

World Cruises: A Perspective of Transportation Geography

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ABSTRACT

World cruises are a marginal part of cruise tourism, but they offer a unique maritime leisure experience for their passengers through special itineraries. Actually, world cruises offer both round-the-world trips that are long duration and short itineraries in the region, which depending on the global layout of the cruise ports and the spatial distribution of the regional cruise homeports. This makes the world cruises, at the geographical level, show the characteristics of globalization and regionalization simultaneously.

Keywords: World cruises; Geography; Globalization; Regionalization

INTRODUCTION

Cruise tourism is a combination of transportation and leisure tourism, and also one of the fastest developing forms of tourism. And the core of cruise tourism is a cruise itinerary built based on ports [1,2]. However, in 2020, the global outbreak of COVID-19 forced most countries to implement strict travel bans and close trade ports, making cruise tourism impossible to carry out normally.

The shutdown is a serious problem for cruise operators, which continue to pay heavy management costs every day despite having no source of revenue at all. To ease the financial burden caused by cruise suspension as soon as possible, some cruise operators, especially MSC Cruise, Costa Cruise, and other offshore cruise lines, have tried to open aimless or domestic cruise industry [3], respectively in September 2020, and have obtained certain good feedback. However, for Cunard Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, and other world cruises, they have to continue to extend the time of resumption. One of the important reasons lies in the differences in the attributes and routes of cruise ships, resulting in different degrees of difficulty in the resumption of navigation.

World cruises mainly focus on trans-regional long itineraries or even round-the-world voyages. Restrictions on inbound and outbound tourism make it impossible for world cruises to sail

normally on their advantageous itineraries. However, after analyzing the itinerary characteristics of world cruises and the space selection of ports, we found that there were certain similarities between world cruise and offshore cruise.

WORLD CRUISES

Among the cruise ships, the world cruise is a non-mainstream type, with a small market share in the global cruise ships. Based on the passenger capacity of the cruises in 2021, the passenger capacity of world cruise accounts for less than 5% of the total global cruise passenger capacity [4].

ITINERARY STRUCTURE AND PORT ORGANIZATION

The itineraries of the world cruises are usually longer. Some itineraries last more than a month, while round-the-world itineraries last more than three months. These long-duration itineraries fully reflect the globalized characteristics of cruise itinerary organization. But simultaneously, world cruises also offer short regional routes within 7 days. From the perspective of the actual sailing schedule of world cruise itineraries, these itineraries are often part of or formed by the division of long itineraries [5].

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The result of such itinerary division is that passengers on the same cruise ship can either have the same port of embarkation and different ports of disembarkation, or have different ports of embarkation but the same port of disembarkation, and have the same or different ports of embarkation and disembarkation. Thus, the "itinerary group" is formed, which is very similar to the mode of the bus ride.

From the perspective of port geography, the globalized features of world cruises mainly benefit from the global layout of cruise ports. The world cruise lines, through selection and orderly combination cruise ports distributed in different regions, connect the global itineraries. The division of long itineraries is the result of cruise lines taking full advantage of the spatial differentiation of global cruise port functions, especially regional cruise homeports. Because the port node divided in each long itinerary usually is the homeport. These homeports are also often the main nodes for offshore cruise organizing the short regional itineraries. Therefore, the short itineraries organized by the world cruises are very similar to the offshore cruises.

CONCLUSION

The specialty and notability of the world cruise is the long itinerary, which can bring the ultimate maritime leisure vacation

experience to the cruise passengers. But in terms of cruise geography, the world cruise has the characteristics of globalization and regionalization in itinerary setting and port organization. However, the result of forming this characteristic is not from one side. Among them, the pursuit of a high occupancy rate of cruise ships to obtain greater economic benefits is one of the original motives for world cruises. Besides, the spatial distribution of cruise ports, regional differences in human and geographical environments and changes in natural climate are important factors that affect the duration and structure of cruise itineraries.

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