

AAA Vacation Now Blog

Everything You Need to Know About Cruising From Galveston

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Consider this gulf port as the point of departure for your next Caribbean cruise vacation.



Looking down from our balcony at the Holiday Inn Resort Galveston-On the Beach, I could almost hear Glen Campbell crooning, “Galveston, oh, Galveston, I still hear your sea winds blowing.”

Galveston, Texas, a city on a breezy barrier island with 32 miles of white beaches, is a charming place for pre- or post-cruise stays. Check out the Victorian architecture downtown, ride the Texas Star Flyer ferris wheel with your kids at the Pleasure Pier waterfront amusement area, and have a bite at Landry’s Seafood. (We had more than a bite and had to be rolled, Texas-style, in a wheelbarrow back to our hotel.)

A home port for cruising since 2000, Galveston is now the fourth-busiest port in the U.S., according to the Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau. Approximately 642,000 guests sailed from Galveston in 2014, which generated \$46

million in spending on shore and another \$13.2 million in services provided at the port.

Though Royal Caribbean International® and Disney Cruise Line also sail from the city, Carnival Cruise Lines® was the first to use Galveston, located 50 miles south of Houston on the Gulf of Mexico, as a mid-country home port convenient to surrounding regions, according to Carnival spokesman Vance Gulliksen. The cruise line has used Galveston as the origin point of its western Caribbean cruises since 2000.

“Carnival was the first cruise line to realize the tremendous potential of Galveston for a year-round embarkation port when we launched the port’s first year-round cruise program 15 years ago,” Gulliksen says. “We’ve grown from a single ship to three year-round ships carrying 600,000 passengers a year—the most in the cruise industry.”

A relaxing seven-night cruise aboard *Carnival Magic*SM brought sunshine, smooth sailing and calls at exotic ports such as Cozumel, Mexico; Isla Roatan, Honduras; and Belize City, Belize.

Gulliksen adds that in May 2016, the line’s newest vessel, the elegant *Carnival Breeze*SM will swap places with the *Magic*SM, one of the *Carnival*[®] ships that currently sails from Galveston.

Tips for cruising from Galveston:

If you plan to drive and arrive a day in advance of your sailing, ask your AAA Travel Counselor about hotels that offer special parking deals for guests embarking on a cruise. Otherwise, you can park at the cruise port (\$70 for seven days).

Fly into William P. Hobby International Airport (HOU), which is closer to Galveston than George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH).

If you fly in on the day your cruise departs, many cruise lines offer shuttles from either airport to the port. Carnival, for instance, offers transportation between Houston Intercontinental and Houston Hobby airports and the Port of Galveston; shuttle rates run from \$70 to \$90 per person, round-trip.

Alternatively, ask your AAA Travel Counselor about options for transportation from the airport, including shuttles, taxis, public transportation and cars or vans for hire, if you fly into Galveston prior to your embarkation day.

A final word: fog. According to Michael Mierzwa, director of the Port of Galveston, ships sailing in late December, January and February may experience fog-related delays.

Inset photo courtesy of Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau



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