

Understanding the Port

Castaway Cay is Disney's original private island — the one that changed the game in 1998 by building a pier so ships dock and you simply walk ashore. A quarter century on, it's still the standard everyone else chases: organized, generous, and easier than a day at the parks.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Port Area

Ships dock at the island's own pier — Disney invented that move here in 1998 — and free towels are handed out as you step off. Free trams run all day; Serenity Bay needs a tram transfer at Pelican Point.

Cash & Currency

Cashless: everything Disney-run charges to your Key to the World card. Disney sells no drink packages — alcohol is pay-per-drink. One cash-only exception: the tiny Bahamian post office.

Getting Around

Flat, paved, and tram-served. The family beach is a 10–15 minute walk from the ship; Serenity Bay sits a mile out — ride the tram, don't skip it.

GOOD

The Free Island Day

Best for: Short stops, easy days, minimal logistics

- ✓ Beaches, BBQ lunch, soft drinks, and soft-serve: all included
- ✓ Pelican Plunge, the splash zones, and the kids' club ashore: free
- ✓ Run the free 5K down a onetime smugglers' airstrip

Low effort, high reward.

BETTER

Bikes, Snorkels & Floats

Best for: Families, snorkelers, explorers

- ✓ Pedal the old airstrip trail — the island's quiet backroad
- ✓ Snorkel the lagoon: a sunken Mickey and a retired Disney submarine
- ✓ Bring your own mask and the lagoon costs nothing

Rentals are modest add-ons — prices vary by sailing.

BEST

Serenity Bay & a Cabana

Best for: Adults, celebrations, shade seekers

- ✓ The adults-only (18+) beach — calm sand, steak on the grill
- ✓ Cabanas are cruising's hottest ticket — they sell out in minutes
- ✓ No cabana? The far end of Serenity Bay is free

Timing management required. Plan around all aboard.

Top Experiences to Consider

GOOD

The Classic Day

The first-timer mistake is stopping at the first beach chair. Walk five minutes past the tram stop and the sand opens up. Cookie's BBQ handles lunch, Pelican Plunge handles the kids, and the ship is always in view.

BETTER

The Snorkel Lagoon

A huge marked lagoon seeded with Disney treasures — follow the buoys to a sunken Mickey and a retired submarine from the Magic Kingdom's old 20,000 Leagues ride. Free with your own gear; rentals are modest.

BEST

Serenity Bay

The adults-only mile: quieter music, longer sightlines, and Hangar 98 grilling steak to order. Many first-timers never make the tram transfer at Pelican Point — which is exactly why it stays serene.

Where Staff & Travelers Recommend

Get Off Early

The whole ship empties onto one island, and shade is the first thing claimed. Ride an early tram, drop towels where you actually want to be, then go find breakfast number two.

The Post Office

A real Bahamian post office, cash-only, with a Castaway Cay postmark. If the counter's open, mail yourself a postcard — it may take months to arrive, which is half the fun.



The Disney Fantasy at the island's pier



The Disney Wish alongside the dock

Key Considerations

The island got its biggest refresh in years in December 2025: thirty new Mickey & Minnie Cove family cabanas beside Serenity Bay, and the adults' BBQ reborn as Hangar 98. What hasn't changed: cabanas of every kind sell out within minutes of booking opening, with Concierge guests first in line. Waitlist through your travel advisor, and bring a plan B for shade.

The berth is wind-exposed, and Disney skips the island when docking is unsafe — most often with winter cold fronts and in hurricane season; a missed call becomes a sea day. Smaller print worth knowing: there's no wifi ashore, free shade is umbrella-scarce, and the ship is docked close enough that lunch aboard is always the free fallback.



The swimming lagoon from the ship's top deck



A throwback: the Disney Magic off Castaway Cay, 2000



The beach path to the dock

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Port Orientation

FROM THE PIER

● Post Office & Tram Stop	Near the gangway — cash-only stamps
A short, flat walk or free tram	
● Family Beach & Cookie's BBQ	Included lunch
● Pelican Plunge & Spring-a-Leak	Free water play
● Snorkel Lagoon	Sunken Disney treasures
Tram transfer at Pelican Point	
● Serenity Bay	Adults-only, 18+
● Hangar 98 BBQ	The adults' grill — steak
● The Old Airstrip Trail	Bikes & the free 5K

DON'T FORGET

Confirm your all aboard time before you leave the ship.
Set a phone alarm. The ship will not wait for you.

Key Takeaway

Castaway Cay is the private island perfected: dock, walk off, and let a quarter century of practice run your beach day.

Book the extras the minute your window opens — then let the island's routine do the rest.

ETA will help you choose the right experience based on your travel style.

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Did You Know?

The Smugglers' Runway. Before Disney, this was Gorda Cay — and in the 1970s and '80s its lonely airstrip was reportedly a favorite stop for drug runners, until a nine-figure cocaine bust ended the era. That same old runway is now the bike trail and 5K route.

The Mermaid Beach. The scene where Tom Hanks meets Daryl Hannah's mermaid in *Splash* (1984) was filmed right here — reportedly near where adults now sun themselves at Serenity Bay.

First to the Pier. Castaway Cay is billed as the first private island where the ship docks — Disney dredged a 1,700-foot channel in 1998. The competition took a while to catch up: Labadee got its pier in 2009, CocoCay in 2019, Half Moon Cay in 2026.

Real Treasure. The pirate theming isn't pure fantasy: in 1950, treasure hunters pulled a 70-pound silver ingot — stamped with the mark of Spain's King Philip IV — from a shoal just off the island.

The Ship Waters the Island. There's no fresh-water source ashore — the visiting ship refills the island's 80,000-gallon tank, while a 4,320-panel solar farm by the old runway supplies about 70% of its power.