



CMA CGM overtakes Maersk in the liner rankings

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CMA CGM

CMA CGM, this year's most aggressive acquirer of ships to date, has made history.

As of this week, Marseille-headquartered CMA CGM has surpassed rival Maersk to the second spot on the liner rankings when including its huge orderbook.

The latest data from Alphaliner shows CMA CGM's fleet – including ships on order – stands at 5.42m slots, some 140,000 teu more than its Danish rival. Mediterranean Shipping Co (MSC) remains far out in the lead, however, its fleet – including ships on order – is now at 8.47m slots, larger than the extant fleets of CMA CGM and Maersk combined.

As well as being the largest buyer of secondhand boxships in the opening months of 2025, CMA CGM has been busy ordering newbuilds. *Splash* reported earlier this week on CMA CGM's latest series of containership newbuildings in China, opting for a dozen LNG dual-fuel 18,000 teu vessels at CSSC Jiangnan Shipyard, its second order for large containerships this year, following a \$2.6bn contract for another twelve 18,000 teu LNG dual-fuel newbuilds at Korean shipyard HD Hyundai Heavy Industries.

CMA CGM can trace its origins back to 1978 when Jacques Saadé founded Compagnie Maritime d'Affrètement (CMA) as an intra-Mediterranean operator. In 1996, Saadé merged CMA with Compagnie Générale Maritime (CGM) to create what was then the 12th largest liner in the world. Saadé, who was born in Beirut in 1937, then went on to buy many famous shipping brands including Australian National Line (ANL), American President Lines (APL), and Cheng Lie Navigation. His son, Rodolphe, took over the business following Saadé's death in 2018, adding many logistics acquisitions alongside the ship purchases.

Maersk, meanwhile, has been content to focus on operating a fleet within the 4m to 4.4m teu range, a policy originally conceived by former CEO Soren Skou, and carried on by his successor Vincent Clerc. This strategy saw MSC overhaul Maersk as the world's largest carrier at the start of 2021.

There are other notable ranking shifts taking place lower down the Alphaliner liner charts too. When including ships on order, Taiwan's Evergreen has just overtaken Japan's Ocean Network Express (ONE) into sixth spot while Wan Hai, also from Taiwan, enters the top 10 at the expense of compatriot Yang Ming.