“Indian Cruise Industry To create more jobs”

Mansukh Mandaviya
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For Sponsorship & Speakership Contact
Raja Vaiz
E-mail - info@littoralcommunications.com
Mobile No. +91 96190 56871
www.littoralcommunications.com
Sri Lanka also known as “Serendib” needs little introduction to many visitors to the country. The country’s natural and historical attractions appeals to many visitors from all parts of the world. As one of the best travel destinations to visit, the coastal paradise secured the top spot in the Lonely Planet and USA Today’s best travel destinations list of countries to travel in 2019. In this context there have been new trends in luxury cruise ships calling on Sri Lanka’s ports in the recent years. Hence statistics speaks for themselves, where over 53 luxury cruise liners with around 72 500 onboard passengers visited the island nation in 2018.

Making a difference the paradise island is now on luxury cruise liner operator’s radar screen. In the same year the islands ports have seen a 28.8 percent increase in luxury cruise ships visiting the island nation compared to the corresponding period in 2017 (The Island, 2018). The reasons for this are manifold, due to its geographical setting it serves as a crucial maritime gateway connecting the nations of ASEAN, Africa and West Asia. As with the Maldives, Sri Lanka too has a flourishing tourism industry with over two million tourist arrivals. Every year Sri Lankan authorities are working hard with special concessions to restore overseas tour operators confidence.

As a result, Sri Lanka’s tourism sector has risen multi-fold contributing 5 percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with US $ 4 billion revenue. To meet ongoing cruise vessel demands, the Colombo port regarded as one of the top thirty ports in the world (Drewry Port Connectivity Index, 2018) converted a Quay into a fully-fledged cruise terminal to cater to the growing cruise ship calls.

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A REPORT FROM SRI LANKA
calls. This year Sri Lanka's leading tour operator Aitken Spence Maritime, agents for Hapag-Lloyd shipping group announced MS Europa-2 cruise line will continue to make regular calls at Colombo, Hambantota, Trincomale ports. In fact the luxury cruise lines also selected Sri Lanka as a port for passengers to begin and end their voyages. (Xinhua, 2019). There is a high expectation among globally reputed luxury travel Cruise line operators in promoting European voyages to Sri Lanka.

Increased demands of Sri Lanka as a top tourism destination have changed greater number of cruise vessels visiting the paradise island ports. This has seen one of Italy's largest Cruise line operators Costa Cruises offering cruise packages to Colombo.

In addition, world's biggest luxury cruise ship operators, such as Princess Cruises, SilverSea Cruises Celebrity Cruises, Washington based Cruise Seabourn Cruise Line, Miami based Oceania Cruises organizing regular voyages to Colombo. Making predictions about the future of the luxury Cruise ships regularly calling on island nations' ports might be a challenging process. In short the new emerging trends in luxury cruise ships calling on Sri Lanka's ports will unquestionably turn a new page in Paradise islands tourism and ports history.