

Re-establishing a network

By **MANOJ PAPA**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AIR SEYCHELLES



MANOJ PAPA began his career with South African Airways (SAA) working across different functions including finance, sales, strategy, the frequent flier program and e-commerce, while rising to the position of Regional General Manager for Asia and Australasia. He joined Etihad Airways in 2007 and served as Vice President of Corporate Strategy. He returned to South African Airways in 2012 and held the position of Acting General Manager: Commercial and was instrumental in developing the long term turnaround Strategy for SAA. He became CEO of Air Seychelles on 1st March 2014.

Air Seychelles' partnership with Etihad links the country to the world

Established in 1978, Air Seychelles is the national airline of the Republic of Seychelles and plays a key role supporting the tourism industry of this idyllic archipelago of 115 islands.

The last two years have been particularly eventful for the airline, culminating in its being awarded the prestigious 4-Star Airline ranking by airline review organisation Skytrax at the beginning of this year. Air Seychelles is the first and only 4-Star airline in the Indian Ocean, and is one of only 36 airlines in the world that meets the rigorous quality criteria of the Skytrax 4-Star airline ranking.

We are absolutely delighted to receive this recognition, which recognizes our hard work to enhance our product and service offering. This new ranking places us among the very best airlines in the world and confirms the significant progress we have made during the last two years.

Air Seychelles was awarded its 4-star rating after a rigorous auditing exercise by Skytrax in recent months. In June 2013, the airline leapt from 133 to 56 worldwide to join the ranks of the most improved airlines. It also achieved the position as second best airline in Africa.

In January 2012, Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, bought a 40 per

cent stake in the airline from the government as part of a strategic equity partnership in which the two airlines have collaborated on a long-term business plan. This has seen Air Seychelles renew its fleet, as well as benefitting from Etihad Airways' resources and extensive global route network, allowing it to maximise efficiencies, boost sales opportunities, and launch scholarship training programs for young Seychellois. In the near future we will be adding an Airbus A319 and three Twin Otters to our fleet, and in 2014 commence flights to Paris, Madagascar, La Réunion and Mumbai.

Air Seychelles is focused on becoming the carrier of choice in the Indian Ocean, providing its guests with a warm and uniquely Creole travel experience, enviable levels of comfort, and service in the air and on the ground.

As part of this mission, the airline has recently upgraded its Pearl Business class and Economy class cabins within its new Airbus A330-200 fleet. Pearl Business class now offers the only true lie-flat seat on any commercial airline flying into or out of Seychelles in a 2-2-2 configuration. Each of the comfortable new seats features leather and fabric upholstery, a privacy shell, and a pitch of 82 inches with lumbar support and an in-seat massage function.

Economy class features personal on-demand entertainment screens in all seats, which are ergonomically designed for optimal comfort with a seat pitch of between 32 and 33 inches. The 'cradle recline' feature ensures the spine rests in a more natural position, with adjustable headrests and integrated footrests providing extra comfort.

Once in Seychelles, the international airport need not be visitors' final destination. There are more than 20, 15-minute flights a day to the second-largest island of Praslin. The more



remote islands of Bird, Denis, Desroches, Darros and Frégate may also be reached with Air Seychelles, in collaboration with the islands' hotels.

Safety and security

Air Seychelles is the first airline in Africa to implement a Safety Management System (SMS), which is mandatory for all IATA member airlines.

The airline's fleet of A330-200 aircraft, leased from Etihad Airways, undergoes regular maintenance at Abu Dhabi Aircraft Technology's state-of-the-art hangars, as well as by qualified engineers in Seychelles.

The domestic fleet is maintained by Air Seychelles Technical Operations, a European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) accredited organisation.

Luxury in the air, and on the ground

The Seychelles is increasingly a luxury destination: the increase in high-end tourism is reflected in the development of 5 star resorts. This brings with it the necessity to provide luxury service to this niche market as well as to other VIPs. Air Seychelles has partnered with Abu Dhabi-based Royal Jet to operate the only Fixed Based Operation in Seychelles, offering dedicated service to private jets as well as to very important guests.

Air Seychelles also has its own premium lounge exclusively for its business class passengers in the departure lounge at Seychelles international airport, designed to provide a world class facility and to meet the needs of discerning guests.

Trezor is the Air Seychelles duty free shop at the departure lounge offering an exciting duty-free shopping experience at Seychelles international airport.

Loyalty programme

Air Seychelles' loyalty programme works in conjunction with the award-winning Etihad Guest programme, offering its members improved benefits, services and flexibility. Etihad Guest members automatically earn and redeem miles with the entire Etihad Guest Partner network worldwide, which includes hotel chains, car hire companies and retailers as well as 15 airline partners. We have also launched Air Seychelles VIP to cater for VIPs and private jets visiting Seychelles.


Cargo

Air Seychelles offers its customers a wide range of cargo services linked to its partner airline Etihad Airways using the Abu Dhabi hub to access its expanding international route network and aircraft fleet in addition to serving the destinations of Johannesburg, Mauritius and Hong Kong. The airline also provides a convenient new option for sending packages within the archipelago through its domestic services.

The future looks bright

Since its partnership with Etihad, a considerably slimmed-down Air Seychelles has demonstrated strong growth as it works to re-establish an international network through an increasing number of codeshare partners.

Air Seychelles forecasts that it is on track for a second year of profitability after reporting a US\$1 million profit for the financial year to Dec-2012, after losing US\$12.5 million in 2011.

We are creating a solid foundation for the future of our airline, Seychelles tourism and our home economy, and we are on track for a second year of profitability. 

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Striving to become the carrier of choice in the Indian Ocean region