

Serendipity Travels to the Caribbean, 2014



This trip involves cross-country travel and cruise-ship cruises from two different ports in Florida. One of the cruises is a four-day affair from Port Canaveral, near Orlando. The other is an eight-day cruise from Port Everglades, which is in Fort Lauderdale.

Before we left ...

We try to make as many arrangements from home as possible. *Serendipity* is great when you're exploring, but less enchanting when you are seeking a place to sleep or trying to find a printer when on the road. Whenever possible, we try to accomplish all the following from the comfort (and high-speed internet) of our home:

- Check in to the cruise(s), printing all documents and as many luggage tags as needed.
- Research the places you will visit and consider the shore excursions available through the cruise line and also locally provided.
- Make airline reservations; check in 24 hours before the first flight.
- Arrange for all motels, including parking and shuttles as possible.
- Arrange for a rental car if needed.

Off to Florida

14-15 March

The journey from one corner of the country (Bellingham, Washington) to the other (Port Canaveral, Florida) takes some time. Our route took us by car to SeaTac, by plane to Orlando via Denver, and then by car to Cape Canaveral.

The first leg was uneventful – Meredith came home after work on Friday the 14th, we left about 17:30, and arrived at our motel in SeaTac less than two hours later. We had used the services of <http://www.parksleepfly.com/> to make arrangements for a “night before” stay, 17 days of parking, and shuttle to and from the airport. We stayed at the Super 8 Motel on 192nd Street in SeaTac.

Up at 04:00 the next morning, we caught the 04:20 shuttle to the airport. Our flight plan:

- 06:25 PDT Southwest Airlines 824, arriving in Denver at 10:00 MDT.
- 10:45 MDT Southwest Airlines 852, arriving in Orlando at 16:10 EDT.

We checked in 22 hours before the first flight and were in the second (“B”) boarding group for both flights. Both flights were comfortable and on-time. Changing planes in Denver was easy because both gates were in the same area.

Our travels in Florida would involve two significant overland treks. The first would be from the Orlando airport to Port Canaveral, on the coast about 60 miles away. The second would occur between the first and second cruises – a drive of approximately 200 miles from Cape Canaveral to Fort Lauderdale. We decided to rent a car in Orlando, drive it to the town of Cape Canaveral, leave it there during the first cruise, then use it for a two-day drive to Fort Lauderdale before the second cruise.



We made our rental arrangements with Budget. They provided a Ford Focus Hatchback that served us well. The rental pickup process was smooth and we were soon on our way.

The drive to Cape Canaveral was uneventful. Rather than rent a GPS, we used Google Maps on my iPhone to guide us. Our reservations were at the Radisson Resort at the Port in Cape Canaveral, where we made arrangements for shuttle to and from the ship (about 3 miles away) and to park the car in the interim.

16 March

Dinner, a good night's sleep, and a buffet breakfast prepared us for today's embarkation. We moved our car to the designated parking area, repacked our bags, and put on the cruise-ship luggage tags.

The Radisson does a lot of business with cruise ship passengers and has good procedures for handling their needs. Their shuttles run continuously between hotel and port, with a dispatcher in the lobby keeping all informed and organized.

At our appointed time, we boarded the shuttle. The driver gave us and the other cruisers some good advice about purchases and cell phone use (generally, don't). We were soon dropped off at the pier, and in line to board the *Carnival Sensation*.