



Nostalgic return: The Superstar Libra cruising into the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal once more behind another liner Sea Princess (background) that arrived from Port Klang en route to Langkawi and Phuket. — Dronepic: CHAN BOON KAI/The Star

Back to make a splash

After an absence of over a year, Superstar Libra makes a much-awaited homecoming to Penang that is greeted with joy by travel industry players and sea travellers. >3



Guitarists serenading the VIPs namely (from left) Penang Port Commission general manager Mohamad Puzi Mohamad Nazir, Syed Mohamad, Tan and Jegerfalk. (Right) A crew member showing visitors the duty-free retail outlets inside Superstar Libra.



Guests being taken on a tour of the ship's central concourse area during the welcome reception at the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal. —Photos: ZAINUDIN AHAD and CHAN BOON KAI/The Star

On deck for a jolly time

Cruise ship receives warm welcome on return to Penang

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STAR Cruises' Superstar Libra has returned to make Penang its home port after being away for slightly more than a year.

The 10-deck, 700-room cruise ship received a warm welcome on arrival at the Swettenham Pier here yesterday afternoon.

Two tugboats met her as she passed the Esplanade and turned on their water cannons to shoot swirling jets of water in greeting while she berthed.

Penang Port Commission chairman Tan Teik Cheng led the welcoming committee of lion dancers, travel trade representatives and several government department directors.

As the ship neared the pier, its crew of over 700 lined the vessel's open passageways to wave at the island and welcoming committee.

The ship, which is longer than two football fields, was not carrying passengers as it was here to take passengers. It had made Penang its home port from 2010 before leaving to home-port in Xiamen, China, on July 15 last year.

"We are delighted she is back. She is a tourism asset to the state and her return is also a testament of Penang's allure in Southeast Asia," said Tan who was accompanied by Penang Port Sdn Bhd chairman Datuk Syed Mohamad Syed Murtaza and acting chief executive officer Rosihan Adi Baharuddin.

Star Cruises sales vice-president Cynthia Lee said Superstar Libra has come back to Penang because she still has a loyal following here.

"We have a network of 20 preferred sales



Superstar Libra sailing into Penang waters with tugboats shooting water cannons to mark her arrival

agents and through them, we discovered that customers regularly ask when Libra is returning to Penang," she told reporters.

The ship's weekly cruises from Penang to Phuket and Krabi in Thailand have already received bookings and the company is looking forward to full occupancy on each trip.

"Our agents bring in tourists from India, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand and Taiwan.

"Our packages offer a good blend of Penang's attractions, Thailand and our cruise hospitality,"

Lee said, adding that Star Cruises moved its ships around regularly as part of its business strategy.

Aside from her journeys to Thailand, the ship will also make nightly high seas cruises from Wednesdays to Saturdays.

Superstar Libra captain Lennart Jegerfalk presented cruise packages as fundraising tools to three charities - Eden Handicap Service Centre, St Nicholas Home for the Blind and Salvation Army Penang Children's Home - as "homecoming gifts".