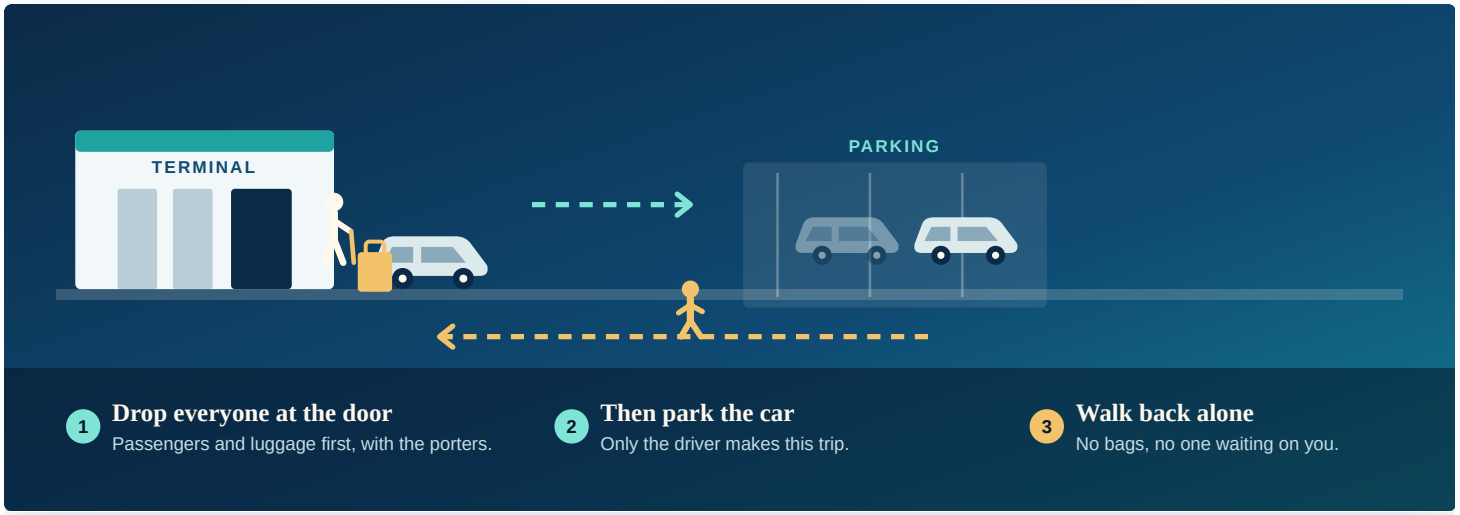
DEPARTURE DAY · PORT CANAVERAL

The hardest day of the cruise *is the first one.*

Packing, driving, parking, luggage, lines, standing, and a long walk at the end of it. More people get hurt on embarkation day than on any other day of the trip. Port Canaveral is one of the easier ports to start from — if you plan the morning properly.

THE SINGLE BEST THING YOU CAN DO

Fly in the day before. Port Canaveral is about 45 miles east of Orlando, and a delayed flight plus that drive on sailing morning is how people arrive at the terminal already exhausted — or miss the ship entirely. A night in Cocoa Beach or Cape Canaveral puts you ten minutes from the terminal, rested.



Parking at the port: *whoever needs the shortest walk should never ride to the garage. Drop them at the door first, with the luggage, then park. Private lots work differently — you park first and ride a shuttle in.*

WHO ACTUALLY PARKS FREE — AND THE NUMBER TO CALL

Under **Florida Statute 316.1964**, the fee is waived only for vehicles with **disability equipment** such as ramps, lifts or hand or foot controls; vehicles showing a **Florida Toll**

Exemption Permit; or vehicles with a **Florida disabled veteran (DV) plate**. The port says its parking agents won't waive fees "for any other reason."

Parking office: (321) 783-7831. Rate $20/day plus tax.

WHAT A FLORIDA TOLL EXEMPTION PERMIT ACTUALLY IS

It's an **orange sticker from FDOT**, for drivers with a **severe and permanent upper-limb impairment** who hold a valid licence and drive a vehicle with accessibility modifications. Most placard holders won't qualify — which is why a placard alone doesn't get you free parking.

Parking at the port, *and what it really costs*

- **$20 a day plus tax**, charged for the arrival day and the return day — so a seven-night cruise bills as eight days. The rate rose from $17 in late 2025.
- **No reservations, ever.** It's pay on arrival, card only, and the lots open at 10am on sailing days. On a multi-ship day there's no way to hold a space.
- **Every terminal has its own garage or lot** directly across the street. That's the reason to pay the port's price: no shuttle, no transfer, no waiting.
- **The walk from the garage is still a walk**, and there's no shuttle to help with it on the way back with your luggage.

FREE PARKING FOR SOME DISABLED DRIVERS — WORTH CHECKING

The port waives the parking fee for vehicles transporting certain people with disabilities: those carrying **special equipment such as ramps, lifts, or hand or foot controls**, or displaying a **Florida Toll Exemption Permit** or a **Florida Disabled Veteran licence plate**. A blue placard alone is not the qualification. Very few people know this exists — confirm the current terms with the port before you travel.

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Parking, for some disabled drivers. The port waives the fee for vehicles with adaptive equipment, a Florida Disabled Veteran plate, or a Toll Exemption permit.

Where to park: *port-run and private, together*

The port takes no reservations. The private lots do, they're cheaper, and booking ahead usually gets you the better rate and a guaranteed space. The trade is one shuttle ride each way.

WHERE	WHO RUNS IT	ROUGHLY	WHAT TO KNOW
Port of Canaveral garages	Port-run	$20/day + tax	A garage or lot beside every terminal, so no shuttle at all. No reservations: pay on arrival, card only, lots open at 10am. You pay for the arrival and return days both.
Park Port Canaveral	Private	$13–15/day	About 1.5 to 2 miles out. **Air-conditioned shuttles with wheelchair lifts** and curbside drop-off at your terminal. Gates open 9:30am and close at 2pm on sailing days.
Park N Cruise	Private	from about $14/day	Merritt Island, roughly a 2-minute ride. Free air-conditioned shuttle. Reported to close on some midweek days — check before booking.

WHERE	WHO RUNS IT	ROUGHLY	WHAT TO KNOW
Port Parking Space	Private	from about $13/day	The closest off-site option, roughly a mile out. Covered and uncovered spaces, EV charging, and a loyalty scheme where 20 days parked earns a free day.
Go Port	Private	from about $8/day	The cheapest, with a catch: it serves only a few specific ships. Check that your ship is on their list before booking anything.
Rightway Parking	Private	from about $9/day	A booking site that compares several partner lots in one place, with a guaranteed space.

ASK ONE QUESTION BEFORE YOU BOOK ANY OF THEM

"Is the shuttle wheelchair accessible, and does it have a lift?" Only some do. If a high step into a van is a problem for you, that single question matters more than the daily rate — and asking it at the lot on sailing morning is too late.

The order that *makes the morning easier*

- **Drop passengers and luggage curbside first**, then park. The port's model is drop, park, and walk back — so whoever needs the shortest walk should never ride to the garage.
- **Hand luggage to the porters** at the curb. Tip them. It removes the single heaviest part of the day.
- **Know your terminal number before you leave the hotel.** Port Canaveral uses Terminals 1, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 10, and assignments vary by ship and sailing date. Check your cruise documents or the line's app in the week before you sail.

- **Request wheelchair assistance in advance** rather than at the door — most lines ask for 30 days' notice, and at peak times there can be a wait even then.

TWO THINGS TO CHECK FOR 2026

A large new garage is under construction at Terminals 5 and 6, due to open in late 2026. Construction changes traffic patterns and walking routes, so confirm the arrival route close to your sailing date.

Port Canaveral is one of the busiest cruise ports in the world. On multi-ship days, lines and traffic are considerably worse — ask your line how many ships are in port on your date.

Coming home, *which is its own problem*

Disembarkation morning catches people out because it happens early, after a week of doing more than usual. Priority debarkation goes to guests needing wheelchair assistance — put your name down the evening before, read the instructions that arrive in your cabin that night rather than in the morning, and don't book a flight that forces you to rush.

Questions to ask *before you drive*

1. Do you waive parking for my vehicle or plate, and what documents do I bring?
2. Where are the accessible spaces, and how close are they to the terminal or the elevator?
3. Can I drop my passenger and bags at the terminal first?
4. For off-site lots: does the shuttle have a wheelchair lift, and can it take my scooter?
5. What's the height limit if I drive a lifted van?

WHEELCHAIR HELP AT THE TERMINAL — ASK AHEAD

Royal Caribbean: crew push wheelchairs on and off the ship at embarkation and disembarkation. Request it on the Guest Special Needs Form **at least 30 days** before you sail.

Celebrity: tick "wheelchair assistance at the pier" on the special needs form, at least 30 days ahead.

Princess: has an **Accessibility Lane** at check-in, and assigns crew when you request wheelchair help.

Every line's form and deadline →

Check with your cruise line

- **Ask which terminal** your ship uses on your date, and how far the garage is from the terminal door.
- **Ask how to request pier and wheelchair assistance**, and by when — 30 days is the usual deadline.
- **Ask whether there's an accessibility lane** at check-in and whether your travelling companions can use it with you.
- **Ask about early or priority boarding** if standing in line is the limiting factor.

Questions people *actually ask*

How much is parking at Port Canaveral?

Is parking free for disabled drivers at Port Canaveral?

Can you reserve parking at Port Canaveral?

Where this comes from

- Firsthand observation on recent sailings, with the date noted above.
- How we check things — our method, and what "last checked" means.

RULES AND RATES CHANGE — CALL BEFORE YOU DRIVE

This is a starting point, not legal advice. Parking rates, free-parking rules and terminal assignments change without notice. **Call the port's parking office on (321) 783-7831 before you set off**, and check with your own cruise line.

Last checked 22 September 2026.

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