

CHINA'S CRUISE TOURISM IS OFF TO A GOOD START



Since September 2023, China has resumed international cruise tourism, and many cities have restarted international cruise routes. Since this year's Spring Festival, there has been a "cruise season" with both supply and demand.

Statistics indicate that China's cruise tourism had a good start during the Spring Festival of the Year of the Dragon. According to data from Fliggy, the cruise booking platform, including domestic and international cruises, **increased by 445% year-on-year during the Spring Festival holiday.** During the 8-day holiday, Shanghai inspected four inbound and outbound cruise ships, with over 21,200 people entering and exiting, indicating an increase of almost 22% month-on-month.

China's cruise tourism has grown in popularity since the Spring Festival. On February 22nd, Shanghai Cruise Port welcomed four international cruise ships to dock simultaneously. These included the sizeable domestic cruise ships "Aida Modu," "Gulangyu," "Blue Dream Star," and "Europa." Later in February, the Maltese luxury cruise ship "Europa" also docked in Shanghai, Qingdao, and Tianjin.

Many places have implemented various measures to enhance the experience of tourists in China. For instance, the Dongjiang Border Inspection Station of Tianjin Frontier Inspection Station has devised a work plan, opened enough inspection channels, and ensured efficient customs clearance for "Cuidedan" tourists.

Since most cruise passengers are middle-aged or elderly, they might forget or misplace their boarding and disembarkation vouchers. If a passenger happens to lose their voucher, it is quickly reissued once their identity is confirmed. This ensures a hassle-free and enjoyable trip for tourists in China.

According to Ye Xinliang, a professor at the Shanghai University of Engineering Science who studies the cruise economy, China's cruise economy is expected to experience a significant increase in its economic prosperity index in 2023, exceeding expectations. He also predicts that 2024 will be a pivotal year for the full development of China's cruise tourism. Professor Ye believes China will have more cruise ships this year, and the growth rate is expected to surpass the global average.

Zheng Weihang, executive vice president of the Cruise Yacht Branch of the China Communications and Transportation Association, shares Professor Ye's optimism regarding the prospects of China's cruise economy. Mr. Zheng believes that China's cruise industry will enter the second "golden decade" of rapid development after this year and the next.

The "cruise season" beginning in the Year of the Dragon has become a noteworthy event in China's accelerated recovery of inbound and outbound tourism. According to data from China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, during the Spring Festival this year, there were approximately 6.83 million inbound and outbound tourists, with 3.6 million outbound and 3.23 million inbound tourists, almost the same as in 2019. The China Tourism Academy predicts that the number of Chinese outbound tourists will reach 130 million by 2024.

The cruise market has attracted competition from international cruise companies. Royal Caribbean has announced that it will provide more than 130 international cruise itineraries to Chinese consumers from 2025 to 2026, leading the accelerated development of China's cruise tourism with a diversified route portfolio and a "dual flagship and three home ports" deployment plan.

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