

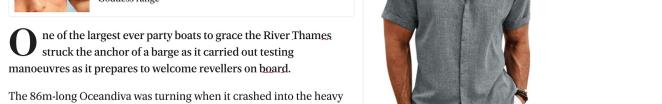
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Thames' largest ever party boat Oceandiva 'damaged by anchor' during test

By Barney Davis @BarneyDavisES | 1 hour ago



The Oceandiva struck an anchor during a routine turn

One of the largest ever party boats to grace the River Thames struck the anchor of a barge as it carried out testing manoeuvres as it prepares to welcome revellers on board.

The 86m-long Oceandiva was turning when it crashed into the heavy anchor chain of an unmanned barge close to Erith on Thursday afternoon.

Tug boats were seen helping the £25m vessel to its berth in the Royal Docks close to the Excel centre.

There is "superficial" damage to the underside of the boat which is to be inspected by divers, according to residents who fear an increase in loud noise and anti social behaviour when it opens after years of planning.

It is unclear who was piloting the boat at the time it crashed with the anchor but a Maritime and Coastguard Agency inspector was on board.

Greg Lawson, CEO of Smart Group, the owners and operators said: "This incident resulted in superficial damage to the exterior of the vessel. We can confirm that no one was injured during the incident and that the vessel has now returned safely to its berth at Royal Docks.

"The safety and security of the vessel, its crew, and other river users is paramount, and we are working closely with the responsible authorities to complete nautical testing of the vessel."

Expected to accommodate up to 1,000 people at a time, the ship spans three decks and is equivalent to around seven double-decker buses in length and 15m longer than a Boeing 737 airliner.

Resident Paul Crosbie, 63, said: "A boat of this size which is twice as big as any passenger vessel on the river presents a danger not only to other river users but also those on the beach who love the river.

"It is 86 metres long. This Dutch built boat normally is based on other vessels that normally sail the mouth of the River Wye which is 3 times as wide as the Thames.

"We hope the Port of London Authority and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency thoroughly vet its safety on our river."

Local councillor Peter Golds told The Standard: "It is so big.

"You have to wonder what its going to be like with a thousand people jumping up and down on it high on champagne."

He added: "We can sustain those little party boats that go shouting about as they go past your window.

"But this is more than twice the size as we got at the moment.

"This needs all the authorities to come together to ensure health and safety - that is paramount."

A PLA spokesperson said: "The Port of London Authority is aware that a planned trip of the Oceandiva London, on which the MCA was aboard, underwent an incident on the River Thames.

"This resulted in some damage to the vessel.

"The Oceandiva London is now safely back at her home berth, at the Royal Docks, and an investigation by the PLA harbour master is underway."

Smart Group



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