



Loyalty programs on cruise ships and what agents get from them

THE MOMENT you disembark your first cruise you not only become a past passenger, you enter a loyalty community full of, future booking discounts, free drinks and occasionally invites to exclusive cruise cocktail parties. Much like airline frequent flyer groups, cruise line loyalty programs have long been a part of the industry as a means of thanking passengers for their ongoing bookings. But as the sector grows, with new lines and ships launching on the scene every year, companies have had to up their loyalty game by adding new membership levels with more exclusive rewards for top returning passengers. To help you and your clients get the best out of cruise loyalty memberships, we have reviewed programs from some of Asia's biggest cruise players. For more information, visit www.aseancruising.com/best-loyalty-programs-high-seas.

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How cruise agents live the good life with perks and commission

TRAVEL agents selling cruise are wooed with a variety of perks and lurks as well as commissions ranging around 10 per cent, a survey by ASEAN Cruise News reveals. After speaking to cruise lines, agents and experts, our survey shows there are many ways to make a lucrative living selling cruises throughout Asia and beyond. As well as earning free cruises and attending well-catered training sessions, most travel agents are paid a standard 10 per cent. Ted Blamey of Chart Management Consultants,

who created a major white paper on the industry and is currently updating it, says, "Essentially, cruise lines pay a standard 10 per cent commission to travel agents to encourage them to sell cruises. It is a published rate," he said. Selling cruise holidays is a "good way of making money" for travel agents because increasingly many cruise lines are offering all-inclusive packages. Travel agents are key in the distribution network to sell cruise holidays.





Country spotlight: Philippines

THE PHILIPPINES plans to capitalise on the emerging cruise market to attract more ships to call at its port and entice Filipinos to go on cruises, the Department of Tourism’s assistant secretary Benito C Bengzon Jr revealed in an exclusive interview with ASEAN Cruising.

“The first objective is to increase the calls of the ships in the region, be they regional ships or stops on round-the-world itineraries,” he said. “We need to get more of them, not only into Manila but into other destinations. Bengzon who is in charge of market development admitted that in order to get more cruise ships to visit the country, the government needs to invest in the development of suitable ports.

“What we have seen over the past five years is a shift towards the island destinations like Boracay, Palawan and Puerto Princesa and some of the destinations that not many people have heard of, like the One Hundred Islands chain. “We need to increase the frequency of these port visits and to do that we need to



make sure that the required level of port infrastructure is there and also to create a higher level of awareness, on the country as a whole but also for specific destinations.”

He said the main reason the Philippines has not been able to capitalise on the growing cruise industry is the lack of infrastructure at both the central and local government level.

“In terms of port infrastructure, we won’t be able to offer something like Hong Kong’s Ocean Terminal or the new Kai Tak Cruise

Terminal, or Singapore’s cruise terminals in the near future so what we need to do is to make sure that the minimum requirements set by the cruise lines are addressed by the government.

In saying that, cruise passenger arrivals in the Philippines rose by a significant 48 per cent to 20,000 in 2013 compared to 2011, while, the number of cruise lines also saw a sharp increase during the same period to 16 ships – up from 10 in 2011.

Last year 18 cruise ships with 20,000 passengers visited the Philippines.





The stars come out onboard

WHETHER its rock climbing, surfing, getting drinks from a robot bar tender or dining at a specialty restaurant – these days there isn’t much you can’t do on a cruise ship. But just when you thought cruise lines had thought of it all, they turned to famous faces in a bid to target celebrity-driven holidaymakers. Chefs from the K-Pop themed show took their cooking utensils and musical instruments onboard *SuperStar Gemini*.

The show was also introduced on *SuperStar Libra* in November during her inaugural season sailing out of Penang in Malaysia. Royal Caribbean adopted the celebrity trend when it hosted Asia’s largest music festival onboard *Voyager of the Seas* in November. The event saw music’s biggest names such as Lil Jon, Basement Jaxx and Dash Berlin take the stage at sea in front of some 3,800 cruisers. Last month, the cruise line expanded its celebrity status by hosting a four-night Latin



dance competition. The ‘Dancesport All Champions’ sailing featured performances from Singapore dance veteran, Aleena Tan and Asia’s most popular dance group, the Sunny Low family. Crystal Cruises serves dishes by famous Japanese chef Nobu Matsuhisa.



***Mariner of the Seas’* first visit to Kuantan**

From March, Royal Caribbean’s *Mariner of the Seas* will be sailing to Kuantan in Malaysia from March. ASEAN Cruising gets the low down on what one of the world’s most popular ships will be doing in Asia. As one of the largest ships on the high seas, *Mariner of the Seas* new itinerary will entice adventure cruisers to check out the sights and sounds of Kuantan.





15 minutes with...Hamzah Rahmat, President of the Malaysian Association of Tours and Travel Agents

President Hamzah Rahmat chats to ASEAN Cruise News about MATTA aims to promote the travel industry in Malaysia.

Q. What part will MATTA play to make Malaysia the country a "Straits Riviera"?

The 3,000-plus tour and travel agents in MATTA provide a wide range of services to their clients including the promotion and sale of cruise packages, and providing local offshore excursions for cruise passengers.

Q. Do Malaysians like to cruise and what are their favourite cruise destinations? Who are your typical Malaysian cruiser?

There are no typical Malaysian cruisers and it is impossible to stereotype Malaysians. As for cruises, the high-end customers may wish to travel incognito and join European and Caribbean cruises.

Q. What are their favourite cruise ships? Why?

This is subjective and for many crowd on board is more important especially for those who fancy going on a 'love boat' cruise.

Q. Do Malaysians like European River cruising?

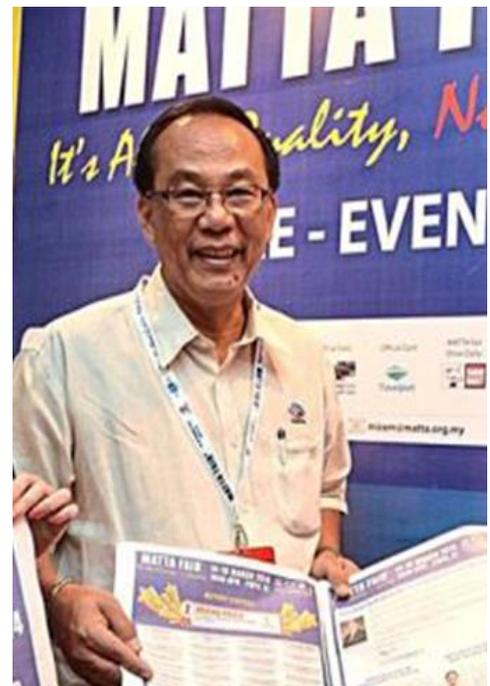
Yes, there are some high-end customers who enjoy river cruising in Europe?

Q. Does adventure cruising to places like the Antarctic interest Malaysians?

High-end customers also share an interest in going for adventure cruises such as the Antarctic.

Q. At your travel agency, Best Star Travel Centre, how long have you been selling cruise holidays?

Best Star concentrates in several niche markets like trade fairs and conventions., afraid cruise is not one of them.



Q. Are there differences in what Malaysians expect from cruises compared with more seasoned passengers from America or Europe?

No difference, Malaysians will be just as curious and excited when they join an American or European cruise.





How we sell adventure, by Jeremy Lindblad

Lindblad Expeditions uses wine, webinars and food to woo new clients and travel agents when marketing its adventure expeditions.

Jeremy Lindblad, the line's business development director, told ASEAN Cruise News when he visited Singapore and Hong Kong last November, he wined and dined about 100 top clients selected by travel agents at two functions.

"The reception was fantastic," he said.

He now works with more than 30 travel agents in ASEAN, marketing Lindblad Expeditions' adventure cruises.

He plans to do four trips to Asia this year to help train travel agents eager to sell cruises on Lindblad Expeditions as well as to sign up new customers.

"Our top priority is to add value to the guest experience on Lindblad Expeditions. Ideally, we like to build a deeper partnership with travel agents to achieve this goal."

But he admits ASEAN is still a young market for the company and the tradition of paying a 10 per cent commission to travel agents for selling



adventure cruises on Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic ships will continue unchanged.

"We are not moving away from the traditional model of paying commission to travel agents who sell our cruises. But we do not want to continue with a passive relationship between agents and suppliers.

"We want to develop a deeper and more meaningful partnership with agents to achieve a better outcome for our guests."

Lindblad has also introduced

monthly interactive Webinars where agents can learn about the company's destinations, cruises and products.

The "live" webinars are conducted by expedition leaders who are able to answer questions from agents. Schedule of the webinars can be found on its website: expeditions.com. We produce a lot of marketing tools including brochures, DVDs and we are always available to answer any questions from travel agents.



Increase of Chinese tourists who have visited Penang from 2012 to 2014