



Voyager of the Seas, with a passenger capacity of more than 4,000, will be in South-East Asia for six weeks.

More voyages to Penang this year

Royal Caribbean to increase port calls and bring in 140,000 passengers

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ROYAL Caribbean International (RCI), an award-winning global cruise brand, has slated 43 port calls to Penang compared with 15 last year.

Royal Caribbean's Asia-Pacific managing director Sean Treacy said they were expecting to bring in 140,000 passengers to Penang this year compared with about 45,000 last year.

"We have been visiting Penang more often on three-night cruises since it has become a popular destination among our customers," he said during a tour with press members on the Voyager of the Seas recently.

Treacy said Voyager of the Seas, a cruise liner with a passenger capacity of 4,269, would be setting out from Singapore this month and next month.

He said there would be 13 journeys of three to five nights to Phuket, Penang and Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang) plus an eight-night one-way cruise to Hong Kong with stopovers in Bangkok (Laem Chabang), Ho Chi Minh City (Phu My) and Nha Trang for one night.

"The Voyager of the Seas will be in the South-East Asia region for six weeks from this month."

"It underwent a US\$80m (RM356m) refurbishment in 2014. There will be more staterooms and revitalised features such as the FlowRider surf simulator, virtual balcony interior staterooms and added specialty restaurants," he said.

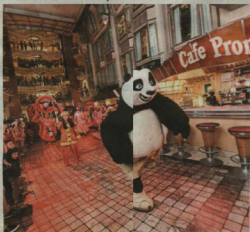
Besides Voyager of the Seas, RCI also serves up two other ship options — the iconic Mariner of the Seas and Ovation of the Seas, the largest ship in the Quantum Class in the region.

These cruises start and end mostly in Singapore, covering Bangkok, Phuket and even China, among other destinations.

Treacy said the company was celebrating its 10th anniversary in the region.

"We started with Legend of the Sea, a 2,000-capacity ship in 2007. We had only 11 visits to Malaysia then. This year, the expected number of visits to Malaysia is almost 90.

"You just think about the growth over the last 10 years.



A DreamWorks cartoon character parading Royal Promenade on Voyager of the Seas and (right pic) passengers having fun at a nine-hole miniature golf course on the cruise liner.



"We believe we may see a 10-fold increase in our visits to Malaysia in the next 10 years.

"There is strong support from local authorities and the Federal Government to build cruise tourism."

"We believe this is just the beginning," he said.

On whether Royal Caribbean would consider turning Penang into its home port once the expansion project of Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal is carried out, Treacy said: "It's not in our short-term or mid-term plan but never say never."

It was earlier reported that Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd was investing in the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal to lengthen the pier from the present 400m to 680m.

It is taking a 40% stake in a joint-venture company to be formed with Penang Port Sdn Bhd in an expansion project that will cost US\$35m (RM155.5m).

After the pier has been made longer, two mega cruise liners carrying more than 4,900 passengers each will be able to simultaneously dock at the pier.



acy sharing a light moment with guests on Voyager of the Seas.