

CLIA Launches New Certification Program For Luxury Cruise Specialists

2007-08-21

Since its official launch in March, Cruise Lines International Association's new Luxury Cruise Specialist (LCS) certification program has drawn a quick, positive response from travel agents.

Nearly 100 CLIA member agents have signed up and 15 have already completed certification. One of the association's member lines has offered additional support to the program by providing special perks to agents who have completed the program and others are expected to follow.

'With annual growth often in double digits, the luxury segment of travel represents a tremendous opportunity for today's travel agents,' said Terry L. Dale, CLIA's president and CEO. 'Selling luxury is a specific skill and CLIA's Luxury Cruise Specialist certification aims to make sure our travel agent partners have every opportunity to take advantage and gain their fair share of the market.'

The LCS program is designed to teach agents all they need to know about the luxury traveler, provide first-hand experience, offer sales skills needed to meet the specific demands of the luxury market, and give graduates the industry recognition, referrals and CLIA promotion they deserve. It defines and clarifies luxury cruises for travel agents who are new to selling deluxe seagoing vacations, and provides a base of knowledge on two types of upscale cruise experiences available aboard CLIA member line ships: the 'all-luxury' category of cruise ships, and luxury categories of accommodations and other services on vessels offering a wide range of price categories.

To be certified a Luxury Cruise Specialist, participants must be affiliated with a CLIA member travel agency and have successfully completed the CLIA Accredited Cruise Counsellor certification program. In addition, agents must complete or have already completed CLIA's 'Selling to Special Interest/Niche Markets' and 'Cruising - The Ultimate Incentive' courses, as well as the 'Understanding the Luxury Market' online course. Course work must be completed within five years of enrollment in the program.

To further ensure that graduates have a full grasp of the market, Luxury Cruise Specialists also are required to complete two ship inspections: one ship inspection is required on a vessel from CLIA's luxury member lines, and one inspection is required of designated premium stateroom categories on other CLIA lines.

At only \$30 for enrollment, the LCS certification represents an outstanding value. More information and an application form is available on CLIA's Web site at www.cruising.org. Simply go to the Travel Agent section, sign in, click on Luxury Cruise Specialist, print the application and mail it to CLIA, 910 SE 17th Street, Suite 400, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316-2968.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

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