

O SPOTLIGHT

E-Commerce Drives Rapid Growth in Ningbo's Cross-Border Express Sector

By Zhao Yu

Ningbo's cross-border express delivery sector is surging. Data from the Municipal Postal Administration shows that in 2025, the city's express shipments to Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas rose 19% year-on-year—outpacing the national average. At Ningbo Lishu International Airport, China Post handled 215% more export parcels from January to November. "This reflects a shift from a port-centric model to integrated sea-land-air logistics," said an official from the Municipal Postal Administration. Multiple forces are driving the sector's rapid expansion.

The "Triple Engine" Driving Growth

Three main forces are fueling the sector: market demand, enterprise innovation, and supportive policies.

Both cross-border e-commerce imports and exports have spurred demand. Supported by national strategies, favorable policies, geographic advantages, improved logistics services, and growing global consumer demand, Ningbo's cross-border e-commerce sector has seen steady growth. Over 70% of Ningbo's international express parcels last year were e-commerce shipments, with made-in-China electronics, precision instruments, and home appliances accounting for roughly 45% of the export volume. Apparel, footwear, hats, and home goods also take up a sizeable portion of e-commerce exports.

"High shipping costs used to deter overseas buyers. Now, group-buying models consolidate multiple orders, cutting costs and delivery time," said Zhu Zhehong, head of China Post Group Ningbo Branch's International



Ningbo's cross-border express delivery sector is surging.
[Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

Department. Customers place orders via platforms like Taobao or JD.com; parcels are processed in Ningbo's consolidation warehouses before being shipped abroad.

Chinese logistics companies are actively adapting by innovating their business models and establishing overseas warehouses to expand their global reach. Cainiao has built warehouses across Europe, the U.S., and Southeast Asia, creating a global logistics network. SF Express has launched specialized intercontinental routes like the "1 Euro to China" service, using digital tracking to cut costs, speed up delivery, and improve transparency.

Policy support also plays a key role. Ningbo has rolled out measures to facilitate cross-border trade, including international route incentives, one-stop clearance for products from Central and Eastern Europe, market ex-

pansion subsidies, and smart port upgrades. "These reforms streamline customs and transport, creating a policy environment for growth," said the postal official.

Shifting Markets Drive Broader Growth

"Last year, the industry focused more on the end-consumer experience, which helped drive growth in emerging markets such as Southeast Asia," said Xu Keke, General Manager of Zhejiang Xuri International Logistics Group, a leading cross-border logistics consolidation company in Ningbo.

At the group's Nuoda Transshipment warehouse, an automated sorting system efficiently organizes a vast array of e-commerce parcels of all sizes, preparing them for shipment to customers around the world. The service supports more than 4 billion consumers outside of China.

Once a customer places an order online, the system assigns them a virtual storage space. "We handle receiving, photographing, storing, consolidating, and shipping according to each consumer's instructions," Xu said. This personalized approach has significantly improved response times and operational efficiency.

Service upgrades are reshaping Ningbo's express industry. Traditional markets like Japan continue to grow rapidly, aided by proximity, frequent flight routes, and streamlined customs clearance. Meanwhile, Southeast Asia is expanding fast, driven by local e-commerce platforms such as Shopee and Lazada and the growing integration of Chinese supply chains.

Emerging markets, including Central and Eastern Europe and Russia, are also becoming key growth areas, benefiting from policy incentives and platform partnerships. Last year, Southeast Asia, Japan-Korea, and Europe-America each ac-

counted for roughly equal shares of Ningbo's cross-border express volume, with Southeast Asia posting the fastest growth. Countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia are showing strong potential.

High-value-added goods are increasingly dominating air cargo exports, providing stable growth for the sector. As Ningbo's international flight network expands, more cargo that previously passed through Shanghai and Hangzhou is now departing directly from Ningbo. "We prioritize supporting local exports whenever Ningbo flights are available," said Zhu Zhehong of China Post Group Ningbo Branch.

To handle the scale, fragmentation, and time sensitivity of cross-border retail logistics, multimodal transport solutions are expanding. Ningbo Zhoushan Port, for example, integrates China-Europe express shipping with overseas warehousing to offer end-to-end logistics that combine the cost efficiency of maritime transport with the speed of local delivery.



Ningbo's Foreign Trade Hits Record 1.46 Trillion Yuan, Extending Decade-Long Growth

By Lu Xinyan

Ningbo's total imports and exports reached a record 1.46 trillion yuan (\$203.8 billion) in 2025, up 2.6% year-on-year, marking the city's 10th consecutive year of foreign trade growth, according to data released by Ningbo Customs.

Exports rose 3.7% to 980.75 billion yuan, while imports edged up 0.2% to 475.4 billion yuan. In December alone, total trade grew 4% year-on-year to 133.38 billion yuan.

The number of active import and export companies also climbed to a new high, underscoring the resilience of Ningbo's open economy. The city recorded 31,500 import-export businesses in 2025, an increase of 2,195 from the previous year. Private firms continued to dominate, accounting for 29,000 of the total. Their combined trade volume reached 1.13 trillion yuan, up 4.2%, representing 77.9% of the city's total foreign trade and contributing 2.8 percentage points to overall growth.

Market diversification continued to advance. The European Union and ASEAN remained Ningbo's two largest trading partners. Trade with the EU totaled 251.08 billion yuan, up 5.1% year-on-year, while trade with ASEAN jumped 15.2% to 216.22 billion yuan. Trade with Africa rose 20.4% to 88.2 billion yuan. Meanwhile, trade with Belt and Road partner countries increased 8.8% to 741.25 billion yuan, and trade with Central and Eastern European countries grew 4.8% to 58.85 billion yuan.

Ningbo's export structure showed further upgrading, with stronger momentum in high-end and branded products. Exports of mechanical and electrical goods reached 570.55 billion yuan, up 5.7% year-on-year, accounting for 58.2% of total exports. The export of electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products surged 76.3% to 38.51 billion yuan. Electric vehicle exports jumped 295.1%, while industrial robot exports rose 113%. Exports under domestic brands reached 177.77 billion yuan, up 5.5%.

On the import side, recovering production and consumer demand supported growth in a number of commodities. Imports of unwrought copper and copper products increased 18.8% year-on-year, while rubber, glass products and high-tech goods also recorded double-digit growth.

Local companies have also benefited from customs facilitation measures. Shu Zhongwen, a liaison manager at Ningbo Hongyue Plastic & Chemical Co Ltd, said streamlined policies such as direct container pickup alongside vessels have significantly shortened clearance times, enabling faster, more efficient logistics operations.

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Ningbo's Auto Industry Hits New High in 2025

By Jin Lu

Ningbo's automotive industry reached a new milestone in 2025, emerging as the city's largest industrial sector and a major engine of manufacturing growth.

Total output value from automobile manufacturing rose to 433 billion yuan (\$62.15 billion) in 2025, the highest on record and a 70% increase from 2020. The sector now accounts for 16.2% of Ningbo's industrial output among enterprises above the designated size.

Vehicle production also expanded sharply. A total of

865,000 vehicles rolled off assembly lines last year—equivalent to about 1.6 vehicles per minute assuming round-the-clock production. Electric vehicles accounted for 398,000 units, or 38% of Zhejiang province's total electric car output.

Geely remains a key pillar of the auto industry in Ningbo, with brands such as Zeekr, Lynk & Co and Galaxy spanning fuel, hybrid and electric models. Zeekr recorded monthly sales of more than 30,000 units for the first time in December, bringing cumulative sales to over 650,000 vehicles. Under a strategic

cooperation agreement signed with the Ningbo Municipal Government last October, Geely plans to raise its annual production capacity in the city to more than 700,000 vehicles by 2027.

International automaker Volkswagen also anchors the local industry. Its plant in the Qianwan New Area—Volkswagen's second-largest production base worldwide—has a planned annual capacity of 600,000 vehicles.

The broader automotive ecosystem in Ningbo continues to expand. The city's auto sector is now home to 911 companies, 170 more than in



Lynk & Co's production base in Qianwan New Area, Ningbo.
[Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

2020. These include 62 listed companies and 39 national-level sector champions in single-product manufacturing.

