

# Cruises catch bug

The virus outbreak in China is creating a patch of rough sea for the three big publicly traded cruise line companies.

Shares of Carnival Corp., Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd. are down by the teens in terms of percentages since mid-December.

The companies are canceling trips and offering refunds. If the coronavirus outbreak lingers, they are willing to move ships from Asia to other parts of the world that at least for now remain largely untouched by the outbreak.

These are uncharted waters for the cruise lines. China was an insignificant market back in 2002, when

the SARS outbreak started, but it's growing fast and equals Alaska's popular cruise sector, according to an industry trade group. The new virus has already killed more people than SARS.

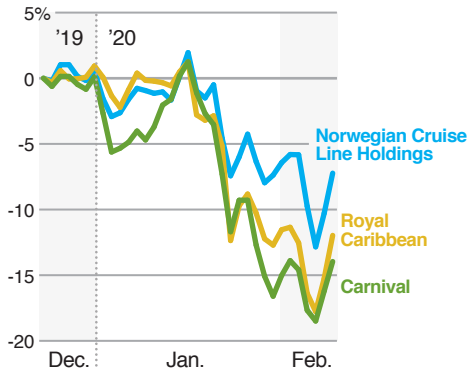
Colleen McDaniel, editor of Cruise Critic, a site that reviews cruises, says the ships have well-staffed medical centers that can handle most illnesses and emergencies. Still, the idea of sharing a confined space with a few thousand

other cruisers during an outbreak is bound to scare away customers.

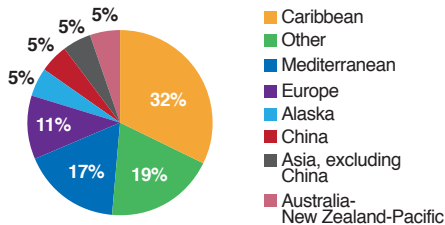
When cruise lines return to calmer waters depends on how quickly health authorities contain and eradicate the virus. A drop in new cases has boosted cruise stocks this week.



**Indexed stock performance since Dec. 23**



**World cruise market**



**Where cruise passengers come from (in millions)**

