



A cruise liner berths at the Wusongkou cruise liner terminal in 2019. — IC

Cruise ship resumes sailing from Wusongkou

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A cruise liner departed for South Korea from suburban Shanghai's Wusongkou port on Tuesday, marking the reopening of Asia's largest cruise liner port after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 25,000-ton lightweight Blue Dream Star, owned by the Shanghai-based Blue Dream Cruises, sailed for Jeju Island from the Wusongkou International Cruise Liner Port in Baoshan District with no passengers onboard, in a trial operation for an impending commercial voyage.

The cruise ship, with 390 rooms and a capacity of 1,053 passengers, will return to the Wusongkou port after the test voyage and then sail for Japan's Seto Inland Sea for its first international passenger cruise since the pandemic.

"The ship will pass Japan's Hiroshima, Miyajima, Naoshima, Kochi, Osaka, Beppu and some other ports where large

cruise liners don't usually berth to provide a special experience for the passengers," said an official with Blue Dream Cruises.

Cruise ships around the world were sites of the earliest clusters of COVID infection, forcing operators to shut down tours and countries to close their ports.

At the Wusongkou port, once the busiest in Asia and the world's No. 4, all cruise liner operations have been suspended since January 30, 2020, to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

The terminal received its last eight luxury cruise liners between January 22 and 29, 2020. They carried 30,595 inbound and outbound passengers, along with more than 10,000 crew.

The city government has given the green light for the smooth restoration of international cruise liner services at the Wusongkou port. It is part of Shanghai's efforts to boost economic recovery and

make the cruise liner industry an economic highlight of the city.

To fully prepare for the official relaunch of the overseas cruise liner service, the Baoshan Maritime Safety Bureau conducted a rescue drill with the Donghai Rescue Bureau and safety inspections to prevent and react to any emergency situation during the Blue Dream Star's maiden voyage.

The bureau dispatched two coastal patrol vessels and drones on Tuesday to escort the trial voyage of the cruise liner at the estuary of the Yangtze River.

Destinations would cover popular destinations in East Asia such as Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Fukuoka and Nagasaki.

CM-Yidun, jointly developed by China Merchants Group and Viking Cruises, will set off from the Shanghai Port International Cruise Terminal in Hongkou District for Japan in June.

Since opening in October

2011, the Wusongkou terminal has welcomed 2,200 cruise ships carrying over 14 million passengers.

Several liners from the world's top cruise companies — Carnival, Royal Caribbean, Norwegian, MSC and Genting — have made their maiden voyages in Asia from the terminal. The terminal is able to moor four luxury liners at the same time after a major expansion in 2019.

Wusongkou is a historic landmark of Shanghai. Its lighthouse was once the tallest site of the city and remains a national geological landmark.

In 1842, when a British fleet attacked the wharf, General Chen Huacheng (1776-1842) led an army to repel the invaders.

Though the cannons at the fort managed to sink several ships, the defenders lost the battle and Chen lost his life. The Wusongkou cruise liner port has upgraded its facilities and streamlined boarding procedures at the terminal over the past three years to prepare for

the resumption of services.

A corridor stretching 14,000 square meters and covered by wave-shaped membrane sunshades has been built to connect the three terminals at the port. VIP lounges, nursing rooms and self-service ticket machines have also been added.

A new project called "Sea One" at 60 Wusongkou Road will include three office buildings, a luxury hotel and outlet shopping malls.

According to the master plan, the Shanghai International Cruise Liner Resort will be developed at the port to become another international tourist resort on par with the Shanghai International Resort in the Pudong New Area, which has the Shanghai Disney Resort at its core.

Royal Caribbean has announced that its Spectrum of the Seas, a Quantum Ultra Class flagship, would return to the Wusongkou port, which also serves as the ship's home port, in April 2024.