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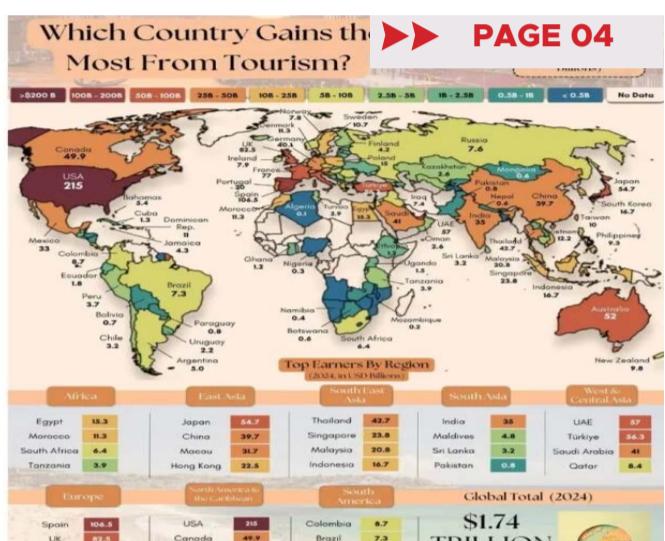
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Countries that Earn the Most from Tourism



Airbus Moves to Reassert Control Over Key Supply Chain Assets

By Joojo Maapa



Airbus has completed a targeted acquisition of selected Spirit AeroSystems assets, a move aimed at tightening control over critical parts of its aircraft production as supply-chain resilience becomes a central business priority for the world's largest planemaker.

The transaction, finalised in December 2025, covers six industrial sites across four countries and focuses exclusively on facilities that feed directly into Airbus programmes. Spirit retains most of its Boeing-related operations, while Airbus absorbs factories tied to its own growing backlog of commercial

aircraft orders.

Though little known to passengers, Spirit AeroSystems has long been a cornerstone of modern aircraft manufacturing, producing fuselage sections, wings and structural components for major airframers. Airbus, in particular, has depended on Spirit for some of the most sensitive elements of its aircraft, including A350 fuselage barrels, A220 wings, and structures for the A320-family.

By bringing these activities in-house, Airbus is seeking to reduce supply risk that has plagued the aerospace industry since the pandemic. Labour shortages, logistics

disruptions and financially strained suppliers slowed aircraft deliveries for years, reinforcing Airbus's view that some production steps are too strategic to remain outside direct control.

The assets being absorbed include facilities in Kinston, North Carolina; Saint-Nazaire, France; Casablanca, Morocco; Belfast, Northern Ireland; and Prestwick, Scotland, alongside the transfer of A220 pylon production from Wichita, Kansas, to Airbus's Saint-Éloi site in Toulouse. The sites are being rebranded under Airbus-owned entities, signalling permanent integration rather than interim oversight.

Beyond operational efficiency, the move also reduces Airbus's exposure to US-centric supply risks, including trade tensions, export controls and the knock-on effects of disruptions in the American aerospace sector. It also strengthens Airbus's industrial base as competition intensifies globally, particularly from China.

For airlines and passengers, the strategy is designed to deliver more predictable aircraft deliveries, improved quality control and greater production stability, helping airlines expand fleets on schedule and supporting smoother growth in global air travel.

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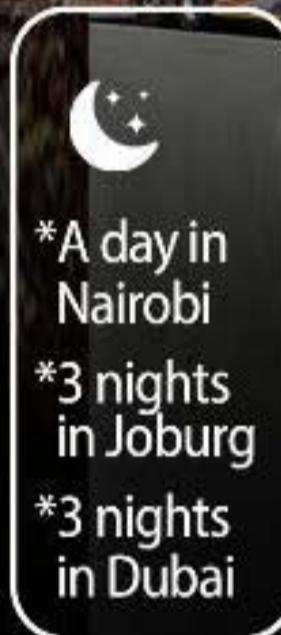
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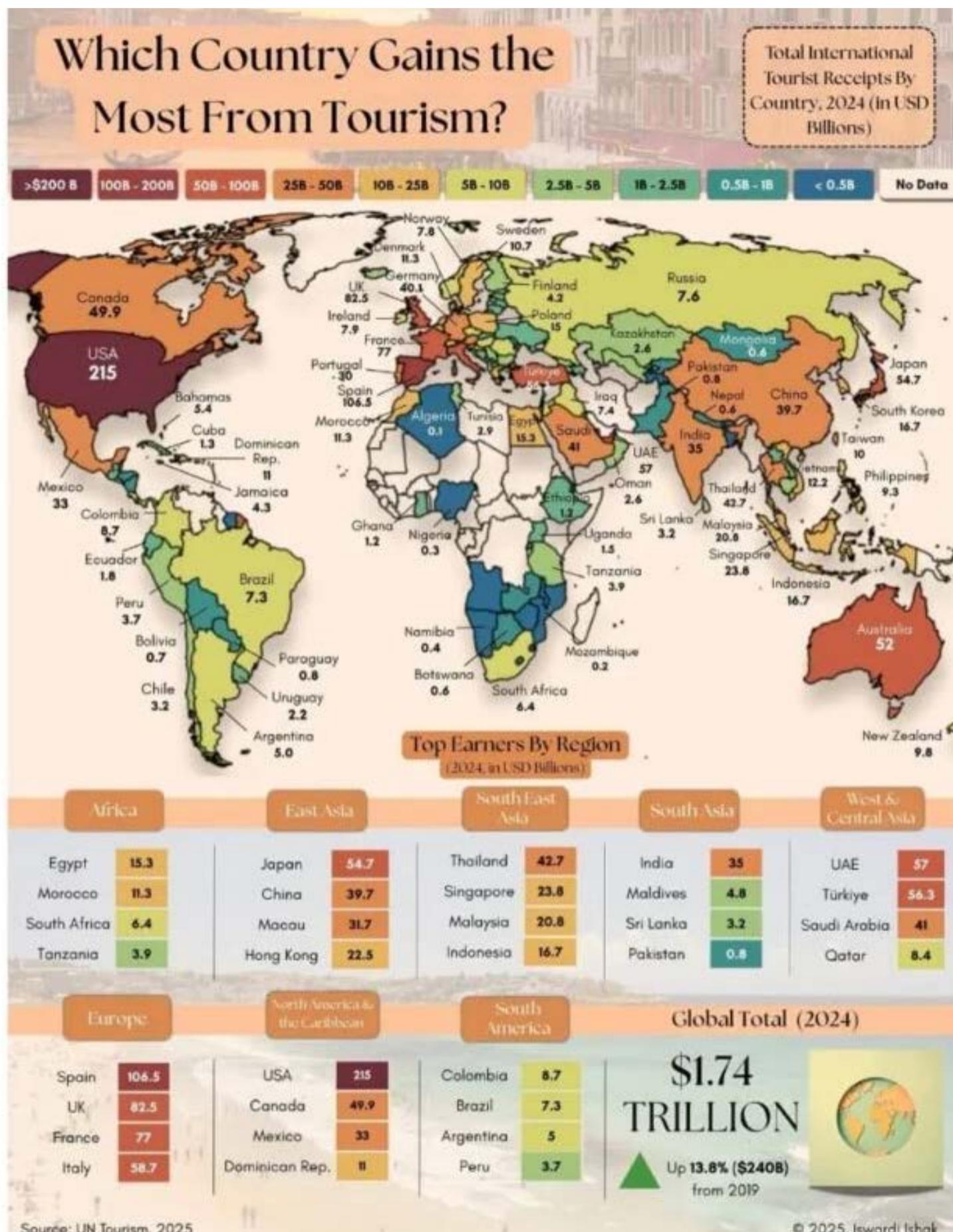
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Countries that Earn the Most from Tourism



Each year, the global tourism economy generates trillions in revenue as travelers explore new destinations and revisit old favorites. According to UN Tourism data, international tourist receipts reached a total of \$1.74 trillion in 2024, which is up 14% from pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

Visual creator Iswardi Ishak mapped the countries that benefit most from this spending, revealing which economies gain the most from foreign visitors.

Unsurprisingly, the U.S. leads by a wide margin, earning \$215 billion from international visitors. Europe dominates the top ranks, with Spain (\$106.5 billion), the UK (\$82.5 billion),

France (\$77 billion), and Italy (\$58.7 billion) all drawing in major tourism income. Japan (\$54.7 billion), China (\$39.7 billion), and Thailand (\$42.7 billion) round out Asia's biggest earners.

Why Some Countries Earn More Than Others

Tourism receipts depend on several factors: not just the

number of visitors, but how much each tourist spends. The U.S., for example, combines high visitor volumes with high average spending. Meanwhile, countries like Maldives or Jamaica may have smaller absolute totals but are far more dependent on tourism as a share of GDP.

In Europe, cultural heritage, high-speed transportation, and proximity to major markets help countries rack up significant tourist spending. Spain, which now outpaces even France, offers an unusually wide range of tourism experiences, from world-class beaches and island archipelagos to historic cities, gastronomy, and cultural heritage. This diversity helps attract visitors year-round and from multiple source markets. As a result, the country became the most-visited nation in the EU in 2024.

Tourism in Conflict Zones: The Ukraine Example

One of the more surprising figures in the dataset is Ukraine's \$1B in international tourism receipts. Despite the ongoing war, some regions of the country, particularly in the west, have remained relatively stable and open to humanitarian, business, and diaspora-related travel. Ukrainians returning to visit family and international volunteers have contributed to tourism-like spending, even under extraordinary conditions.

Henley Passport Index 2026: Ghana Passport Outranks Nigeria and Rwanda

By Kadel Traore



Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, Ghana's Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ghana has maintained a mid-tier position in the 2026 Henley Passport Index, ranking 69th globally and placing it ahead of several African and European peers in overall travel freedom, according to the latest index, released in January 2026.

The Ghanaian passport offers visa-free, visa-on-arrival, or electronic travel authorisation (eTA) access to 68 destinations worldwide, reflecting stable but limited global mobility.

This access covers ECOWAS member states, parts of East

Africa, select Caribbean nations, and a number of Asian and Middle Eastern destinations that offer visas-on-arrival.

Within West Africa, Ghana performs better than Cape Verde (ranked 72nd, with access to 65 destinations); Senegal is ranked 78th, with access to 57 destinations; Nigeria is ranked 89th, with access to 44 destinations; and Benin is ranked 70th, with access to 67 destinations.

Across the wider Africa region, Ghana's passport is ranked higher than Rwanda (70th), Tunisia (70th), Egypt (85th), and Angola (86th).

Internationally, Ghana's passport ranks higher than India's (80th), the Philippines' (73rd), and Jordan's (84th).

The Henley Passport Index is the most authoritative ranking of the world's passports by the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.

The index includes 199 passports and 227 travel destinations, providing users with the most comprehensive and reliable information about their global access and mobility.

Despite its relative strength in West Africa, Ghana's ranking underscores the continued

importance of bilateral air service agreements, diplomatic engagement, and reciprocal visa policies in expanding travel access.

Ghana's passport strength is increasingly a strategic asset for Ghana's aviation, tourism, and investment ambitions.

With historical data spanning 20 years and regularly updated expert analysis on the latest shifts in passport power, the index is an invaluable resource for global citizens and the standard reference tool for government policy in this field.

Labour Commission Declares Air Traffic Safety Engineers' Intended Strike Illegal



The National Labour Commission (NLC) has ordered the Ghana Air Traffic Safety Electronics Association (GhATSEA) of the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), to immediately call off its intended strike action, declaring it illegal under Ghana's labour laws.

The directive was issued at a meeting held on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, involving the NLC, the GCAA and GhATSEA. At the meeting, the Commission ruled that GhATSEA lacks the legal

capacity to declare or institute a strike, as it is an association and not a registered union recognized to negotiate or undertake industrial action.

GhATSEA had earlier announced plans to embark on an indefinite strike beginning Thursday, January 15, 2026, citing salary discrepancies and demanding the removal of the Director of Human Resources of the GCAA.

Following the announcement, the GCAA petitioned the National Labour Commission

to intervene in the matter.

The NLC stated that the intended strike action contravenes Regulation 20(e) and (h) of the Labour Regulations, L.I. 1833. The Commission further noted that the issues raised by the Association fall within the scope of a Collective Agreement, which GhATSEA lacks the legal capacity to negotiate or enforce. It emphasized that such matters should have been pursued through the recognized union, which is a party to the Collective Agreement.

According to the Commission, the Association also lacks the capacity to appear before the NLC and, consequently, has no legal right to declare a strike.

The NLC directed individual members who feel adversely affected to channel their grievances through the procedures outlined in the applicable Collective Agreement. It added that once the issues are properly brought to the attention of GCAA management, they should be addressed expeditiously.

ASKY Airlines Marks 16 Years of Strengthening Regional Connectivity



ASKY Airlines has marked 16 years of operations, underscoring its growing role in improving air connectivity, trade and people-to-people links across West and Central Africa.

Since launching operations in 2010, the Lomé-based carrier has steadily expanded its network, positioning itself as a key regional airline connecting major commercial and political centres across the sub-region.

ASKY's hub-and-spoke model, anchored at Lomé's Gnassingbé Eyadéma International Airport,

has enabled passengers to travel efficiently between markets that previously required lengthy surface journeys or indirect international routings.

Over the past decade and a half, ASKY has played a critical role in supporting intra-African mobility, facilitating business travel, tourism, and regional integration in line with broader continental initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

AviationGhana.com has consistently reported on the airline's expanding route network, fleet development and

partnerships that have helped close connectivity gaps across the region.

To celebrate its 16th anniversary, ASKY is offering special anniversary fare discounts. Customers booking online or via the ASKY mobile app will receive 16% off, while those booking through local offices or travel agents can enjoy 10% off using the promo code ASKY16YEARS.

The promotional fares are available during a sales period from January 16 to January 22, 2026, with travel valid between January 16 and May 31, 2026,

offering travellers flexibility across the first half of the year.

The anniversary campaign reflects ASKY's commitment to customer appreciation while reinforcing its mission of seamless regional connectivity.

As the airline enters its next phase, Mr. Worlanyo Afadzinu, Ghana Country Manager of ASKY, expects ASKY to continue strengthening its footprint, supporting economic activity and enhancing mobility across West and Central Africa's fast-growing aviation markets.

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New Look Kotoka International Airport VIP Lounge Set to Open On This Day



Artists Impression of the new-look Kotoka International Airport VIP Lounge after completion of renovation works

Refurbishment works underway at the VIP Lounge of Kotoka International Airport (KIA) is progressing very fast.

The upgraded facility is expected to reopen in about four months, according to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa.

In a post on his official X (formerly Twitter) account, the Minister said he inspected the ongoing refurbishment of the VIP block at Kotoka

International Airport, which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and serves as a key reception point for high-profile guests, diplomats, investors, and eminent tourists visiting Ghana.

Mr. Ablakwa noted that the project aims to give the VIP Lounge a modern transformation, reflecting Ghana's image as an attractive destination for diplomacy, investment and tourism. He stressed that the lounge often forms the first impression of the country for distinguished

visitors, making its upgrade a strategic priority.

The Minister emphasised that the refurbishment is being carried out at no cost to the Ghanaian taxpayer. Instead, funding has been mobilised through corporate sponsorships, secured as part of corporate social responsibility initiatives aligned with President John Dramani Mahama's Reset Agenda.

When completed, the revamped VIP Lounge will incorporate strong Ghanaian cultural elements, with local creatives invited

to contribute to the interior design and overall aesthetic. In addition, the facility will serve Made-in-Ghana food only, a move intended to promote the country's indigenous culinary industry.

The project is expected to enhance the overall premium passenger experience at Kotoka International Airport and reinforce Ghana's soft-power diplomacy through culture and hospitality.

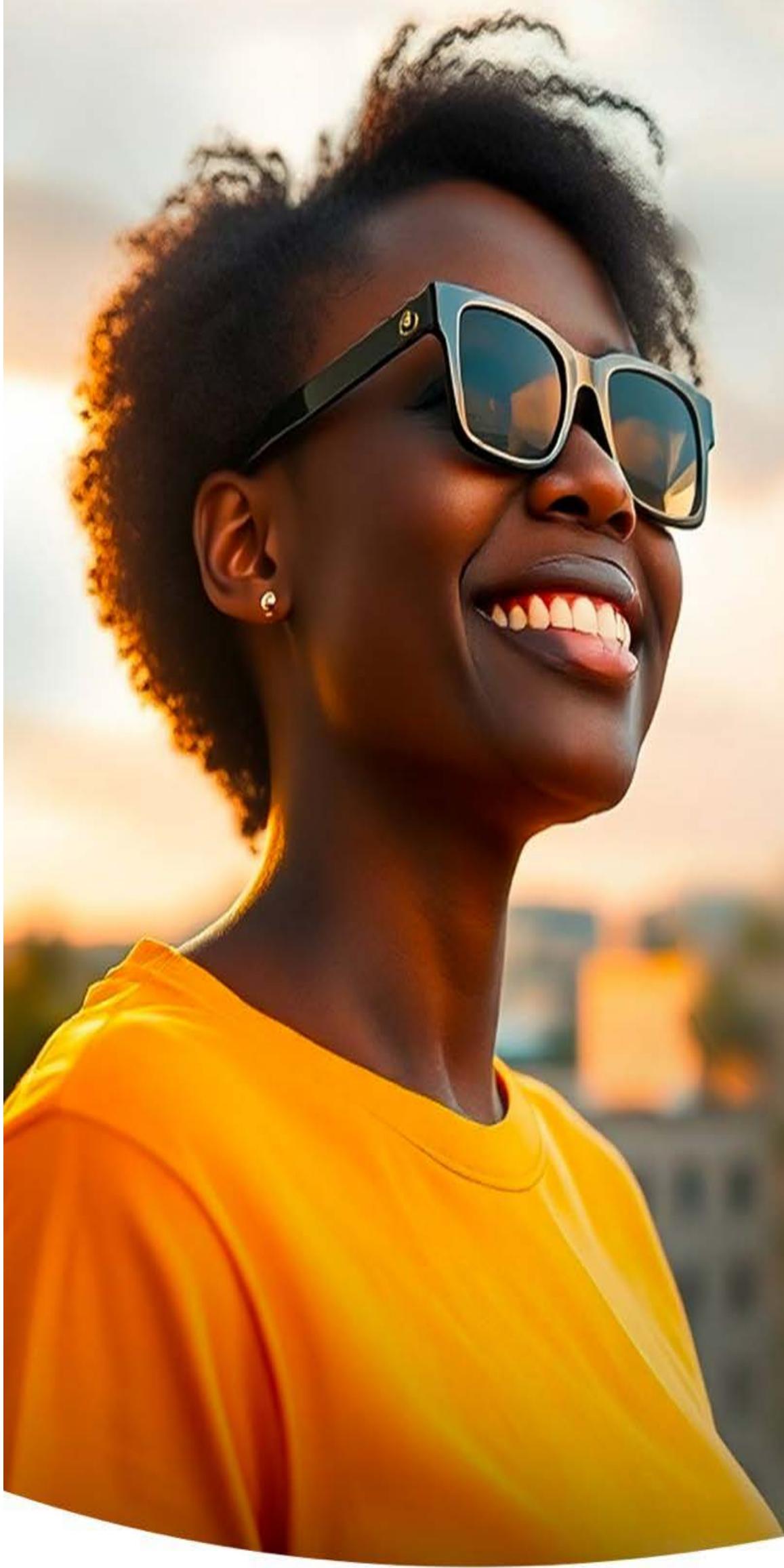
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African Airlines and Airports: Why resilience and smart tech are non-negotiable

By Martin Smillie and Yann Cabaret



Martin Smillie - SVP SITA C & DE

If you lead an airport or airline in Africa today, you're not just running a complex operation – you're managing a prized national asset. Airports have become critical infrastructure, and airlines are an integral lifeline for economic growth. Yet the reality is stark: the margin for error has vanished. Downtime isn't merely an inconvenience; it's a reputational and financial risk that ripples across economies.

So, what does that mean for leaders in aviation? It means resilience isn't optional. It's the foundation of competitiveness. And resilience, in 2025, starts with connectivity. Without it, the most sophisticated platforms, the most ambitious strategies, and the most talented teams are simply left powerless.

The Connectivity Imperative

Think about your airport or airline as a living organism. Its heartbeat is data – flowing through networks, systems, and platforms that must never stop. But here's the challenge: Africa's vastness and

varied connectivity make traditional networks vulnerable. Fiber cuts and outages become real risks. And when they do, everything grinds to a halt. The cost isn't just operational; it's reputational. Passengers don't forgive chaos easily, and neither do regulators or investors.

Forward-thinking leaders – those shaping the future – are asking a different question: What happens when things go wrong? Because they might. The answer lies in layered connectivity. If fibre fails, mobile steps in. If mobile falters, satellites take over. Low Earth Orbit (LEO) constellations aren't science fiction anymore; they're the safety net that keeps operations alive when the unexpected happens. This isn't redundancy for redundancy's sake – it's a resilience strategy.

Airlines: Efficiency Is Your Survival Strategy

For airlines, the conversation goes beyond connectivity. It's about fuel – the single largest cost driver and, increasingly, a sustainability flashpoint. For many African carriers, capital constraints and for

others, the global aerospace supply chain crisis, make it challenging to acquire the latest fuel-efficient aircraft.

But technology levels the playing field. New solutions are rewriting the rules. Imagine creating a digital twin of every aircraft in your fleet, analysing flight data, weight, and weather to optimise climb, cruise, and descent. No hardware. No retrofits. Just intelligence applied to what you already have.

The payoff? It's possible to achieve up to 5% fuel savings on climb alone. On a wide-body aircraft, that's 150 kilos of jet fuel per take-off. Add cruise optimisation, and you're looking at tons of fuel saved on long-haul routes. Multiply that across your network, and the numbers stop being incremental – they become transformational. Lower costs. Higher margins. And yes, a smaller carbon footprint. In a world where sustainability isn't just a buzzword but a business imperative, this matters.

Weather: The Next Frontier

If you think turbulence is just an issue of passenger comfort, think again. It's a cost issue, a safety issue, and increasingly, a sustainability issue also. Accurate, granular weather data is the difference between smooth operations and costly diversions. Today, advanced aggregation and predictive models are already available – and they're improving fast thanks to satellite technology. The leaders who integrate this into their operational DNA will outpace those who don't. Imagine the competitive advantage of predicting and avoiding turbulence before it even forms. That's not just clever; it's game changing.

Cybersecurity: The Silent Risk

Let's not sugarcoat it: airports are prime targets. As platforms move to the cloud and bandwidth demands soar, the attack surface expands. The basics matter – patch management, access control, IT hygiene. But basics aren't enough. You need layered security architecture, intrusion

detection, and, in many cases, outsourced expertise. If you don't have the skills in-house, it's the right time to get them. Because the cost of a breach isn't measured in dollars alone; it's measured in trust. And trust, once lost, is almost impossible and costly to regain.

Think Big. Start Small. Scale Fast.

This isn't about chasing the latest, new and shiny tech for the sake of it. It's about making pragmatic, high-impact moves that compound over time.

Start with resilience. Build redundancy into your connectivity. Then tackle efficiency – because every kilo of fuel saved is margin earned. Layer in weather intelligence and cybersecurity. And do it decisively. The future is moving fast, and Africa's ready to move at LEO speed. The question is whether you're willing to move with it.

Your Call to Action

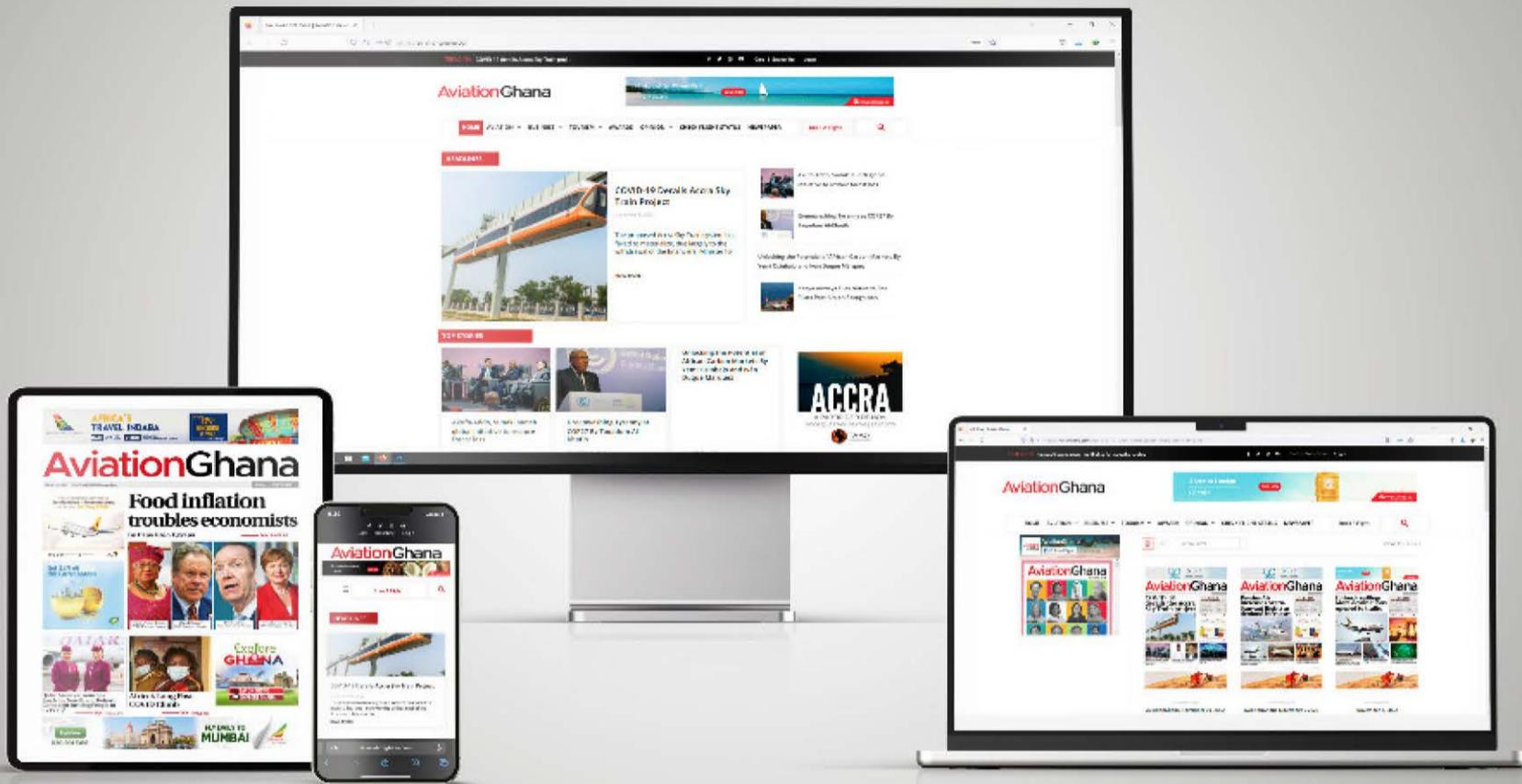
If you're reading this, you're already ahead of the curve. You understand that aviation isn't just about moving people; it's about moving economies. The question is: will you lead the transformation, or watch it happen from the sidelines? The tools exist. The technology is proven. The only variable left is leadership. And in this industry, leadership isn't about playing it safe – it's about making bold, informed bets that secure your future.

Africa's aviation story is still being written. Make sure your name is in the next chapter. Because the leaders who act now won't just survive – they'll thrive. And they'll define what success looks like for decades to come.

Martin Smillie is SVP of SITA Communications & Data Exchange and Yann Cabaret, CEO of SITA for Aircraft, the air transport industry's tech engine that delivers solutions to airlines, airports, aircraft and governments. SITA supports over 1,000 airports and 18,000 aircraft operated by more than 2,500 customers globally.

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