

# Velvet adds another route to its schedule

Velvet Sky, South Africa's newest and first BEEE-owned aviation company is adding yet another route to its flight schedule - Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town - ahead of the busy festive season. This is the second new route that the company had added in a month and one that is expected to position it as a major contender in the price sensitive low cost domestic airline market.

The first flight from King Shaka International Airport to Port Elizabeth leaves on 4 November. Flights between the two centres will take place on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The first departure from Port Elizabeth to Durban gets airborne on 8 November, opening the way to a weekly service on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The Cape Town Durban route will kick off on 7 November with flights between the two centres on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The first Durban to Cape Town flight is scheduled for 4 November. Flight frequency is once a day on weekdays.

This adds a further 19 flights per week. In addition to opening up this new coastal route, Velvet Sky has increased its flight frequency between Johannesburg and Cape Town to seven flights daily on peak days and introduced a Durban overnight flight. The airline has doubled flights on Saturdays and has also improved some flight timings ahead of the busy summer holiday period.

## Closing the triangle was a logical step

According to chief operating officer, Gary Webb, "closing the golden triangle" was the logical next step for an airline that is about to double the size of its fleet with two Boeing 737s undergoing stringent safety testing before taking to the sky. Up until now, Velvet Sky has concentrated on servicing the routes between Durban and Johannesburg and Johannesburg and Cape Town which form the apex of the triangle. The Durban to Cape Town route addition completes it.

"We are doubling again and joining the dots. Because we will be en route to Cape Town, it makes sense to stop over and offer our consumers another low cost package to Port Elizabeth. From an economic perspective, we are increasing our customer base by carrying from Durban to Cape Town via Port Elizabeth."

Webb said that the recent recession which had put severe constraints on families' disposable incomes meant that South Africans were more likely to spend their holidays at a domestic resort than to travel overseas as they had in more prosperous times. In addition, Velvet Sky intended bringing on board a whole segment of the market that had up until now relied on buses and taxis to visit friends and families over the busy Christmas period. Webb said that less than 10 percent of South Africans have flown and that, while it is known that over four million trips are taken each year within the golden triangle, it is not clear how many of these are repeat travellers.

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