Microsoft is first major cloud provider to open African data centers

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A little later than planned, two new Azure data centers have gone live in South Africa. With these, Microsoft has become the first major cloud provider to have any infrastructure on the African continent.

First announced in 2017, the company originally intended to open its facilities—South Africa West in Cape Town and South Africa North in Johannesburg—in 2018. Even with the delays, Microsoft has still beaten Amazon to the punch; an AWS datacenter is to open in Cape Town in 2020. As well as offering Azure services, Microsoft is going to use the facilities for hosting Office 365 from the third quarter of the year and Dynamics 365 from the fourth quarter.

Microsoft is also investing in connectivity in Africa, with a fibre network reaching Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and soon Angola. The customer profile in Africa is perhaps a little more varied than in the other regions Microsoft serves. Early customers include not just a bank and a municipal water utility, but also the Peace Parks Foundation, which is working to monitor and prevent poaching. The foundation processes tens of thousands of cameras used to monitor areas at risk of

poacher activity and also intends to use expanded network infrastructure to relay radio communications to improve its ability to reach remote areas.

The new data centers might also one day provide relief to South African gamers, who have long complained of high ping times and poor online gaming performance.

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