

First air taxi flights in Singapore to take scenic route around Marina Bay if approved

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SINGAPORE, July 12 : Tourists looking for a new way to take in the sights in the Marina Bay area may be able to do so from the sky if a proposed route for the first commercial air taxi flights here gets the nod from the authorities.

The proposed 12km-long flight, operated by air taxi pioneer Volocopter, is expected to be ready for launch around early- to mid-2024, with the hiring of key staff such as pilots, engineers and service crew expected to start by end-2023 at the latest, said Volocopter's chief commercial officer Christian Bauer on Tuesday (July 12).

Bauer spoke to reporters during a tour of a newly launched public exhibition at ITE College Central in Ang Mo Kio, which will showcase a scale model of Volocopter's fully electric urban air taxi VoloCity.

The fully electric aircraft has a range of 35km and a speed of 90kmh, and is an expression of the German company's longer term vision for urban air mobility in Singapore.

If all goes to plan, Volocopter's maiden flight here will take passengers from a take-off and landing area in Marina South to the Marina Reservoir, going over the Marina Barrage and the Benjamin Sheares Bridge at an altitude of 100m to 150m, before looping around the Tanjong Rhu area and heading back to Marina South.

The journey will take approximately 15 minutes and studies on the route have already been performed, said Bauer, adding that the proposed route is in "the final approval stage".

"Why a tourist flight? Because to be quite transparent, Singapore does not have a congestion problem on the ground, but you have around 20 million visitors per year who want to have excitement, an experience. We believe such a breathtaking sightseeing excursion would be a brilliant way to start off," he added.

Bauer said Volocopter is also in discussion with the authorities on the location of its first VoloPort, which is where the air taxi will take off from and land at.

"In fairness, the devil is in the details. We also have to really get approval from all ministries for that," he said.

Volocopter's air taxis look like small helicopters with multiple mini rotor blades. These electric aircraft have been touted as a safer, quieter, more convenient and more environmentally friendly way to travel.

They will take off from and land on vertiports - named for the way the aircraft take off and land vertically.

Resembling small private airports about 20m to 25m long, these can be replicated on the rooftop of buildings, which would allow for more direct transport.

The firm wants Singapore and Paris to be the first cities its commercial air taxis are flown in, and is in the process of obtaining the necessary regulatory approvals from the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore and the European authorities.

A slew of tests, flight trials and evaluations are being conducted to ensure the air taxis are as safe as commercial aircraft. - The Straits Times/ANN