

Tourism off to a good start

Penang and Kedah record promising number of visitors

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GEORGE TOWN: Tourist arrivals in just the first two months of the year show Penang's tourism sector is making a strong comeback.

Among the trackable figures, cruise ship passenger arrivals jumped 30.16% compared to last year and Penang Hill's funicular train ridership is up 10%.

Penang tourism and creative economy committee chairman Wong Hon Wai said 131,208 cruise tourists called to shore between January and February, compared with 100,803 at the same time last year.

"They came via 45 cruise ships that called on Penang this year.

"The number of international cruise ships that berthed at our cruise terminal was 45.16% higher than last year, which was 31 ships," he said.

Penang Port Commission chairman Datuk Yeoh Soon Hin said several large cruise ships will be arriving soon.

"In March, Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal (SPCT) is booked to receive 20 trips of international cruise arrivals.

"At end of March, SPCT will receive the *Queen Mary 2* with a capacity of 2,685 passengers and crew of 1,253," he said.

Yeoh, who is also Tourism Malaysia deputy chairman, said based on the Malaysian Association of Hotels in Penang, hotels enjoyed an average occupancy rate of 60% by domestic



Strong comeback:
Cruise ship passenger arrivals jumped 30.16% compared to last year in Penang.
— Pic courtesy of Penang Port

travellers during the recent school holidays.

According to Penang Hill Corporation, ridership increased by about 10% this year compared to last year.

"So far this year, including nine days of shutdown, about 290,000 people rode up to the hill, compared to about 260,000 at the same time last year," the corporation stated.

Meanwhile, Kedah is implementing various initiatives to ensure the target of three million visitors to Langkawi this year can be achieved, thus maintaining the island as a preferred tourist destination.

Kedah tourism, culture and

entrepreneurship committee chairman Datuk Mohd Salleh Saidin said the state is confident that the target can be achieved with 206,443 tourists already recorded as of Jan 31.

"The state government, through the Kedah State Economic Planning Division and the Langkawi Development Authority are implementing and planning various initiatives, including improving accessibility to Langkawi through the improvement of new routes and the quality of transport services.

"Also offered is the Special Charter Flight Incentive Programme and so far six special flights are scheduled from

Chengdu and Chongqing, China to Langkawi with a total estimate of 1,080 passengers," he said during the Kedah state legislative assembly sitting at Wisma Darul Aman on Tuesday.

Mohd Salleh said, apart from that, airline company flydubai has started a direct flight to Langkawi scheduled for seven times a week since Feb 10 with the arrival of tourists from West Asian countries, Europe and Africa.

He said Langkawi has also received visitors from 16 luxury cruise ships docked at Langkawi Cruise Terminal, adding that 26 international events will be held in Langkawi this year.