

South Africa Air Freight Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Service (Freight, Express, Mail), By Destination (Domestic, International), End Use (Private, Commercial), And Segment Forecasts, 2025 - 2030

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Abstracts

The South Africa air freight market size was estimated at USD 3,223.1 million in 2024, and is projected to reach USD 5,760.4 million by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 8.7% from 2025 to 2030. The growth of the South Africa air freight market is primarily influenced by factors such as increasing e-commerce and retail demand, which is driving higher volumes of air shipments, and expansion of manufacturing and industrial exports, boosting the need for faster cargo transport.

An emerging opportunity lies in the rising adoption of cold chain logistics and temperature-sensitive shipping, creating growth prospects in pharmaceuticals and perishable goods. However, infrastructure limitations and airport congestion pose challenges, potentially affecting timely cargo delivery and operational efficiency. South Africa's booming e-commerce ecosystem is a major driver behind rising air freight volumes. In 2024, online retail in the country grew by 35%, reaching about USD 5.5 billion, and this trend continues into 2025 at an annualized growth rate of 38%. This surge is being fuelled by strong digital adoption across major retail categories such as groceries, fashion, health and beauty, and rapid investment by large retailers like Shoprite, Pick n Pay, and Woolworths. At the same time, increased air connectivity, especially international flights from Cape Town, has expanded belly-cargo capacity, enabling more high-value, time-sensitive e-commerce goods to be shipped by air. The growth of mobile payment solutions and same-day delivery services is further accelerating online purchases, creating higher demand for reliable air freight solutions. As consumer expectations rise, logistics providers are increasingly adopting advanced

tracking and warehousing technologies to meet fast delivery requirements.

The expansion of South Africa's manufacturing and industrial exports is driving demand for faster air freight logistics. Industries such as automotive, electronics, and chemicals are increasingly relying on air transport to meet tight delivery schedules and maintain global supply chain efficiency. For example, South Africa's automotive sector, which exports vehicles and components to Europe and Asia, often uses air freight for urgent parts and high-value shipments to avoid production delays. Similarly, high-tech electronics and pharmaceutical products require quick, reliable shipping to preserve quality and meet regulatory timelines. This growing need for speed and reliability in exports is encouraging logistics providers to enhance their air cargo networks, invest in advanced tracking systems, and offer dedicated express services. As a result, faster logistics solutions are becoming integral to sustaining the country's industrial competitiveness and export growth.

A key opportunity in the South Africa air freight market lies in the rising adoption of cold chain logistics for pharmaceuticals, perishable foods, and other temperature-sensitive goods. With increasing demand for fresh produce, vaccines, and medical supplies both domestically and internationally, specialized air freight services that maintain strict temperature controls are becoming essential. Companies that invest in refrigerated storage, temperature-monitored containers, and rapid handling processes can tap into this growing segment. For instance, the pharmaceutical industry increasingly relies on air shipments to ensure timely delivery of vaccines and biologics to hospitals and clinics. Expanding cold chain capabilities not only supports public health and food security but also opens new revenue streams for air cargo operators, positioning them to capitalize on high-value, time-sensitive shipments.

Many airports, including OR Tambo and Cape Town International, face limitations in cargo handling capacity, runway availability, and storage facilities, especially during peak seasons. Congestion on aprons and at customs clearance points leads to delays, increasing the risk of spoilage for perishable goods and affecting the reliability of time-sensitive shipments. Limited investment in modern cargo terminals and insufficient integration between road and air logistics further exacerbate the issue. Thus, air freight operators must navigate operational bottlenecks, higher turnaround times, and increased costs, which can hinder growth and reduce competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.

South Africa Air Freight Market Report Segmentation

This report forecasts revenue growth at country level and provides an analysis of the latest industry trends in each of the sub-segments from 2018 to 2030. For this study, Grand View Research has segmented the South Africa air freight market report based on service, destination, and end use.

Service Outlook (Revenue, USD Million, 2018 - 2030)

Freight

Express

Mail

Other

Destination Outlook (Revenue, USD Million, 2018 - 2030)

Domestic

International

End Use Outlook (Revenue, USD Million, 2018 - 2030)

Private

Commercial

Retail and E-commerce

Manufacturing

Healthcare

Automotive

Perishable Goods

Others

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