



Now that we seasoned wanderers twitter and tweet day and night on our little light boxes, we've become even more attractive targets for crooks. For example, we keep getting phone and/or email messages: Congratulations! You've won a free cruise!

When you see or hear the word congratulations on a promo, chances are at least 110% it's a scam. Examples of rip-off travel song-and-dance routines aimed at seniors: fill out forms requiring financial and other personal information, participate in opinion polls and/or attend live sales pitch meetings.

Don't reveal your financial situation for any of those phony gimmicks. And never send advance money as deposits or reservations, such as promises to hold the best cruise cabin for you. When asked to provide your Social Security, bank or credit card ID numbers, run away as fast as you can from any so-called free cruise or other travel offer. Even if the travel sales pitch includes a free lunch, always heed the old adage: There ain't no such thing as a free lunch. There's always a phony, hard-sell gimmick involved. For older travelers, it's safest to plan the old-fashioned way.

Contact the cruise line, hotel or resort by phone or official web page. If it's more comfortable, use your trusted hometown travel agency. For recent info on travel scams, go to www.cruisemates.com/articles/consumer/travelscams