

Inside Edition Investigates Sexual Assaults Onboard Cruise Ships



Inside Edition investigated sexual assaults on female travelers by crew members working onboard cruise ships.

An **Inside Edition** investigation has found dozens of cases alleging sexual assault against female passengers by ship employees, including rape, molestation, and fondling, despite the fact that cruise lines have strict guidelines and policies in place regarding employee fraternization with passengers.

"We get a call once every two weeks from someone who's been victimized on a ship," Miami attorney Jim Walker tells **Inside Edition**. He says cruise lines often try to make sexual assault claims disappear, even offering free cruises to the victims.

Walker says his firm alone has handled more than 40 lawsuits in the past five years involving claims of sexual assault by crew members against passengers on major cruise lines, including Carnival Cruises, Royal Caribbean and Norwegian Cruise Lines. He tells **Inside Edition** that passengers should really have a heightened sense of security on a cruise ship.

Inside Edition interviewed a woman who agreed to appear on camera only under the condition that her name not be revealed in the report. She says during a three-day cruise, a ship bartender who had been flirting with her and her friends, slipped a powerful date-rape drug into her drink when she was sitting alone at the bar.

"He got me to a remote place, a bathroom, but not a public bathroom...and he assaulted me. He sexually assaulted me," she says.

The woman sued and, as part of her settlement, she is prohibited from disclosing the name of the cruise line or the terms of the settlement. She's speaking out for the first time to **Inside Edition** to warn women that a dream vacation can easily turn into a nightmare if female passengers aren't cautious. "Initially, I didn't want to live. When you go through trauma like this, it hits you pretty hard. What happened to me was wrong," she says.

A security expert for the cruise industry, who has worked on a number of large cruise ships where it was part of his job to investigate sexual assaults, spoke to **Inside Edition** on the condition that he not be identified in the report. He agrees that cruise lines try to pacify some alleged victims with offers of free perks. "An upgrade, another cabin, champagne, wine, possibly a free cruise...anything to appease her, anything to make her happy, anything to make it go away," he says.

He claims many crew members try to see how far they can go with the female passengers. "It's a running joke [amongst cruise employees] to see who can score with a passenger." He continues, "If there are single women on the ship they're being targeted from the minute they came on the gangway."

Inside Edition sent two female producers on two Royal Caribbean cruise ships, *Empress of the Seas* and *Majesty of the Seas*. In both cases, they were repeatedly subjected to lewd come-ons and propositioned by crew members for dates. One crew member even requested a secret rendezvous in a producer's cabin. Another crew member told a producer he's, "Looking for the right lady to give her [his daughter] a brother," and propositioned her by asking, "Is it a possibility?"

Royal Caribbean, in a statement released to **Inside Edition**, said "Royal Caribbean International's highest priority is to ensure the safety and security of all our guests and crew members. Our company maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy on crime, and all allegations are immediately reported to law enforcement officials. Our company also maintains strict policies that prohibit fraternization with guests."