

BALTIMORE SUN

Another ship to offer cruises from Baltimore

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A 1,900-person cruise ship will begin sailing from Baltimore next year, offering trips to the Eastern Caribbean and down the East Coast, the governor's office announced yesterday. The Celebrity Mercury will offer 12-night cruises to St. Thomas, St. Kitts, Antigua, St. Maarten and Tortola; and nine-night excursions to Charleston, S.C., Key West, Fla., Cococay and Nassau, starting in November 2009. The Celebrity Mercury will be docked in Baltimore until February 2010. Celebrity will be the latest of several cruise lines that next year will offer trips from Baltimore. In June, Carnival Cruise Lines announced it would offer year-round cruises, and Royal Caribbean and Norwegian cruise lines have scheduled trips to begin in 2009, as well.

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Celebrity Cruises to set sail out of Baltimore

by Scott Dance Staff

Celebrity Cruises has signed on as the fourth ocean liner to port in Baltimore.

Celebrity's Mercury, a 1,900-guest ship, will take 10 trips from the Port of Baltimore's Locust Point cruise terminal from November 2009 to February 2010.

It joins Carnival Cruise Lines as a recent addition to the port's cruise business. Carnival announced in June it would begin year-round cruises in September 2009. Royal Caribbean and Norwegian cruise lines will also continue Baltimore service.

Celebrity's first trip will leave Nov. 9, 2009, for a 12-night trip to St. Thomas, St. Kitts, Antigua, St. Maarten and Tortola.

That trip will be offered four other times, and there will also be five nine-night cruises to Charleston, S.C., Key West, Fla., and Cococay and Nassau in the Bahamas.

"Celebrity's decision to offer cruises from Maryland confirms once again that the international cruise industry recognizes Maryland as a viable departure location," Gov. Martin O'Malley said in a statement.

Norwegian Cruise Lines and Royal Caribbean Cruise lines are the only liners to call on Baltimore in 2008. But the addition of Celebrity and Carnival bring the port near a high of 60 cruises offered in 2004.

In 2009, Celebrity is scheduled for five trips, Norwegian for 15, Royal Caribbean for 23 and Carnival for 16, for a total of 59.

Royal Caribbean was scheduled to take 16 trips in spring and fall 2008, while Norwegian was scheduled to take 11 trips in summer 2008, starting June 21.

The cruise industry has a \$148 million economic impact on the state, according to a 2007 report of Cruise Lines International Association. That includes any jobs related to the cruise industry or any trips state residents take on cruises.

The Maryland Port Administration estimated a \$56 million impact from 125,000 passengers in 2006 and a \$63 million impact from 100,000 passengers in 2008.

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