



Grand entrance: The luxurious Star Clipper will sail into Penang with just about 170 passengers, some said to be among the ultra-rich of the world, on Monday.

Liners to invade Penang – again

Super-rich among 10,000 from four vessels

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GEORGE TOWN: Four cruise vessels including a traditional sailing ship full of gleaming white sails are bringing about 10,000 people to Swettenham Pier on Monday.

Instead of the 'bigger-is-better' multi-deck ocean liners, the 111.5m-long Star Clipper will be carrying only up to 170 passengers who are expected to be from among the ultra-rich of the world.

The fare on this four-masted ship ranges from RM8,800 per person for the smaller cabins to RM34,700 for travelling solo in the owner's cabin.

Star Clipper is on a week-long round trip to and from Phuket, and Penangites will get a close view of this 69m tall vessel of teak and mahogany arriving from the northeast from around 7am to 8am off the Esplanade.

She will leave Penang at 7pm. Her first ever trip to Penang was in January.

Of the other three giant ships, Superstar Gemini from Singapore will arrive at 4.30am, Diamond Princess at 7.30am and Mein Schiff at 10.30am, bringing European tourists.

To deal with the expected traffic jams, the state will close two roads at the Esplanade from 6am to noon.

State Tourism Committee chairman Danny Law said Jalan Padang Kota Lama and part of Jalan Tun Syed Sheh Barakbah would be closed to allow about 70 tour buses to pick up

the throngs of ship passengers and take them on day tours.

Many more tourist vans, limousines and trishaws are expected to be called in and the state has set up a carnival fiesta at Fort Cornwallis with Chingay performances, handicraft exhibitions and food trucks.

The month of March, Law said, is cruise tourism season in Penang because many people in four-season countries like taking long cruises with numerous ports-of-call while escaping the winter.

On March 14 last year, four ocean liners disgorged about 12,000 passengers on their day trip to the pier.

In January, Law announced that 17,000 cruise passengers would arrive this Monday and that gave many locals a fright.

Many Penangites were moaning in social media about traffic jams and some had even declared they would leave the island for the day.

Penang Trishaw Rider's Association chairman Koay Beng Hong said his members were not excited because they did not get much business from past arrivals.

"Cruise ship travellers are here for just a few hours. They don't have time to try our trishaws, and buses and vans will take them further.

"Even when they do take trishaws, there are limited trips we can make in a day.

"We hope the ships will come on different days to spread out the demand for trishaws," he said.