelles will also strengthen non-airline service areas and these include ground handling, cargo handling and engineering.

2019 plans

In 2019, the airline will replace its regional fleet of two Airbus A320 with next-generation narrow-bodied aircrafts to enable Air Seychelles to operate more competitively.

The Minister for Civil Aviation, Maurice Loustau-Lalanne said that "it is important that we take these tough but necessary steps at this time to safeguard the future of Air Seychelles."

He remains confident that "with the full support of its stakeholders, our flag carrier will adapt to the winds of change."

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