

European travellers cruise into Colombo

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The ferry between Tuticorin and Colombo has begun to attract European travellers to India in the wake of which an international marketing campaign is being initiated. The campaign will target travellers from Europe and the Middle East to use the services of the luxury cruise liner that will take them between Colombo and Tuticorin, the liner's Passenger Service Agent (PSA) Arugambay Travels Managing Director A.M. Jaufer told the Business Times during an interview at his Colombo office.

At present the Scotia Prince cruise operated by Flemingo Liners is already bringing down Europeans visiting India to Colombo, he said. The international marketing strategy will involve email marketing and by advertising in the print media in these countries, it was pointed out.

This will ensure there is an ease of reaching any part of Sri Lanka, Mr. Jaufer said adding that this marketing campaign will commence after September by which time the vessel will be a fully-fledged one. He pointed out that this service would also assist in reaching the government's targets of 2.5 million tourists by 2016. The luxury cruise is likely to be joined by another vessel next year that will take to the high seas in the Indian ocean carrying out a similar operation, Mr. Jaufer said. This service will be commenced by the Shipping Corporation resulting in a boost in business and operations for luxury cruises next year, he explained.

Plans are also underway to enhance the operations and extend the route to include Male on the existing tour by attracting more upmarket customers. Other routes planned are Rameshwaran – Talaimannar with possibilities ventured for Hambantota – Singapore and Trincomalee – Chennai, the Arugambay Travels official said.

The PSA noted that this service is proof of the commitment of the two governments of India and Sri Lanka to enhance such operations between the two destinations and facilitate increased cooperation to improve passenger traffic travel. Further the luxury cruise has also upgraded its services and has increased the fare with new improved packages for passengers to avail of with tours organised to India and a tour to Sri Lanka in the planning, Mr. Jaufer said.

Packages are provided for travel within Tuticorin and Tamil Nadu as well, Mr. Jaufer said adding that packages to Sri Lanka will include visits to Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Bentota, Colombo and Negombo. Meanwhile the passenger terminal at the Colombo port will undergo improvements in facilities to ensure quick passage for travellers amidst complaints that passengers are compelled to stay on until around 10.00am after reaching the destination at 6.00am.

This is also evident at the Indian landing site where passengers are held up for nearly three hours, it was pointed out.

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