



the bohting company

## ▶ Captain Jay's

# Ultimate Boat Buying Red Flags Guide

## How to Spot Trouble Before You Buy

After 25 years on Tampa Bay waters and guiding hundreds of buyers, Captain Jay has compiled this professional-level red flag checklist. These warnings can save you from expensive mistakes and unsafe ownership.

Captain Jay's Perspective:

“The best deal isn't the cheapest boat – it's the one without hidden nightmares. Every red flag you catch early saves thousands later.”

## Mechanical Red Flags

- ✗ Engine hours that don't match vessel age (too high or suspiciously low)
- ✗ Oil leaks or evidence of patch repairs
- ✗ No compression test data available
- ✗ Cooling system corrosion or salt deposits
- ✗ Gear oil that looks milky (water intrusion)
- ✗ Propeller dings, cracks, or mismatched sets

## Structural Red Flags

- ✗ Soft spots in deck or hull (tap test fails)
- ✗ Transom flexing (critical failure risk)
- ✗ Extensive spider cracks around stress points
- ✗ Evidence of recent bottom paint hiding blisters
- ✗ Unsealed through-hull fittings or seacocks
- ✗ Poor bilge condition (oil, debris, standing water)

## Electronics & Systems Red Flags

- ✗ Outdated GPS/fishfinder with no updates
- ✗ Non-functioning VHF or no DSC capability
- ✗ Dead batteries, corroded terminals, loose wiring
- ✗ Missing safety gear (jackets, flares, extinguishers)
- ✗ Inconsistent light or pump operation

## Documentation Red Flags

- **✗ No clear title or liens present**
- **✗ Expired or missing Florida registration**
- **✗ Incomplete bill of sale or mismatched signatures**
- **✗ No recent survey or service records**
- **✗ History of insurance claims (check carefully)**
- **✗ Missing warranties or manufacturer paperwork**

## Market & Seller Red Flags

- **✗ “Too good to be true” pricing way below comps**
- **✗ Seller unwilling to allow professional survey**
- **✗ Pressure to close without sea trial**
- **✗ Refusal to provide maintenance history**
- **✗ Boat listed for many months with price drops**
- **✗ Inconsistent seller story about boat’s history**

## Tampa Bay–Specific Red Flags

- **✗ Ignored shallow-water wear (grass flats, sandbar grounding)**
- **✗ Corrosion from high salinity & lack of flush systems**
- **✗ Failure to comply with manatee zone restrictions (ticket risks)**
- **✗ Undisclosed hurricane or storm damage repairs**
- **✗ Bridge clearance issues (know your fixed height needs)**

## How to Protect Yourself

1. **Always hire a certified marine surveyor.**
2. **Insist on a sea trial in Tampa Bay conditions.**
3. **Cross-check title, insurance, and service records.**
4. **Build a “walk away” mindset – if red flags pile up, move on.**
5. **Use local experts (like Captain Jay) who know regional pitfalls.**

## About Anchor & Trade

Greater Tampa Bay | Florida’s Gulf Coast

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**Note:** Content created in September 2025. Water depth, businesses, restaurants, and market costs/trends change often. Always verify before you go out or purchase. Boating and monetary investments carry risk(s). Consulting a financial or legal advisor is recommended for decisions beyond general guidance.

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