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TRAVEL

Singapore bets on 'big wheel' lure

Wednesday, September 14, 2005 Posted: 0410 GMT (1210 HKT)

SINGAPORE (AP) -- Singapore is seeking to boost tourism with a giant Ferris wheel that planners say will be 43 meters (142 feet) taller than the London Eye, a similar attraction beside the River Thames.

The Singapore Flyer project will be 178 meters (587 feet) high when it is completed in early 2008, and visitors will be able to see as far away as 45 kilometers (28 miles), with views of neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia, according to project managers.

Construction is expected to begin later this month on the Singapore Flyer, which will feature 28 air-conditioned capsules that treat tourists to a 37-minute ride as the wheel goes around.

The wheel will be built in Singapore's Marina Bay area, where the city-state also plans to build a casino.

Peter Purcell, managing director of the project, said German banks Delbrueck Bethmann Maffei and Bayerische Hypo-und Vereinsbank are funding the project, which will cost sing. \$240 million (\$143 million).

"The most successful iconic visitor attractions anywhere in the world are viewing platforms," such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris, The Straits Times newspaper quoted Purcell as saying.

Singapore hopes 2.5 million people will visit its sightseeing wheel in its first year of operation.

The London Eye, which offers a sweeping view of central London, attracted some 3.5 million visitors in 2000, the year it opened, and remains hugely popular.



The wheel will be built in Singapore's Marina Bay area.

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Singapore's observation wheel is a joint venture between Melchers Project Management, a German logistics and engineering company, and Orient & Pacific Management, a consultancy based in the British Virgin Islands, the newspaper reported.

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