

Cruise Special

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TTGmice

Asia-Pacific's intelligent business events resource

Making a case for MICE cruises

Step aside cruise myths, we are counting out the many benefits of bringing business events onboard a cruise ship

What's onboard

Cruise ships today are a treasure trove of fun facilities and memorable experiences

Hot ports of call

Find out which ports in Asia are stealing the hearts of cruise chiefs



experiential events at sea



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Making a case for MICE cruises

Customisation, access to unique destinations, all-inclusive fares, and use of event facilities, dining venues and entertainment options are just some of the distinct benefits of taking a business event onboard a cruise ship, but persistent myths surrounding the experience need to be dispelled. By Karen Yue

It is widely known that cruises allow holidaymakers to explore various destinations without the hassle of packing and unpacking while enjoying the ease of an all-inclusive fee that covers accommodation, transportation, F&B and entertainment.

For corporate groups taking their gatherings to the high seas, a cruise experience brings far more benefits.

While Genting Cruise Lines (comprises brands Star Cruises, Dream Cruises and Crystal Cruises), has seen continued year-on-year growth in corporate bookings for events of 30 to 2,000 guests, its senior vice president – international sales, Michael Goh, revealed that some persistent myths surround MICE cruises still stand among corporate clients.

"The common misconception is that MICE cruises can be costly and boring," said Goh.

His observations are echoed by industry peers Freddy Muller, Silversea Cruises' vice president, corporate & incentive sales, and Farriek Tawfik, Princess Cruises' Southeast Asia director.

Adding to Goh's list, Farriek said clients also perceive events onboard cruises as being inconvenient, a hassle to organise, and lacking in event facilities and capabilities.

All the right reasons

Naturally, cruise representatives are eager to set the story straight.

Goh said: "In fact, (the cruise product) is the most cost effective form of group travel and promises diverse and unique business offerings in one seamless voyage. The ship itself is a destination on its own, complemented by enchanting destinations."

Farriek added: "Participants are able to wake up at a new destination every day (but) need to pack and unpack only once which means more time for them to engage in activities."

"As well, shore excursions also offer great opportunities for team bonding and can be tailored to a group's specific interest. Furthermore, groups can visit destinations that can only be accessed by sea or are difficult to reach over land."

Cruises on the high seas are also "distraction-free" while allowing planners to "balance the seriousness of business objectives with leisure", Goh pointed out.

An even more tantalising benefit, is the customisable nature of the product.

Said Muller: "The majority of business events on Silversea are full ship charters. This allows a corporation endless opportunities to customise their experience. They can select their destination, duration of voyage, and (onboard) branding opportunities."

"We have team members located globally to be visible and accommodating. We even have an operations team dedicated solely to running all our business event programmes."

"A deep understanding of the latest event trends and fast-changing needs will help drive stronger MICE cruise take-ups."

- Michael Goh

Senior vice president – international sales, Genting Cruise Lines

Something for everyone

Muller believes that there is cruise ship for any type of corporate gatherings.

"Most of the cruise lines are able to offer programmes for true incentive, reward programmes. Others allow for more meetings and conventions, as they have purpose-built ships for this type of business; these ships would have large conference facilities," he said.

Farriek noted that Princess Cruises' larger ships are ideal for meeting groups of 300 to 500 people, thanks to their large theatres and dining halls.

Genting Cruise Lines, with its different cruise brands and products, can accommodate events "of any scale", remarked Goh.

"We get a good mix of incentive trips, company retreats, seminars, product launches and award ceremonies," he said, adding that the introduction of Dream Cruises' massive ships, *Genting Dream* and *World Dream*, homeported in Singapore and Hong Kong/Nansha respectively, have given the company "greater flexibility to accommodate any events at sea".

Education as game-changer

Cruise industry leaders told TTGmice that the way to dispel these common misconceptions about MICE cruises is better education targeted at event planners.

"We see a big potential in MICE cruises as there is currently a low awareness among planners and companies that events can be organised easily and held successfully onboard cruise ships," said Farriek. "We are driving and promoting further awareness of MICE cruises. We are working closely with our partners such as travel agents to offer fam trips and training. Our educational tour onboard *Sapphire Princess* in Singapore last January, done with TTGmice, for example, received an excellent response."

As well, Muller emphasised the need to show the differences across cruise brands, products and segments. For example, planners could consider expedition cruising and river cruises as well.

"We have seen that business from Asia does venture outside of (regional) waters, showing interest in destinations such as Alaska and the Mediterranean," he said.

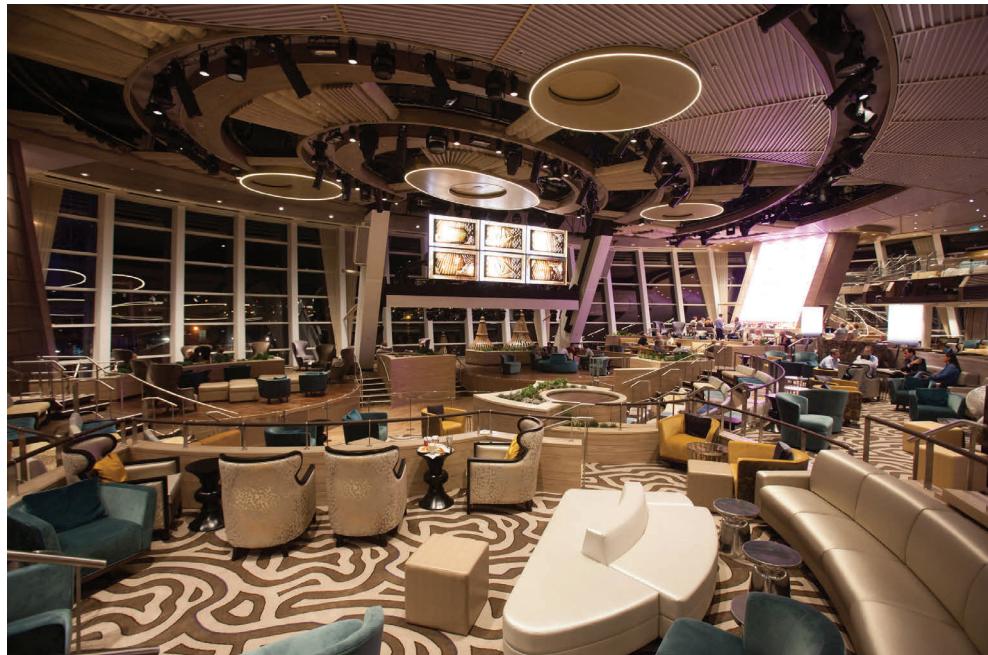


From left:
Michael Goh,
Freddy Muller
and Farriek
Tawfik

What's onboard

Cruise ships today are a treasure trove of fun facilities and memorable experiences.

Here are some that would charm event delegates



Royal Caribbean International

Studio B ice skating rink

Voyager of the Seas features an iconic ice skating rink where performances by professional skaters from around the world are held. On top of that, the rink can support team-building activities and be used as a unique venue for casual meetings for up to 800 pax.

Skypad

Spectrum of the Seas and *Quantum of the Seas* offer some of the world's most innovative activities at sea, which are perfect for teambuilding. The Skypad, in particular, is a gem. It promises an out-of-this-world bungee trampoline experience but with a virtual reality spin. Participants strap on a headset and are at once transported to another time, place or planet. This virtual adventure launches them high into the stratosphere and let their imagination soar.

Two70

Unique to the Quantum class of ships, Two70 is an entertainment hub which offers guests multiple experiences throughout the day. Ordinarily, Two70's giant windows



From above: Host an impressive gathering at Two70, a venue unique to Royal Caribbean's Quantum class ships; rest and relax in a Dream Cruises Executive Suite; catch fantastic performances at The Zodiac Theatre, Superstar Virgo

offer sweeping views of the ocean, but become massive screens that show any scene, real or imagined, with Vistarama. Naturally, it is the perfect venue for meetings and seminars, especially events that require impressive visuals to complement messages.

Dream Cruises

Rope course and zipline

The rope course and zipline onboard Dream Cruises ships is perfect for team bonding. Participants first tackle a tricky rope course before gliding down the 35m zipline, set 18 decks above the ocean. What a rush!

Dream Night

Unique to Dream Cruises, Dream Night is the grand finale to any cruise experience. As a spectacular fireworks display takes off against the night sky, guests are invited onto the main pool deck where they get to indulge in champagne and cocktails.

Dream Palace

While Dream Cruises ships are a luxurious experience, Dream Palace takes things up several notches. It is in a class of its own, a regal "ship-within-a-ship" enclave with 142 suites and private VIP facilities including its own swimming pool, spa, gym and dining venues. Guests are pampered by meticulous Dream Butlers who promise personalised attention.

Star Cruises

Galaxy of the Stars

Offering panoramic views of the ocean from a glass-fronted observatory area, this lounge in *Star Pisces* and *SuperStar Virgo* is ideal for presentations and product launches. With a seating capacity of up to 292 guests, it also serves as a popular dance spot where delegates can unwind to popular music after a day of conferences.

Zodiac Theatre

The Zodiac Theatre in *SuperStar Virgo* is a performing arts space for musicals, dance performances and magic shows. With its 830-seat capacity, the theatre is equipped with state-of-the-art lighting, rigging and sound systems. The audience is assured of a comfortable and enjoyable experience, thanks to plush seats and good acoustics.



Princess Cruises

Movies Under The Stars

This open-air poolside amphitheatre brings back the romance of movies under the stars. Blockbusters are screened every evening at this top deck attraction, and complimentary fresh-popped popcorn and hotdogs are dished out. Movies Under The Stars makes a delightful addition to any corporate programme onboard the cruise ship.

Luxury beds

Touted as the first bed onboard a cruise line that is designed by a board certified sleep expert, Princess Cruises' luxury beds provide delegates the ultimate sleep experience out at sea. Ultra-premium features including a plush nine-inch single-sided medium firm mattress with two-inch thick pillow top for enhanced support as well as luxurious Jacquard-woven cotton linens. Delegates are refreshed and ready for the day's programme, and will return home from their event all rejuvenated.

24-hour room service

Complimentary 24-hour room service ensures delegates are never hungry throughout their programme at sea, no matter the time of the day. The all-day room service menu includes hand-tossed pizzas to dazzling multi-course gourmet dinners.

From above: Catch a movie under the stars onboard Princess Cruises ships; race a go-kart on a Norwegian Cruise Line's ship; master impressive cooking skills at Oceania Cruises' The Culinary Center; be pampered by Silversea Cruises' top butlers



Delegates learn how to prepare a variety of exquisite dishes in a fully-equipped teaching kitchen. Classes are led by master chefs from around the world.

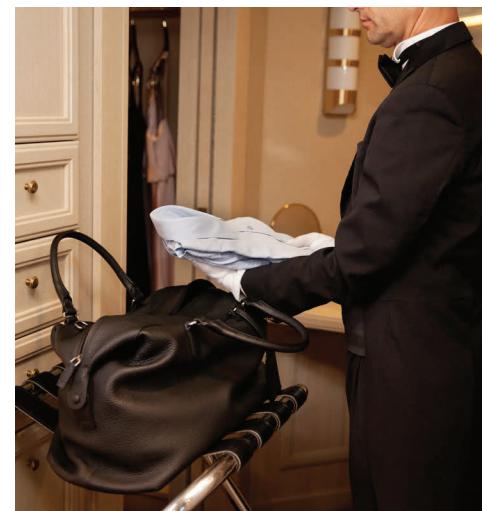
Stay connected

Oceania Cruises is rolling out its new Wavenet high-speed Internet service fleet wide, available to all guests at no extra charge. For businessmen out on a programme at sea, this invaluable service ensures they remain connected.

Oceania Cruises

The Culinary Center

A Oceania Riviera and Oceania Marina offer the first custom-designed and hands-on cooking school at sea, where



Silversea Cruises

Signature butler service
A Silversea cruise experience is never without a top-class butler service which begins the moment guests come onboard. Upon arrival, the butler welcomes guests personally, orientating them to their suites and even offering to unpack their bags. The butlers remain attentive throughout the voyage.

Professional event planning services
Silversea's team of corporate and incentive planning professionals provides creative solutions to ensure that corporate events take off successfully. The extensive host of event planning resources available onboard will ensure that all special activities and services are well customised and arranged, promising delegates an unforgettable experience.

Hot ports of call

Cruise line chiefs reveal their favourite ports of call in Asia, and dish out tips on what corporate groups can do there for an unforgettable travel experience

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

"Ho Chi Minh City is a pulsing city that retains an old-world charm despite its rapid growth. Beautiful pagodas sit next to vibrant markets, while food vendors serve steaming bowls of pho in the shade of historical colonial buildings. The best way to soak it all in, is to ride a local pedicab through the bustling streets. For guests who would prefer to escape the bustling city, I will recommend a Mekong River cruise."

Felix Chan

Vice president, sales Asia
Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings

North Bali, Indonesia and Macleod Island, Myanmar

"My top picks include North Bali and Macleod Island in Myanmar, both of which are accessible right to their door step with Dream Cruises."

In North Bali, be sure to check out the wonders of Singaraja City, the enchanting Pura Ulun Danu Beratan which is a major Shaivite water temple located on the shores of Lake Bratan, and the traditional Candi Kuning market.

Macleod island, which is exclusive to us, provides a uniquely diverse island adventure. It is a hidden and private island with untouched natural beauty and pristine beaches. Guests will get a sense of exclusivity

and freedom to go scuba diving or jungle trekking. There is also a wide range of water sports to choose from. Guests can also simply relax on the beach."

Michael Goh

Senior vice president,
international sales
Genting Cruise Lines

Vietnam

"Arriving into Vietnam is an experience on its own. With the intimate size of Silversea's ships, we can navigate freely through Ha Long bay during misty, foggy conditions. Once we arrive, you will tender ashore and take a transfer to the Giac Tam Buddhist Zen Monastery. As you drive through the scenic country side of Ha Long Bay, you begin to absorb the culture. Upon reaching the spectacular monastery, your cultural experience peaks. Here you can experience a fascinating lesson on Zen meditation from one of the monks – an experience that stays with you for life."

Freddy Muller

Vice president,
corporate & incentive sales
Silversea Cruises

Phuket, Thailand and Penang, Malaysia

"I have two favourites. In Phuket, you will reach Patong Beach where our ship tenders. This is within walking distance to nearby at-

tractions where there is plenty of shopping, food and beverage and relaxation options. I suggest that teambuilding groups go island hopping and snorkelling at Phi Phi island or sea cave canoeing at Phang Nga Bay National Park.

Over in Penang, the pier is situated at close proximity to George Town. There is a wide array of cultural sites, gastronomic and shopping attractions in Penang, which are easily accessible via our shore excursions. I recommend that groups join the Heritage Cycling Tour to Clan Jetty to view traditional settlements created by Chinese fisherman or the Habitat Nature Discovery at Penang Hill where they can enjoy sweeping views of Penang from a tree-tops walk."

Angie Stephen

Managing director,
Singapore and South-east Asia Royal Caribbean Cruises

Yokohama, Japan

"Yokohama is my pick, as the pier has a pleasant waterfront promenade which is a great spot for a stroll and for spectacular views of the Minato Mirai skyline. The port is also situated in the heart of Yokohama, so shopping and tourist attractions are easily accessible. In Yokohama, Sankeien Garden is a beautiful Japanese-style garden where you can view cherry blossoms and autumn foliage, depending on when you visit."

Farrieck Tawfik

Director, South-east Asia
Princess Cruises

From left: Macleod Island, Myanmar and Pura Ulun Danu Beratan in North Bali, Indonesia



Get your checklist ready

Business event planners taking their programmes onboard a cruise ship get plenty of support from the cruise lines, but it never hurts to be prepared. Princess Cruises' Farrieck Tawfik and Royal Caribbean Cruises' Angie Stephen dish out some hot tips that will help planners get more out of the cruise experience

Book early

Plan ahead and make reservations early to secure the best stateroom selection and venue spaces, especially if your group isn't chartering the whole vessel. The larger your group, the farther ahead you should plan and book.

For a full ship charters, Stephen advises planning to begin 1.5 to two years ahead. For 1,000 guests and more, planning should begin one to 1.5 years ahead. Six to 12 months of planning should suffice for smaller groups of 500 to 999 guests.

Be BFFs with cruise team planners

The cruise line's in-house planner will be your closest ally, working closely with you from the get-go to secure and arrange everything you might need, from conference room booking, dining room seating and customised features for your gala dinner and themed parties. They are experienced in handling onboard business events and are a hassle-free help for MICE agents and event planners.

Go for customised leisure activities

Start by having a clear understanding of your group's preferences and requirements before planning a teambuilding programme onboard. Once these details are known, have a look at the wealth of activities and leisure facilities available on the ship. These days, cruise ships are packed with much more than what a five-star hotel can typically offer. Most of these onboard activities are also customisable, allowing you to shape a programme suitable for your delegates' profile and level of expectations.

Dole out the special treats for VIPs

To reward the best of the best in your group, be sure to plan special events. Consider booking them into premium accommodation or treating them to a specialty dining experience. Guests of Royal Suite Class on Royal Caribbean International and Princess Suite on Princess Cruises offer more customised adventures, greater exclusive access and inclusive amenities.

Stay connected

Don't forget that your delegates are businessmen by nature, and would want to remain connected to the world beyond the cruise ship while

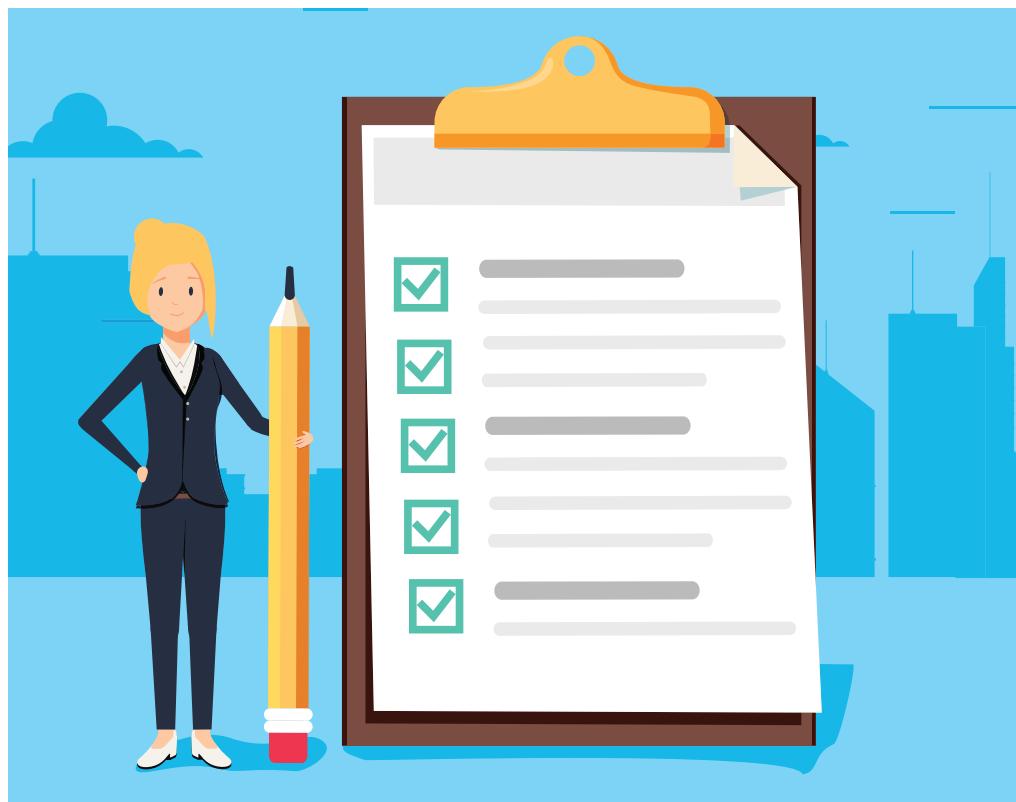
onboard. Work with the cruise line to secure complimentary Wi-Fi for everyone.

Plan for many feasts

Dining options are aplenty onboard cruise ships, and most will have dining venues that can accommodate large groups of several hundreds of guests. Plan ahead so that the ship's kitchens can prepare and accommodate various dietary requirements your guests might have.

Go for off-peak seasons

To get the most attractive rates, avoid school holidays and festive dates which usually come with higher rates.



COME  SEEK

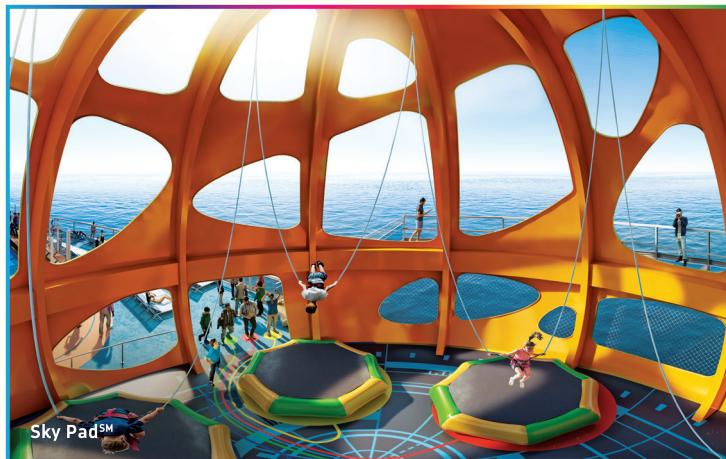
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Royal Caribbean[®] offers great space and meeting facilities dedicated to all kinds of team activities; from conferences, meetings and seminars at sea, or even an incentive trip. With state-of-the-art facilities, luxurious accommodations, sumptuous fine-dining, spectacular entertainment, impeccable service and more – all inclusive in the cruise fare, Royal Caribbean's cruise is the ultimate cost-effective option for you.



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