



Port Canaveral Leads in LNG Cruise Ships, Supports Florida Jobs

By Fran Golden

With its year-round operations, Port Canaveral is the preeminent cruise port in North America for cruise ships powered by cleaner-burning liquified natural gas (LNG) and the second busiest cruise port in the world. Some 9 million cruise guests are expected to sail from Port Canaveral next year, and the port anticipates exceeding 10 million passengers by fiscal year 2027.

The popular port's ability to attract the world's newest and largest cruise ships was built on prescient investments in LNG fueling readiness. LNG is the cleanest-burning fossil fuel readily available. As the cruise industry pursues net-zero cruising by 2050, LNG-powered ships will be able to easily switch to future sustainable fuels, such as bio or synthetic LNG.

For cruise guests, Port Canaveral is an easily accessible destination. About 85% of passengers drive to the port for their cruise vacations. These drive-in market guests, and guests who fly in too, visit local beaches, restaurants, and attractions and stay at local hotels.

In addition to cruise and cargo operations, Port Canaveral has recreation options, including its own Jetty Park beach – a popular spot to watch space launches or passing cruise ships. The port has commercial fishing and local seafood outlets, aerospace and military operations, restaurants and retail shops, public boat ramps, marinas, and more.

Among the 20 homeported cruise ships in Port Canaveral are some of the newest and largest LNG-powered ships from Carnival Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean, and Disney Cruise Line. Royal Caribbean launched the world's largest cruise ship, the 250,000-ton Star of the Seas, from Port Canaveral in August 2025.

LNG Leader

Port Canaveral was the first North America homeport to accommodate cruise ships powered by LNG. Capt. John W. Murray, CEO and Port Director of Port Canaveral, who joined the port in 2016 from the commercial ocean carrier side of the maritime industry, was studying cruise industry trends and observed that several new cruise ships under construction would be powered by LNG, a first for the industry. Murray saw LNG as a way for the port to distinguish itself and attract the cruise industry's largest and most innovative ships.

"I started asking questions," Murray says. "I knew if we figured out the 'how' in terms of LNG fueling of passenger vessels, those new ships might come to Port Canaveral. It took more than

five years and considerable effort to develop bunkering best practices and protocols and specialized safety and firefighting capabilities to get to a point where it worked.”

The LNG bunkering practice developed by Port Canaveral has become the prototype for ports around the world. The first LNG-powered cruise ship arrived at the port in 2021, Carnival Cruise Line’s Mardi Gras – which debuted as the first ship in North America to run on LNG. The ship operates from Cruise Terminal 3, built to accommodate Carnival Excel-class ships. Five LNG-powered ships are now homeported in Port Canaveral – Disney Wish and Disney Treasure, Mardi Gras, and Royal Caribbean’s Utopia of the Seas and Star of the Seas. Coming in 2027 are MSC World Atlantic and Carnival’s Festivale, bringing the number to seven – as Port Canaveral continues as an LNG leader.

In addition to these lines, homeporting ships in Port Canaveral are Norwegian Cruise Line, Princess Cruises, and Celebrity Cruises. Ships also visit as a port of call or to provision. Passengers book shore excursions such as a tour to see the NASA Kennedy Space Center.

Port Canaveral Benefits Florida

The thriving port is a significant economic driver for Central Florida and the entire state, accounting for \$6.1 billion in statewide economic impact and nearly 43,000 jobs. The port and its business segments deliver some \$2.1 billion in wages and \$189.5 million in state and local taxes.

“We’re providing jobs in the State of Florida and Florida-based businesses benefit from port operations,” says Captain Murray. “When you have a ship with thousands of people onboard, they are getting all of their food supplies, laundry and everything else for a whole week delivered, and all of that is provided from local vendors and suppliers.”

As cruise grows, so do local businesses. “The cruise industry is a vital and fast-growing part of Central Florida’s economy, and we’ve been growing every step of the way,” says Janne Meinertz, president of Cape Canaveral, Fla.-based American Cruise-Aid Logistics.

Eric Garvey, CMO of a local hospitality group, says, “Cruising from Port Canaveral is not just holding steady—it’s thriving. Transportation services, hospitality partners, and local businesses are all feeling the positive impact of this growth.”

© 2026 Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). All rights reserved.

This content may be shared or republished with clear attribution to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). Content must remain intact and may not be altered, edited, or excerpted in any way that changes its meaning or context. For additional permissions, media inquiries, or additional information, please email krobinson@cruising.org.