

300 Americans May Be Touring China at Same Time as Nixon

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By FRANK J. PRIAL

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About 300 American tourists may visit China at the same time as President Nixon. They would be the first American tourists on mainland China in more than two decades.

The Americans are among 1,100 passengers booked aboard the liner France, which begins a 91-day luxury world cruise tomorrow at Le Harve. The trip into China, which will be open to all passengers on the France, will start from Hong Kong when the vessel arrives there late in February.

The group will go on to Canton, probably by special train, spend two nights there, then fly to Singapore to catch up with the ship.

French Line officials here said they have been working on the trip with the official

Chinese Agency for International Tourism in Peking. Jean-Claude Potier, general manager of the Ship line for the United States, Canada and Mexico, said the idea for the side trip was worked out only a few weeks ago and that details had not yet been completed.

Mr. Potier said the Chinese

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had proposed that the group leave for Canton as soon as the France arrived in Hong Kong but that an attempt was being made to give the passengers a day to shop in that free port and return their purchases to the ship before departing for Canton, about 100 miles to the northwest.

Mr. Potier emphasized that the trip would be held on whatever days the Chinese offered.

Tourists May Be Limited

The French Line official said he was awaiting word on the change in scheduling and on the maximum number of visitors the Chinese will accept. "We understand Canton has 1,500 beds for foreign visitors," Mr. Potier said, "and we hope they will take everyone on the France who wants to make the trip."

If only a limited number of the group are accepted, he went on, the passengers will be asked to draw lots to determine who goes. Thomas Cook & Son, the travel company handling all shore excursion arrangements for the world trip, is hoping to obtain a collective visa for all tour members.

Excursion Cost Not Known

Mr. Potier noted that the Chinese had not yet indicated how much the two-day excursion would cost. He said that he doubted that many of the cruise passengers would argue over the price since they paying anywhere from \$7,600 for a single cabin to nearly \$100,000 for a suite for five.

Besides the 307 Americans who will board the France when it arrives here Monday, the passenger list includes 396 French persons, 79 Britons, 64 Canadians and others from Spain, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Tunisia, Switzerland, South Africa, Peru, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Sweden, Uruguay, Brazil, Portugal, Greece, Ireland and Chile.

Most of the passengers will board the ship in LeHavre or New York and others are expected to join the cruise at Nassau in the Bahamas or in Brazil.

Originally, the French Line had thought of visiting Shanghai, but it was learned that the huge ship could not tie up in that city's harbor. Northern Chinese cities, such as Peking itself, were ruled out because of the cold weather in February and because the long detour would upset arrangements made at many of the cruise's other 27 ports of call.

After New York, the France will call at Nassau, Trinidad, Rio de Janeiro, the Falkland Is-



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Jean-Claude Potier, French Line executive here, discussing cruise yesterday.

lands, Punta Arenas and Valparaiso, Chile, Easter Island, Tahiti, Suva, Noumea, Port Moresby, Bali, Hong Kong, Colombo, Bombay, Mombasa, Reunion Island, Durban, Capetown, Luanda, Dakar, Cannes, Madiera and back to New York.

At least one other Marxist government, that of Chile, is making a special effort to entertain the 1,200 obviously wealthy passengers on the cruise. When the France stops at Easter Island, the passengers will find buses waiting to take them around the island. The buses are being sent by the Chilean government by chartered freighter.

Improved Relations Cited

In Washington, a State Department official confirmed that the Americans aboard the France, as far as he knew, the first tourists from this country to visit China since the recent improvement in relations between the two countries.

"We don't know for sure," he said, "because they don't have to come to us for permission anymore." He said an estimated 130 to 150 United States citizens have visited China since the American table-tennis team went last year but that all of them were thought to have gone in some professional or academic capacity.

The State Department official noted that Canton would be a logical place for tourists because semi-annual trade fairs are held in the city which are widely attended by foreigners.

Mr. Potier of the French Line said he believed the Chinese now were actively seeking tourists. He said a number of tour groups from Eastern-bloc nations had visited the country and that he knew of at least one recent group of Portuguese who had visited China.