

RUSSIAN CRUISE INDUSTRY ON THE RISE



The cruise industry in Russia is experiencing a significant increase in bookings. The tourist flow has risen by some 20-25% for river cruises, and by 70% in the sea cruises.

Several positive trends have been noted in river cruises in Russian tourist industry. According to tourism experts, **sales have increased by 30%, and the tourist flow has improved by 20-25%** compared to the previous year.

This year, the demand for Russian river cruises is influenced by several factors. The following are the key factors: **the economic crisis and consecutively the fall in effective demand in 2009 as well as the depreciation of Euro against Ruble**, due to which there is a decrease of potential tourists from Europe in the cruise industry. As a result, the season has not caused an increase in costs of river cruises over the past year, and this led to a sharp jump in sales volume.

However, in the last two years the demand for river cruises in Russia has decreased. In 2009, the European demand sank an average of 9%, and so far has been slow to recover. The greatest blow of the crisis fell on the flow from the U.S., which decreased by about 50% last year.

As for the sea cruises, at the beginning of the summer the segment began to show steady growth in the number of bookings. Experts estimate that the flow of tourists has risen by about 70% compared to the same period last year, and sales start at 3 and end with a record 14 months. The result was possible because of the pent-up demand last year, when most tourists chose a very low-budget accommodation on cruise ships or when they prefer other types of recreation. Now, the situation is quite different from the summer of 2009.

According to the monitoring manager of the travel company Atlantis Line Natalia Andronova talking about the number of sea cruises the sales have already reached 12-14 months. "We have announced new routes for summer 2011, and tourists are already booking them," she explained. "Tourists' preferences remain the same as last year: **the most popular routes are to the Mediterranean region with visits to Italy, France, Spain and Malta.** These are being booked by approximately 70% of tourists," Ms. Andronova added.

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