

# BUSINESSSAFE

*BusinessSafe is designed to aid businesses in protecting the safety and well-being of Florida's residents and visitors from threats. BusinessSafe provides private sector partners with open source information, analysis and resources to help protect their businesses and communities.*

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## BusinessSafe Threat Topic: Cruise Scams

Florida and its ports are the epicenter for the cruise industry of the United States, accounting for approximately 59% of all U.S. embarkations with a quarter of those passengers being Florida citizens. Florida isn't just at the top for cruise originations, but it is also the headquarters for five of the cruise industry's top companies. In 2019, the industry contributed over nine billion dollars to the Florida economy in direct spending and supported about 160,000 jobs. The cruise industry has a long history of scams in both trip sales and excursion bookings. Two of the top scams that affect the cruise industry are the "Free Cruise" and "Deep Discount" scam. Both of these scams attempt to lure victims into a false sense of receiving a substantial discount. The listed "original" price typically has no validity to it and is a tactic to elicit a response. High pressure sales techniques and up-sales are not unique to the cruise industry, but these tactics combined with multiple high-dollar fees and taxes eliminate the "unbeatable savings" advertised to potentially unwitting consumers. Victims of the scam may end up paying for an inferior experience with the final cost being more than a full price cruise. There are several "service adjacent" scams, which normally take place at ports of call and typically involve a financial transaction for various excursions or services.

### Potential Signs of a Cruise Scam

- Letters and emails from companies which typically have names similar to those of larger cruise lines.
- Advertisements in emails, letters and on social media for unbelievable discounts from "original prices" that can't be missed.
- Multiple types of fees and costs that inflate the discounted or free price beyond comparable cruises.
- Requirements to attend a presentation for a timeshare or other type of investment.
- Shop owners at ports needing cash payments because the credit card declined.



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## How to Protect Yourself from Cruise Scams

- Independently research the name of the company sending the advertisement.
- Compare the costs between competitor cruise lines and the final cost with fees from the bargain offer.
- If someone calls you, ask for all fees and associated costs upfront and whether a presentation is required for the deal, and if they try to change the subject, hang up.
- Use cash instead of credit cards at ports and try to pay in dollars instead of local currency to avoid being shortchanged.

## How to Report Cruise Scams

- Report cruise scams to your local law enforcement.
- Cruise scams can be reported to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) using their [website](#).
- The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) maintains an [online complaint form to report travel scams](#).
- The U.S. Postal Inspection Service allows victims to [report cruise-related fraud/scams](#) received by mail.

## Resources

- FDACS maintains a [website](#) with information on common travel scams and tips.
- The FTC also maintains a [website](#) with tips on common travel scams.
- The BBB maintains a [website](#) with tips on recognizing and dealing with potential cruise scams.



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