

## NEW PORTS OF CALL

## IT'S SMOOTH SAILING AHEAD FOR RCC

Cruise market in Southeast Asia set to grow strongly, says managing director

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**T**HERE are no signs of rough seas ahead for Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd (RCC) as the global cruise operator sees strong growth in Malaysia and Southeast Asia.

Managing director (Asia Pacific) Angie Stephen said the cruise market in Southeast Asia had seen strong growth over the last several years and would continue to grow strongly.

"From China, there is massive growth and in Southeast Asia, we have moved from a seasonal product to nearly all-year round.

"Consumer demand has grown. The cruise passenger penetration rate is on the rise but is still very small, about one per cent in Southeast Asia.

"Apart from China, we are seeing strong growth in Malaysia, Indonesia and India, especially during the peak holiday seasons," she told NST Business recently.

For Malaysia, Stephen said RCC was constantly looking for new ports of call and aimed to bring bigger cruise ships to the country and Southeast Asian waters.

"We have a new ship coming out every year and it has to sail somewhere. But it is all about port infrastructure and the readiness to accept our ships. In Malaysia, we call on Port Klang, Penang and

Langkawi, and we are working with others who are interested in developing the infrastructure."

Based in Singapore, Stephen took over from Sean Treacy earlier this year. She oversees the commercial and operational activities for the company's brands, Royal Caribbean International and Azamara Club Cruises, in the region.

Treacy has been relocated to Miami this month to take up the new role of associate vice-president strategic planning for international.

In April, RCC's "Voyager of the Seas" sailed to Singapore for her longest-running Southeast Asian programme until June next year.

"Quantum of the Seas" will also be based in Singapore for six months next year, the cruise line's longest deployment for a Quantum Class ship.

Itineraries include four-night cruise to Penang or Phuket, five-night cruise to Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang), Penang and Phuket, seven-night cruise to Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Phuket and seven-night cruise to Bangkok (Laem Chabang) and Ho Chi Minh City.

In June, RCC announced the deployment of its upcoming ship, "Spectrum of the Seas", to Southeast Asia next year.

This is the second time it is deploying a new ship to Asia for homeporting, which underscores its ever-growing confidence in the region.



Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd's 'Spectrum of the Seas' will be deployed in Southeast Asia next year.

Her port of calls include Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang), Penang, Shanghai, Ho Chi Minh City, Nha Trang and Hong Kong.

"We are constantly looking for more ports of call in Malaysia and Southeast Asia as we bring bigger ships into the region. I think Malaysia and Indonesia has a lot of potential," said Stephen.

"Three of our 25 ships are in this region and we are continuously adding capacity in our larger ships," said Stephen.

RCC owns and operates three global brands — Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises and Azamara Club Cruises.

It also owns a 50 per cent stake in Germany's TUI Cruises, 49 per cent stake in Spain's Pullmantur and 36 per cent stake in China's SkySea Cruises.



Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd managing director (Asia Pacific) Angie Stephen says the company is constantly looking for more ports of call in Malaysia and Southeast Asia.