

Tampa Noting Cuba Boost

12/02/2018



Port TampaBay is closing in on a million passengers this year with the addition of the Carnival Miracle, which begins year-round service in January. For 2017, the port saw a nice increase in business to 961,000 cruise guests, mainly attributed to Royal Caribbean’s expanded deployment from the port sailing to Cuba.

They weren’t alone, however, as Carnival Cruise Line also added Cuba sailings.

“The cruises to Cuba added excitement and generated demand for more,” commented Greg Lovelace, director of marketing and business development.

In addition is a new five-year agreement with Royal Caribbean, with an option for two more years. Tampa is guaranteed certain passenger numbers and in exchange, spent around \$2 million upgrading Terminal 6 for the cruise line, said Lovelace.

“They see a lot of potential in the market, it’s a testament to Tampa Bay,” he added. This year will see Royal Caribbean sail two vessels during the winter from Tampa, and one ship in the summer.

Seasonal business includes single ship homeporting from Holland America Line,

in its 35th year sailing from Tampa, and Norwegian Cruise Line.

The port worked closely with both Carnival and Royal Caribbean to host shipboard events to mark the first sailings to Cuba, bringing the culture from Tampa's Ybor City neighborhood, which has Cuban roots, aboard.

"Havana is due south, and having a new destination in the Western Caribbean, which is our primary market, is huge," Lovelace said.

"We certainly see ourselves as continuing to be a significant homeport with a niche for Western Caribbean sailings, which hopefully will include Cuba for a long time."
