

PRESS RELEASE

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Port St. Maarten pleased with Pullmantur Homeporting Operation on Sunday

December 19, 2016 – PORT ST. MAARTEN – Port St. Maarten Management was very pleased with the homeporting operation that took place on Sunday at the new homeporting terminal after cruise passengers arrived on the inaugural XL Airways flight out of France to board the Pullmantur Zenith vessel for a warm Caribbean cruise.

Passengers were treated at the homeporting terminal to steel pan music and refreshments while waiting to be processed in preparation for boarding Pullmantur's Zenith.

On Sunday Minister of Tourism & Economic Affairs Ingrid Arrindell, presented the Captain of the Zenith with a plaque as a commemoration of the homeporting operation. Minister Arrindell expressed words of welcome and congratulations to the Captain, crew and passengers, and she looked forward to a successful homeporting experience out of the destination.

Port St. Maarten Management, the Minister's Cabinet, St. Maarten Tourist Bureau, SXM Airport, Pullmantur, XL Airways, and other stakeholders worked diligently for months to secure the Pullmantur homeporting business arrangement which culminated into the successful operation on Sunday.

Present for the on-board ceremony on the Zenith were representatives from Pullmantur, St. Maarten Tourist Bureau, port officials as well as representatives from SXM Airport. The delegation was given a tour of the ship including lunch, and thereafter, a tour of the homeporting terminal.

Port St. Maarten has placed emphasis on luxury cruise brands that translate into more spending power of passengers based on their higher disposable income levels. This also shifts the destination from quantity to quality cruise tourism therefore increasing the destination value due to attracting other high-end brand lines.

Pullmantur Cruises is headquartered in Madrid, Spain. It began operations in 1990, and is the largest Spain-based cruise line. The company mainly markets to Spanish passengers, but cruises are also sold by travel operators outside Spain. This group focuses on cruise customers from Latin America and Europe. The vessels used carries approximately 1500 cruise passengers and 450-crew.

Pullmantur Cruises home port will mean a significant economic boost and spin off for the destination as it will bring in additional tourists and business for the tourism and hospitality sectors. It also serves part of the diversification of visitors to the destination with respect to Latin American and European visitors. This can translate into new airlift opportunities for the destination as other cruise lines and airlines review the successes of homeporting out of Sint Maarten.

Home porting is nothing new for the destination as the country has had the opportunity to handle smaller vessels of under 500 passengers.

XL Airways is the aviation company that will be used to bring cruise passengers to the country who will then

board the Pullmantur vessel Zenith for their Caribbean cruise.

XL Airways weekly flights from Paris, France is using a an Airbus 330-200. Allocated on the weekly flight are 250 seats for homeporting. There will be some additional seats for regular passengers who would like to spend their vacation on the island.

XL Airways has close to 20-years' experience. It's a French airline specializing in long-haul flights, and annually flies over one million passengers to the Antilles, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, the United States and the Mediterranean Basin. With XL Airways connectivity throughout Europe, this allows for more travel options for passengers seeking a Caribbean cruise, as accessibility to the destination will be seamless because getting to the island will just be much easier.

The airline is based and operates out of Charles de Gaulle Airport. It also operates flights from Marseilles and four other French airports, Lyon, Bordeaux, Nantes and Toulouse. In addition to the aforementioned regular service flights, the airline also operates chartered flights all year round on behalf of main French and European tour operators.

Being a home port of call, this opportunity increases brand marketing and creates a better diversification balance between stayover and cruise which is what all stakeholders should be working towards, Port St. Maarten Management said on Monday.



PHOTO OUTLINE: Delegations from Sint Maarten, and Pullmantur in a group photo with representatives from the Zenith Cruise Ship.

For further questions, please contact: comments@portofstmaarten.com