S&P Journal of Commerce

Congestion eases at key Asian ports on holiday-related cargo reduction



Vessel wait times have fallen to a little over two days this week in Shanghai and Ningbo (pictured), according to forwarder Kuehne + Nagel. Photo credit: Alex Tao Wang / Shutterstock.com.

Keith Wallis, Asia Special Correspondent | Oct 16, 2026, 11:59 AM EDT

Key ports in Asia including Shanghai, Ningbo and Kaohsiung are seeing an improvement in vessel wait times after successive typhoons between July and September caused lengthy port closures and vessel waits of up to two weeks at some ports.

The improvement is being driven largely by reduced cargo volumes and some blank sailings as a result of China's National Day Golden Week holiday, which officially ended on Oct. 7, although some factories delayed a return to work until this week.

While forwarders reported a general reduction in congestion, they also point out there are still specific terminal hotspots within individual ports such as Shanghai, where berthing delays exist.

David Yuan of Rhenus Air & Ocean said overall port congestion is easing, especially for regional trade vessels.

“The most congested ports like Shanghai, Singapore, Port Klang, Manila are experiencing less than three days congestion for berthing,” Yuan told *Journal of Commerce* Friday.

The biggest improvement is at Shanghai and Ningbo, where overall wait times have fallen to a little over two days this week, according to freight forwarder Kuehne + Nagel. That compared with berthing waits of at least five days after severe storms in August and September.

“Congestion improved across terminals with reduced vessel waiting times, although some terminals continue to experience higher delays,” the forwarder said of the situation at Shanghai, the world’s busiest container port.

Carrier schedules show improvement

Carriers have also reported a significant improvement in Shanghai congestion, with HMM schedules Friday showing just two vessels facing delays of two days or more between arrival and berthing. Most vessels were tying up alongside the berth within 24 hours of arrival in Shanghai. That compared with 32 ships where arrival and berthing was delayed by at least two days in early September.

Evergreen Marine said seven ships this week have faced arrival and berthing wait times longer than two days in Shanghai. Vessel schedules Friday showed all vessels next week will berth within two days of arrival.

By comparison, at least 20 Evergreen ships had to wait more than two days to berth in Shanghai in early/mid-September.

But highlighting terminal-specific delays within Shanghai, Hapag-Lloyd said wait times at terminal five of the inner-city Waigaoqiao container complex were between three and five days, and 14 days at terminal four at the Yangshan deep-water facility.

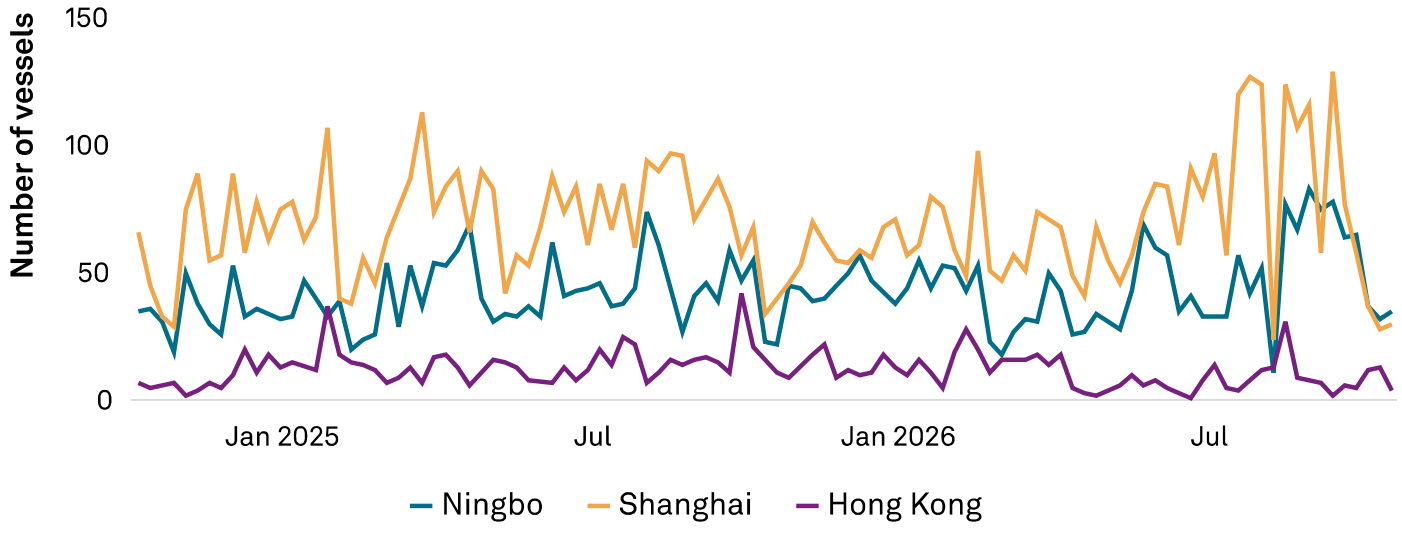
At Ningbo, the seven-day average vessel time is about 2.06 days, Kuehne + Nagel said Friday.

“Congestion has eased following Golden Week, reducing waiting times, though dredging works continue to limit berth availability,” it said.

Vessel queues continue to improve at Shanghai and Ningbo, according to Portcast data available on *Journal of Commerce*'s Gateway platform. As of Oct. 12, 30 vessels were waiting at Shanghai, while the queue at Ningbo was 35 ships, the data showed. That is well below storm-related peaks of 129 vessels in Shanghai and 83 at Ningbo in late August and early September.

Vessel queues at Shanghai, Ningbo well below post-storm peak

China port harbor performance



Source: Portcast

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In Shekou, one of the Shenzhen terminals in south China, yard density of more than 90% has led the terminal company to "deprioritize heavy discharge vessels due to limited yard space" this week, according to Kuehne + Nagel.

While Taiwan's Kaohsiung is facing yard utilization of 95%, wait times are about a day, according to Hapag-Lloyd and Kuehne + Nagel.

In Singapore, the port is continuing to be affected by "strong post-Golden Week cargo demand" which was driving congestion at PSA terminals this week, K+N said.

The challenges led Ocean Network Express to skip Singapore on several intra-Asia sailings to maintain schedule reliability.

Yard congestion and infrastructure improvements are hampering improvement in vessel wait times in Busan. Three terminals — Pusan Newport International Terminal, Pusan Newport Terminal, and HMM PSA New-Port Terminal (HPNT) — have yard densities of more than 80%, helping to cause a three-day wait at HPNT.

At Vung Tau in southern Vietnam, yard utilization is more than 100%, worsening the congestion there, Kuehne + Nagel said.

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