Find-a-Cruise

Helping Cruise Guests Navigate Their Options and Access the Port with Ease

Award Categories:
Excellence in Cruise Practices
Excellence in Print/Digital Media Communications
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Background, Purpose and Goals

Port Everglades, located on the southeastern coast of Florida, is the third busiest cruise homeport in the world with more than 4.7 million cruise guests annually. The landlord port is a diverse powerhouse and a leading container port in Florida and is South Florida's main seaport for receiving petroleum products such as gasoline, diesel and jet fuel. It is a secure port with Security Checkpoints that require visitors and workers to state their business interest and display a valid government ID.



As a self-supporting Enterprise Fund of Broward County government, the port does not rely on local tax dollars for operations. Port Everglades' economic impact is approximately $43.8 billion. Nearly 300,000 Florida jobs are impacted by the port, including approximately 13,000 people who work for companies that provide direct services to the port.

The digital media program, Find-a-Cruise, is designed to address business and customer needs, including improving ground operations, enhancing cruise guests' experience at the port, supporting the port's cruise line partners, maximizing internal workflows, and reducing customer inquiries by providing current and easily accessible information.

For more than 10 years, the port's External Affairs and Marketing team has produced a cruise guide that is widely used by travel planners, taxi drivers, cruise terminal workers and residents who live near the port and who are big cruisers. The port typically prints and distributes 5,000 copies.

The list of cruise sailings in the printed guide was repurposed a few years ago into an IOS app by a port staffer. The app, called Cruise Schedule Port Everglades, is widely used by port staff, however, it has its limits. For instance, people who use Android devices cannot view the sailings. Also, the app uses data from a third-party vendor that only lists sailings happening in the next two weeks. This is not useful for most travelers who want to see which cruises are available months from now. Another challenge is that people who live outside the port's marketing area are unaware of the app.

The printed guide also has its limitations. One challenge is that the sailing schedule is subject to change based on cruise lines' shifts. One goal was to ensure that Find-a-Cruise provides current information and displays well on various devices.

The interactive tool allows users to search hundreds of sailings by cruise line, destination, date or duration while providing real-time information on cruise terminals and parking.

Another goal was to improve workload. Previously, the short-staffed Cruise Services department had to field questions by phone while also providing on-ground support to up to eight cruise line customers at a time. Occasionally, this led to delays in customer service and additional work.

Another goal was to maximize information provided in the port's cruise guide for potential and current cruise guests, and the local tourism partners that rely on Port Everglades' cruise traffic to book hotel rooms and provide transportation.

To ensure the goals were met, the port worked closely with its website provider to determine how to program and display Find-a-Cruise. The two parties also considered where Find-a-Cruise would live on the website for prime marketability and usability.

Placement and ease of use were important as the port sought to mimic the successful launch of a video stream for cargo customers called The Trucker Cam. Find-a-Cruise quickly emerged as one of the port's top 5 webpages viewed. For comparison, The Trucker Cam, launched in May of 2022, quickly became one of the most-visited web features and has maintained its position in the top 3 webpages throughout the year.

Implementation and Resources

The port set out to create Find-a-Cruise with existing staff and resources at no additional cost.

The core External Affairs and Marketing team, which includes three people, first met with internal stakeholders from the Cruise Services and Operations divisions to determine how to ensure Find-a-Cruise was feasible and would add value.

One of the key activities was adapting a spreadsheet of 779 cruise sailings, compiled by another port department for multiple print and business uses, into a digital format that adds – not detracts – from the port's cruise line customers and aids cruise guests' travel to and from the port.

It usually takes about five months to compile the spreadsheet for the printed cruise guide, which includes itineraries, cruise ship names, ports of call, and whether the cruise is a round-trip or one-way voyage. Find-a-Cruise provided an opportunity to solve a business issue: By the time the printed guide was distributed, some sailings were outdated or had been changed.

Starting in January 2025, the External Affairs and Marketing team met with its website vendor once a month for five months to develop, populate and test the Find-a-Cruise interactive directory.

One of the driving forces behind the aggressive production calendar was to unveil the innovative tool at the port's annual Cruise Kick-Off meeting, which is held in October. The annual event attracts more than 200 people in South Florida who work in the cruise and tourism industry. During this meeting, the port introduces its executive leadership and cruise staff and shares operational information about its upcoming cruise season.

The 2025 Cruise Kick-Off was especially significant for the port because Port Everglades was serving as the homeport for the naming ceremonies of three new cruise ships within a three-week period. Port leaders knew that many industry stakeholders would be paying close attention to both the facilities and the website.

By June 2025, the team was ready to launch a soft rollout of Find-a-Cruise.

Between June and September 2025, the team tested, refined and enhanced the design and functionality of Find-a-Cruise, including asking trusted external advisors to test the tool and provide feedback. Find-a-Cruise was also demonstrated during an employee town hall to help ensure a successful public launch.

Innovation & Relevance

Technology is literally in the palm of cruise guests' hands with more than 5 billion people worldwide owning a cell phone, according to the United Nations agency International Telecommunications Union. And, Broward County's Port Everglades responded with innovation that supports its cruise partners' goals for a seamless and positive experience from car door to ship door.

The innovative Find-a-Cruise makes it easier for cruise guests to select a sailing and navigate the port's parking options. Find-a-Cruise is a mobile-friendly searchable calendar of sailings available from the port's nine cruise line partners to augment the planning process for the more than 4.7 million cruise guests who travel through the port annually.

Find-a-Cruise users can search by cruise line, date, destination or duration. The search results also include the ship's name, cruise terminal of embarkation, and whether it's a round-trip or one-way cruise.

One click leads users directly to the cruise line's website to make a reservation or learn more details.

This makes Find-a-Cruise effective because it augments the marketing and sales done by the port's cruise line partners. It also helps the hospitality community better plan and respond to times when the port will be brimming with cruise guests.

For the port staff, Find-a-Cruise streamlines the workflow. Now, the spreadsheet created for the printed cruise guide can be uploaded to the port's website to populate the interactive platform. This process also enhances the collaboration between two departments – one responsible for updating the website and the other responsible for tracking the cruise schedule.

The public community benefits from streamlined workflows and a boost to the local economy with more people booking cruises offered at Port Everglades.

Results, Evidence & Impact

By creating Find-a-Cruise as an interactive directory on its website, Port Everglades expands its marketing reach, maximizes staff resources and improves the planning process for local businesses that rely on cruise travel.

Now, the port has a dynamic way to encourage people to book a cruise leaving its port. This helps drive economic growth for hotels, taxi drivers, restaurants and other local businesses.

The users' response, as measured by webpage views, is outstanding considering no marketing dollars have been used to promote the program.

Find-a-Cruise grew organically from the soft launch in June 2025 through peak holiday and seasonal cruise travel to the slower months of summer.

June 23rd, 2025 – 43 Views (first day of soft launch)

June 2025 – 576 views

October 2025 – 7,167 views (annual Cruise Kick-Off meeting)

November 2025 – 14,837 views (official start of the cruise season)

December 2025 - 17,393 views

January 2026 – 19,707 views

March 2026 – 14,062 views

April 2026 – 9,303 views

May 2026 – 6,891 views

Total views from June 2025 launch to June 2026 – 115,691 (placing it in the top 5 most-viewed pages on the port's website)

Compared to the port's other innovative web features, Find-a-Cruise is often among the top 5 visited web pages. This includes The Trucker Traffic Cam (a video feed of cargo truck traffic that the port launched in 2022) and the Terminal Parking Custom Map (which was launched in 2025).

For instance, comparing views by page between June 2025 and February 2026, Find-a-Cruise had 77,000 views compared to 90,000 for the Trucker Traffic Cam and 78,000 for the Terminal Parking Custom Map during the same period.

External stakeholders cite the usefulness of the program, along with established publications including the leading travel industry publication, Travel Host: https://travelhost.com/news/before-you-set-sail-what-to-know-about-getting-through-port-everglades

The launch did not come without its lessons. Among the opportunities, the port found that the calendar feature can be clunky to navigate. To address this issue, the port added directions on how to search for sailings. It also learned that the digital guide did not replace the need for redundancy. To ensure that last-minute changes such as a shift in where a ship will berth or where cruise guests should park are addressed, the port team cross-trained the Cruise Services' staff on how to update the platform.

Find-a-Cruise underscores Port Everglades' commitment to using technology to simplify the cruise journey and support its cruise line partners. By making clear, real-time information convenient and mobile-friendly, the port is making strides in enhancing trip planning, reducing friction on embarkation day and reinforcing its role as a forward-thinking homeport.

Integration, Adaptability & Scalability

Find-a-Cruise demonstrates long-term sustainability because it is fully integrated into the port's existing website, business processes and staffing model.

Find-a-Cruise leverages an existing spreadsheet maintained annually by the Cruise Services and Operations teams, allowing the same source data used for the printed cruise guide to populate the online platform. This integration eliminates duplicate work, improves data consistency and creates a streamlined workflow between departments.

Find-a-Cruise was designed to also address the port's need to more fully use its existing paid services, in this case the website. Because the program lives on the port's website, new features, search capabilities and user-interface improvements can be implemented without requiring users to download software updates. The port has already demonstrated adaptability by refining the calendar interface based on user feedback and cross-training Cruise Services staff to make timely updates when schedules, terminals or parking assignments change. This flexibility ensures the platform can evolve alongside changing customer expectations, cruise industry schedules and future technological advances.

The framework behind Find-a-Cruise has already had the team's wheels turning on additional applications that support other port operations and customers' needs. Under consideration is adapting the platform to create a Cargo Vessel Directory. This would be a searchable platform that allows shippers, truckers and logistics partners to view vessel schedules, terminal assignments and cargo operations information. Currently, the port uses cargo data from a third-party vendor with a frankly outdated and clunky display.

The Find-a-Cruise structure could also be flexed to create a Port Events and Business Calendar, an interactive directory of trade events, public meetings, career fairs, stakeholder workshops and industry conferences hosted by the port.

These opportunities demonstrate that Find-a-Cruise is more than a cruise-planning tool; it is a scalable digital platform that can support future operational, marketing and customer-service initiatives across the port.

Conclusion

Find-a-Cruise successfully transformed a static printed cruise guide and a limited iOS-only application into a dynamic, web-based platform that serves cruise guests, tourism partners and port employees. Developed using existing staff and resources at no

additional cost, the platform quickly became one of the port's most-visited website features, organically generating more than 77,000 views within its first eight months.

The tool expanded the port's marketing reach, improved access to current sailing information, reduced customer inquiries and streamlined internal workflows by allowing existing cruise schedule data to populate the website automatically. It also strengthened support for the local tourism economy by helping travelers, hotels, transportation providers and other hospitality businesses plan around cruise activity.

Among the lessons learned, Find-a-Cruise reinforced the importance of continuous improvement and user feedback. Early users found the calendar feature difficult to navigate, prompting the team to add clearer instructions and refine the user experience.

The port also learned that digital tools require operational redundancy. Because cruise schedules, terminal assignments and parking locations can change quickly, Cruise Services staff were trained on how to update the platform, ensuring information remains accurate and timely. The project further demonstrated the value of collaboration between communications, operations and cruise services teams.

Going forward, the port is exploring how to continue enhancing Find-a-Cruise based on user feedback and evolving business needs. One idea is to add a parking reservation feature.

Other improvements include making the search function easier and adding ability to view the listings as an annual calendar. The platform's flexible design also creates opportunities to support other business functions, customer groups and digital services across the port.

The port’s Find-a-Cruise is valuable because it bridges the gap between cruise planning, port operations and destination marketing in a single, mobile-friendly platform. The tool not only improves the guest experience but also supports cruise line partners, local tourism businesses and internal port operations. By leveraging existing data and resources to create a highly scalable, real-time digital service, Find-a-Cruise demonstrates how a public-sector organization can deliver measurable value through innovation without incurring additional costs.