

PORT OF GALVESTON IN FLURRY OF CRUISE ACTIVITY

During October and November, the Port of Galveston was busy with an abundance of cruise activity. The Port marked the last sailing of Galveston's first year-round cruise ship and three new cruise ships were welcomed by Port and City officials, travel agents, the media and local guests.

On October 8th, the Port of Galveston said goodbye to an old friend, Carnival Cruise Line's *M/S Celebration*. "We were truly saddened that our beloved *Celebration* departed our facilities for the last time," stated Steven M. Cernak, Galveston Port Director. "It has been here since the beginning of our cruise operations. We truly feel that Carnival and *Celebration* played a key role in our success in the cruise industry and in being named the 18th largest cruise port in the world and the ninth largest cruise port in the United States, and that both significantly contributed to the \$600 million economic impact from cruise operations in the State of Texas in 2003. Carnival, the first cruise line to take a chance on the market in Galveston, has emerged as a true partner with the Port of Galveston."

On October 22nd, the Port of Galveston welcomed *Celebration's* replacement, *M/S Ecstasy*, increasing Carnival's vessel cabin availability from the Port by 38%. "Once again we mark the arrival of a newer, larger Carnival Cruise Line's vessel at the Port of Galveston," stated Steve Cernak. "Ecstasy will sail on a four- and five-day schedule from our newly refurbished Cruise Terminal No. 1. The facility was upgraded and enhanced through a Public Private Partnership with Carnival Corporation. This was the first time that this type of partnership had been used for a port project in Texas and the first time our Port used design-build project delivery. It worked out to benefit both parties."

The Superliner *Ecstasy* was built in 1991 and has a double-room capacity of 2,052 passengers. She will offer four-day cruises departing on Thursdays for Cozumel, and five-day cruises departing on Mondays and Saturdays to Cozumel and Calica/Playa del Carmen.

On November 1st, Celebrity Cruises' *M/S Galaxy* was welcomed by area officials. "We were excited to welcome Celebrity Cruises and the *M/S Galaxy* to Galveston Island," Cernak continued. "This product is considered one of the world's top-rated premium cruise lines by many, and the *Galaxy* was rated one of the top 10 'World's Best Ships,' according to a readers' survey published in *Conde Nast Traveler*."

M/S Galaxy was built in 1996 and offers double-passenger capacity of 1,870 passengers. It will offer seasonal sailings November through April 2005. *Galaxy's* 11- and 12-day cruises have various itineraries to Cozumel, Belize City, partial transit of the Panama Canal, Cristobal Pier, Puerto Limon, Georgetown and Montego Bay. It will return to Galveston for another season of cruises from November 2005 through April 2006.

On November 8th, the Port of Galveston welcomed Princess Cruises' *Grand Princess*. "We have had a whirlwind of activity this past month at our cruise facilities," added Cernak. "The arrival of the 109,000-gross ton *Grand Princess* was a fitting ending to our current chapter of growth. It was magnificent as to see the ship's image rise above the Galveston skyline. This is by far the largest cruise ship to visit Galveston Island and it may possibly be the largest vessel ever to

dock here. The sailings through the end of the year are sold out and that speaks well for the success of Princess's operations in Galveston."

M/S Grand Princess was built in 1998 and offers double capacity of 2,600 passengers. It will offer seven-day Western Caribbean cruises to Belize City, Majahual, Grand Cayman, and Cozumel. During December, it will offer one 10-day and one 11-day partial Panama Cruise. *Grand Princess* will return to Galveston for a second season of cruises from November 2005 through April 2006.

"This is going to be a stellar year for cruising from the Port of Galveston, and by year end, we will have three year-round home-ported cruise ships and two seasonal cruise ships operating from our cruise terminal complex. We have invested over \$35 million upgrading, renovating and enhancing our cruise facilities and we believe that all of the hard work and effort has paid off for the Port and the City. The citizens of Galveston should be proud of the strides that have been made, and Port staff is hopeful that the community recognizes the opportunity for future growth that is being presented," Cernak concluded.

Information about any of these cruises can be obtained from a local travel agent or by accessing websites at www.carnival.com, www.royalcaribbean.com, www.celebrity.com or www.princess.com.