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# Ship Carrying 111 Tourists Collides With Barge

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More than 100 foreign tourists experienced a short-lived Titanic-like scare on the Volga River early Wednesday when their luxury cruise ship sailing from Moscow to St. Petersburg collided with a sand-laden barge.

None of the 111 tourists from the United States, Germany and Italy were injured, while three of the 91 crew members sustained minor bruises during the incident on the Rybinskoye reservoir on the Volga River in the Yaroslavl region, emergency officials said.

But the ship, the Sergei Kirov, suffered a 5-meter-long gash along its hull, and the crew prevented it from sinking, officials said.

"The crew listed the ship immediately and began bailing water out and removing property from [flooded] cabins. The water was pumped out, and a patch was improvised from inside," said a spokesman for the local branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry, Interfax

reported.

News reports gave no information about damage to the barge, which was transporting 4,500 tons of sand to Rybinsk, the second-largest city in the Yaroslavl region. It was unclear Wednesday which ship was to blame for the accident.

Two motor ships were sent to the site of the incident to pick up tourists and bring them to Rybinsk, from where they were to be transported back to Moscow by bus later Wednesday, the Emergency Situations Ministry said.

Eighty-three tourists refused to travel on a lower-class ship than the Sergei Kirov, and a third motor ship had to be sent for them, Lifenews.ru reported.

The Sergei Kirov, owned by a St. Petersburg company, was booked by the U.S. firm Viking River Cruises for trips between Moscow and St. Petersburg, Interfax reported. River cruises are a popular tourist attraction in Russia.

Viking River Cruises had no immediate comment on the accident.

Tickets for the Moscow-St. Petersburg cruise start at $2,396, according to the company's web site. The cruise, called "Waterways of the Tsars," promises a "monumental 13-day itinerary," with stops in Moscow, St. Petersburg and "quaint riverside towns like Yaroslavl, Uglich and Goritzy that only a river cruise can provide."

"See opulent palaces, discover fortified monasteries and visit beautiful cathedrals," the web site says. "It is an unforgettable way to experience the history and culture of this unique and mysterious country."

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