

CHINESE CRUISE MARKET IS STEADILY GROWING



By 2030, the Chinese cruise market could be the world's first. The cruise market off the coast of China, virtually non-existent a decade ago, is now in full expansion.

Last week, the German ship Meyer Werft delivered the Norwegian Joy liner to the company Norwegian Cruise Line, a ship designed specifically for Chinese customers. At the end of March, the "Majestic Princess", built in Italy in Fincantieri shipyards, was delivered to Princess Cruises. It will head for Asia in mid-May.

These ship owners are not the only ones who want to make Chinese tourists discover the charms of the cruise. By 2015, nearly 1 million Chinese have boarded a ship, a figure rising to up to 40% over one year, according to figures from the International Association of Cruise Lines (CLIA) and according to projections by the Chinese Cruise Association quoted by Royal Caribbean Cruise Line (RCCL), they should reach the number of 4.5 million by 2020.

The Chinese cruise market would then become the second in the world, ahead of Europe and behind the United States, which is number one today with more than 11 million cruise passengers. By 2030, the Americans would even be supplanted by the Chinese.

In 2006 the Costa group was the first one to invest in the Chinese offshore travel market under the Costa Asia brand. A fifth ship, the "Costa neoRomantica", has just been repositioned in Asia, already served by four ships of the company. Two other passenger ships, specially designed for the Chinese market, were also ordered in 2015 from Fincantieri and are expected to join the fleet in 2019 and 2020.

Having been present in China for almost a decade, RCCL has about "9% of its fleet deployed to the Chinese cruise market", a market with "outstanding potential" said Emmanuel Joly, the company's sales manager for France and Spain - including the "Quantum of the Seas" and the "Ovation of the Seas". RCCL has recently developed local departures, from Shanghai, Hong Kong, or Tianjin, to the north of the country.

Each of these companies had to adapt to this specific clientele, CLIA recently noted in a press release, with "all inclusive" offers including activities for families and in the image of what you find aboard the "Norwegian Joy", "high-class boutiques, multilingual staff, tailored menus with local and regional cuisine, cabin and high-tech amenities".

To get closer to the target market, European shipyards are starting to export the construction of cruise ships to China, where a total of sixty ships were positioned in 2016 (including fourteen all year round).

This is the meaning of last year's partnership between Fincantieri and the state-owned China State Shipbuilding Corporation, controlled by Beijing. As for the world's number one cruise company, the

American Carnival (parent company of Costa and Princess), it formalized the order in February, for 1.4 billion euros, two ships in China, again dedicated to Chinese travelers and adapted to their expectations.

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