

Maersk, Hapag-Lloyd confirm they'll route Gemini service through Suez



*Albert Maersk will leave Mundra in India on Feb. 4 for the Mediterranean, sailing via the Suez Canal.
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[Greg Knowler, Senior Editor Europe](#) | Feb 3, 2026, 11:43 AM EST

Gemini Cooperation partners Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd said Tuesday that the first vessels in their ME11/IMX service will be routed through the Suez Canal in mid-February, with plans by the carriers to send two other services through the waterway.

The *Journal of Commerce* reported on Jan. 15 that the ME11/IMX service would resume the Suez route “shortly,” citing a Maersk executive. It would be the first time in more than two years that a Gemini service has transited the Red Sea.

“The service in scope is the ME11 service, which connects India and the Middle East with the Mediterranean,” Maersk said in a statement. “From mid-February, changes

will be implemented on westbound sailings as of the vessel *Albert Maersk* and on eastbound sailings as of the vessel *Astrid Maersk*.”

On the initial westbound sailing, the *Albert Maersk* will depart Mundra in India on Feb. 4 after arriving from Jebel Ali in the United Arab Emirates; on the eastbound sailing, the *Astrid Maersk* will depart Valencia in Spain on Feb. 3. A naval escort will ride shotgun during the Red Sea passages to guard against attacks by Yemen's Houthi militants, the Gemini statement noted.

Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd also said that “where possible,” they will redirect Gemini's AE12 Asia-Mediterranean and AE15 Asia-Turkey services through the Red Sea and Suez “at a later stage.” The carriers said further information for customers will follow, but no further changes to the Gemini network related to the Red Sea were foreseen at this stage.

“We see this announcement as another important milestone for the industry,” J.P. Morgan said Tuesday in a note to customers. “It demonstrates the willingness of container shipping lines to improve flows and increase sailings via the Suez Canal.”

But the investment bank said the market has yet to price in a sustained return to the Suez, which will add up to 7% of effective capacity to the global fleet.

Earlier this year, Maersk made its first structural move back into the Red Sea by rerouting its standalone MECL service, which links the Middle East and India with the US East Coast via the Suez Canal.

Regional unease over volatile US-Iran relations

The regional situation remains tense, with a US carrier strike group now stationed in the Gulf of Oman to back up threats by President Donald Trump to launch military strikes on Iran. Tehran has vowed to respond to any attacks, which may spill over into the southern Red Sea controlled by Iran-backed Houthi militants.

Gemini said switching the services from around the Cape of Good Hope to Suez would be carried out in a way that keeps disruption for customers to a minimum. But in a nod to the volatile regional security situation, the Gemini statement added: “Contingency plans are in place should the security situation deteriorate, which may necessitate reverting individual sailings or the wider structural change of the ME11 service back to the Cape of Good Hope route.”

Carriers have been forced to divert vessels around southern Africa since late 2023, when the Houthis began their attacks against commercial shipping to protest Israel's move into Gaza.

Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd also warned shippers to review their bookings on the ME11 service and ensure they had sufficient insurance cover for their cargo being transported through the area.

Cargo insurance is a significant hurdle for shippers with freight transiting the Red Sea. Some shippers say their insurance brokers have refused to provide cover, while others say the high cost of premiums was prohibitive.

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