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Inland Water Passenger Transport Market Forecasts to 2032 – Global Analysis By Vessel (Water Taxis, Cruise Ships, Cargo-Passenger Ship and Ferries), Propulsion (Conventional, Electric, Hydrogen and Hybrid), Transportation Mode, Passenger Capacity, End User and By Geography

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Abstracts

According to Stratistics MRC, the Global Inland Water Passenger Transport Market is accounted for $1.87 billion in 2025 and is expected to reach $3.12 billion by 2032 growing at a CAGR of 7.6% during the forecast period. The movement of people by ferries, boats, and other vessels through waterways like rivers, canals, lakes, and estuaries is referred to as inland water passenger transport. This form of transportation is essential in areas with vast water systems because it offers a practical and environmentally responsible substitute for rail and road transportation. Particularly in nations with extensive river systems like China, India, and the Netherlands, it is extensively utilized for cross-border travel, tourism, and daily commuting. Moreover, inland water transportation is becoming an increasingly attractive option for urban mobility and regional connectivity as a result of improvements in its efficiency and sustainability brought about by advancements in vessel technology, such as electric and hybrid boats.

According to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, India's inland waterways indeed have the potential to support approximately 15,500 kilometers for passenger and cargo movement.

Market Dynamics:

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Driver:

Growing urbanization and congestion in traffic

Longer commutes and increased pollution are the results of congested urban transportation systems brought on by cities continued growth and population expansion. A practical substitute is inland water passenger transportation, which uses natural waterways to lessen traffic on highways and railroads. Ferry services are being incorporated into public transportation systems in many cities, including Bangkok, Venice, and London, in an effort to improve connectivity and reduce traffic. Additionally, to facilitate last-mile connectivity, the availability of water-based transit makes it simpler for people to get to residential areas, business districts, and tourist destinations without depending entirely on road transportation.

Restraint:

Expensive initial infrastructure costs

Infrastructure development and upkeep for inland water transportation demand large financial outlays. Inland water passenger transportation requires the building of docks, terminals, navigation channels, and safety infrastructure to ensure seamless operations, in contrast to road and rail transportation, which depend on established networks. The cost of dredging rivers and canals to keep them navigable is constant, especially in regions where sedimentation is a problem. Furthermore, governments and private operators may find it prohibitively costly to invest in modern vessel technology, such as electric ferries and intelligent navigation systems.

Opportunity:

Developments in sustainable and eco-friendly vessel technologies

The market for inland water passenger transport has a big chance as environmental sustainability and emissions reduction gain more attention. Electric, hybrid, and hydrogen-powered ferries are replacing conventional diesel-powered ones, lowering carbon emissions and enhancing air quality. Research and development for fuel-cell technology, solar-assisted ferries, and battery-powered boats is being funded by governments and private investors, making water transportation a more environmentally friendly choice. Moreover, the transition to environmentally friendly transportation options creates new opportunities for industry participants to launch low-emission,

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energy-efficient ships that adhere to international environmental standards.

Threat:

Competition from air, rail, and road transportation

Inland water passenger transportation has its benefits, but it also faces fierce competition from other modes of transportation like short-haul flights, high-speed rail, and road networks. Inland ferry systems have limited growth potential because governments and private investors frequently give funding for road and rail infrastructure a higher priority than the development of water transportation. In cities, people can use electric buses, ride-sharing services, and metro systems to get around more quickly and conveniently, which lessens the need for ferries. Additionally, the efficiency of travel is also being enhanced by developments in electric aircraft and high-speed rail, especially for regional and international routes.

Covid-19 Impact:

Due to lockdowns, travel restrictions, and social distancing measures, the COVID-19 pandemic had a severe effect on the inland water passenger transport market, resulting in a sharp decline in passenger traffic. Operators of commuter boats, river cruises, and ferry services suffered large financial losses as a result of the suspension or reduced capacity of many of these services. Financial difficulties were made worse by the fall in tourism, particularly in areas that depended on river cruises and sightseeing ferries. Furthermore, operating costs also increased as a result of operators being forced to adopt expensive sanitization procedures, capacity restrictions, and contactless ticketing due to health and safety regulations.

The ferries segment is expected to be the largest during the forecast period

The ferries segment is expected to account for the largest market share during the forecast period. Ferries are an economical and effective substitute for road and rail transportation, and they are an essential part of regional and urban transit systems, particularly in cities with vast waterways. The market is boosted by the high demand for passengers in crowded areas, where ferries offer a more environmentally friendly and emission-free form of transportation than conventional land-based alternatives. Moreover, the market is expanding due to the rise of environmentally friendly electric and hybrid ferries, which is in line with international sustainability objectives.

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The electric segment is expected to have the highest CAGR during the forecast period

Over the forecast period, the electric segment is predicted to witness the highest growth rate. Stricter emission regulations are being enforced by governments and regulatory agencies, which are pushing operators to switch from traditional fuel-powered boats to environmentally friendly electric ferries, water taxis, and passenger boats. Commercial use of electric vessels is becoming more feasible due to developments in battery technology, improved energy efficiency, and reduced operating costs. Furthermore, accelerating market adoption are investments in renewable energy integration and charging infrastructure. In order to fight urban pollution and traffic, cities with large inland waterways are giving electrification top priority in their fleets of public transportation.

Region with largest share:

During the forecast period, the Europe region is expected to hold the largest market share. In nations with vast river and canal systems, like Germany, the Netherlands, France, and the United Kingdom, ferries, water taxis, and cruise ships are essential for both urban transportation and tourism. The market has been further strengthened by the region's substantial investments in electric and hybrid passenger vessels as a result of its commitment to lowering carbon emissions. Moreover, a major factor in the high passenger volumes is Europe's well-established tourism sector, especially in areas like the Danube, Rhine, and Seine rivers.

Region with highest CAGR:

Over the forecast period, the Asia Pacific region is anticipated to exhibit the highest CAGR. In order to reduce traffic and offer affordable, environmentally friendly transportation options, nations like China, India, Indonesia, and Vietnam are making significant investments in inland waterway infrastructure. Particularly in densely populated urban areas, the region's vast river networks—including the Ganges, Yangtze, and Mekong—support a high volume of passenger transportation. Additionally, the adoption of contemporary inland water transport solutions is being accelerated by the growing emphasis on smart transportation systems as well as increased investments from the public and private sectors.

Key players in the market

Some of the key players in Inland Water Passenger Transport Market include ABB,

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Siemens, Holland Shipyards Group, Saga River Cruises, Hebridean Island Cruises, Emerald Cruises, Avalon Waterways, SES-X Marine Technologies, Damen Shipyards Group, American Cruise Lines, Viking River Cruises, Crystal River Cruises, Kooiman Marine Group, Riviera Travel and A-ROSA River Cruises.

Key Developments:

In March 2025, ABB has entered into a Leveraged Procurement Agreement (LPA) to become the automation partner for Dow's Path2Zero project at Fort Saskatchewan in Alberta, Canada. The project, currently under construction, aims to establish the world's first net-zero Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions ethylene and derivatives complex, which will produce vital components for numerous everyday products and materials.

In March 2025, Siemens Energy announced that it has obtained a $1.6 billion contract to equip the Rumah 2 and Nairyah 2 gas power plants in Saudi Arabia. These infrastructures, located in the western and central regions of the country, will inject 3.6 gigawatts of electricity into the national grid, equivalent to the consumption of 1.5 million households.

In January 2024, American Cruise Lines which operates a fleet of U.S.-flagged coastal and inland passenger cruise ships has reached an agreement with the U.S. Attorney's Office that calls for improving accessibility on its ships and shore operations. The settlement will address accessibility on all 17 of the company's vessels and implement accessibility standards and policies to provide greater access during cruises.

Vessels Covered:

- Water Taxis
- Cruise Ships
- Cargo-Passenger Ship
- Ferries

Propulsions Covered:

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- Conventional
- Electric
- Hydrogen
- Hybrid

Transportation Modes Covered:

- Canal Passenger Transportation
- Intercostal Transportation Of Passengers
- Lake Passenger Transportation
- Water Shuttle Services
- River Passenger Transportation
- Ship Chartering With Crew
- Water Taxi Services

Passenger Capacities Covered:

- Up to 50 Passengers
- 51 to 200 Passengers
- 201 to 500 Passengers
- More than 500 Passengers

End Users Covered:

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- Tourism
- Commuting
- Leisure

Regions Covered:

- North America
  - US
  - Canada
  - Mexico
- Europe
  - Germany
  - UK
  - Italy
  - France
  - Spain
  - Rest of Europe
- Asia Pacific
  - Japan
  - China
  - India

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- Australia
- New Zealand
- South Korea
- Rest of Asia Pacific

South America

- Argentina
- Brazil
- Chile
- Rest of South America

Middle East & Africa

- Saudi Arabia
- UAE
- Qatar
- South Africa
- Rest of Middle East & Africa

What our report offers:
- Market share assessments for the regional and country-level segments
- Strategic recommendations for the new entrants
- Covers Market data for the years 2024, 2025, 2026, 2028, and 2032
- Market Trends (Drivers, Constraints, Opportunities, Threats, Challenges, Investment Opportunities, and recommendations)
- Strategic recommendations in key business segments based on the market estimations

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- Competitive landscaping mapping the key common trends
- Company profiling with detailed strategies, financials, and recent developments
- Supply chain trends mapping the latest technological advancements

Free Customization Offerings:

All the customers of this report will be entitled to receive one of the following free customization options:

Company Profiling

Comprehensive profiling of additional market players (up to 3)

SWOT Analysis of key players (up to 3)

Regional Segmentation

Market estimations, Forecasts and CAGR of any prominent country as per the client's interest (Note: Depends on feasibility check)

Competitive Benchmarking

Benchmarking of key players based on product portfolio, geographical presence, and strategic alliances

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Contents

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10 GLOBAL INLAND WATER PASSENGER TRANSPORT MARKET, BY GEOGRAPHY

+357 96 030922
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11 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

12 COMPANY PROFILING

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List Of Tables

LIST OF TABLES

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Note: Tables for North America, Europe, APAC, South America, and Middle East & Africa Regions are also represented in the same manner as above.

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