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The number of vessels calling in at Cherbourg has continued to increase over the years

The English and German companies Royal Mail Line and Hamburg Amerika Line were the first to use Cherbourg for cruise ship stop-overs as from 1869. French companies however, in particular the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, preferred the port of Le Havre. Docking conditions there are not as good as those in Cherbourg but the town is directly linked to Paris via the River Seine and has been connected to the capital by train since 1847.

With the fresh upsurge of emigration, other foreign companies started making regular stop-overs in Cherbourg and the town was, in turn, linked to the capital by rail in 1858. Three maritime companies were using the harbour in 1900 and this number rose to seven in 1913 then eleven in 1927, including White Star Line, the future Cunard Line.



Thousands of passengers disembark in Cherbourg

In the space of a century (1869-1969), more than 3.9 million passengers came through Cherbourg, some leaving Europe for the Americas and others coming into Europe; most of these voyages took place during the two World Wars. A large part of the travellers boarding ships in Cherbourg were emigrants. This is not really surprising as at the time, the only means of reaching the new continent was by crossing the sea. Ships were the only solution, whether travelling to Europe or America, for business or pleasure.



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