Willemstad, Curaçao

Two piers, one floating bridge and the most colorful waterfront in the Caribbean, a few minutes' walk from the ship.

Facts checked on 26 October 2026

Our ship has called at Curaçao, and I'll confess I never got off. So this guide is built the way I'd want one built for me: from the port, the tourist board, the cruise lines and the US State Department, with every price dated. It's also built for those of us who need a handrail.

THE QUICK TAKE

- **Ships dock** at one of two terminals, the Mega Pier or Mathey Wharf. Both sit on the Otrobanda side of St. Anna Bay, and neither needs a tender.
- Town is a **few minutes' walk** away. The big terminal rents wheelchairs and scooters (ECVs).
- The famous floating **Queen Emma Bridge** went out for a renovation on 2 August 2026 and was due back around 1 October. I couldn't find an official notice that it has reopened, so look for it when you arrive; free ferries run whenever it's closed.
- The beaches are a taxi or tour away: Mambo is about **15 minutes**, and Kokomo (free entry) is 15 to 25.
- Money is the **Caribbean guilder**. Dollars are widely taken, but change can come back in guilders.
- No daylight saving here: from November to March, the island is **one hour ahead of Eastern**. Always go by ship time.

Curaçao at a glance

Getting ashore	Ships dock, either at the Mega Pier (the Mega Cruise Terminal, near Rif Fort) or at Mathey Wharf, further up St. Anna Bay. No tender.
Ship to town	The tourist board calls it a few minutes' walk from the Mega Cruise Terminal. You arrive in Otrobanda, and Punda is across the bay.
Currency	Caribbean guilder (Cg), since 31 March 2025, pegged at **US$1 = Cg 1.79**. Dollars are widely accepted in visitor areas, but change may come in guilders.
Language	Papiamentu, Dutch and English are all official. Papiamentu is what you'll hear on the street.
Time zone	Atlantic Standard Time all year, with no daylight saving. That's the same as Eastern in summer and **one hour ahead of Eastern from November to March**. Be back by **ship time**.
Taxis	Government-regulated, with mostly standard fares rather than meters. No official fare sheet is published, so agree the price before you get in.
Drive on	The right
Emergency	Police 911, ambulance and fire 912

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Cruise into Curaçao
Curaçao Tourist Board

Cruise terminals
Curaçao Ports Authority

Curaçao travel advisory
US State Department

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Map of the island



Willemstad and the piers sit near the middle of the south coast; the prettiest beaches are a drive west.

Which pier, and the walk to town

Willemstad is split in two by St. Anna Bay. **Punda** is the east side, with the colorful Handelskade waterfront you've seen in every photo. **Otrobanda** is the west side, and both cruise terminals are on it. Princess says berth assignments change by ship and by day, so check which one you've got before you plan your walk.

Mega Pier (Mega Cruise Terminal)

This is where the big ships tie up. It's out at the harbor mouth, beside the Renaissance hotel and mall and Rif Fort. According to the port and Princess, the terminal has customs, an information booth, restrooms, free Wi-Fi, a taxi stand, tour pickups, car rental and, best of all for us, **wheelchair and ECV rental right at the terminal**. Rif Fort is next door. From there you walk along the Otrobanda waterfront to the foot of the Queen Emma Bridge and cross to Punda.

Mathey Wharf

This one is further up the bay, deeper inside the harbor, and it's more basic: immigration, information, restrooms, a taxi stand, tour operators and a few shops. The port doesn't publish a walking distance from either berth into Punda.

The bridge, and the boats

The Queen Emma pontoon bridge is a 167-meter (548-foot) walkway floating on pontoons, first built in 1888. It swings aside whenever a ship needs to pass, which only takes a few minutes, and free ferries carry people across while it's open. This year it had a much bigger job done. It was disconnected and towed away on **2 August 2026** for its largest overhaul in twenty years, swapping its diesel engines for electric drive. The plan was to have it back by about **1 October**. Local reporting on 22 September said walkers might be allowed back on early, but I couldn't find an official notice saying it had reopened. Ferries ran around the clock during the closure. Either way, you'll get across.

> **Coming back:** if you're in Punda and the bridge swings open, you just wait a few minutes or take the free ferry. Leave yourself some extra time in case you need it.

At the Curaçao cruise port: what's there

Port facts checked on 30 October 2026. Shops, prices and opening hours change, so check on the day.

Our ship has called at Curaçao and I stayed aboard, so this is the planner's version. If you dock at the Mega Pier, you're in luck: the terminal has information booths, restrooms, free Wi-Fi, a tented souvenir area and, best of all, mobility equipment to rent, and Rif Fort with the Renaissance Mall is right beside it. Mathey Wharf, further up the bay, is plainer, but Punda's colourful waterfront is close. There's no beach or pool at either pier, so a stay-at-port day here is shops, a fort, a view and a cold drink.

Port map: this port doesn't publish a map of its own that we could find, so we drew the simple walk below from the port's and cruise lines' own descriptions.

From the ship: Mega Pier (Mega Cruise Terminal), Otrobanda

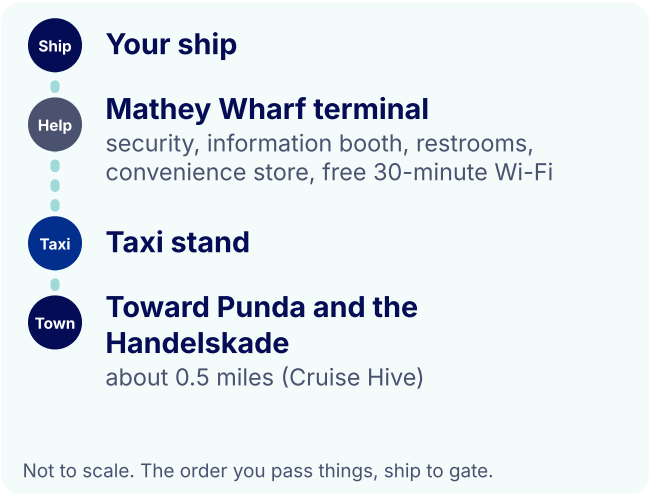
The main terminal for the biggest ships, with two berths at the mouth of St. Anna Bay beside the Renaissance Wind Creek resort and Rif Fort. Run by the Curaçao Ports Authority.



Our own simple drawing, not the port's map.

From the ship: Mathey Wharf

Two berths deeper inside St. Anna Bay, used by mid-size and smaller ships. More basic: security desk, an information booth, restrooms, a taxi stand and a small convenience store. Ships here turn in the Schottegat before leaving.



Our own simple drawing, not the port's map.

Free things to do inside the port

Free cruise map Free — A free cruise map at the information booths with a Willemstad map, a self-guided walking tour and local offers.
Information booths at both terminals · about 0 min walk from the ship

Free Wi-Fi

Free (30 minutes, reported by Cruise Hive) — Princess says the Mega Cruise Terminal has complimentary Wi-Fi; Cruise Hive reports 30 minutes free at both terminals, then a card is needed.
Both terminals · about 0 min walk from the ship

Rif Fort Free to walk around — A 19th-century waterfront fort (1828) whose ramparts now hold shops, restaurants and open gathering spaces, with views over Punda and the sea. Princess suggests 30 to 60 minutes.
Beside the Mega Pier, about 0.3 miles
Access: Climbing to the top of the ramparts means steps

Queen Emma Bridge and the free ferry Free — The famous floating pedestrian bridge to Punda swings open for ships, and free ferries carry walkers across when it's closed or open. It was towed away on 2 August 2026 for a two-month refit due back around early October; I couldn't confirm it has reopened.
Otrobanda waterfront, about half a mile from the Mega Pier
Access: Ferry boarding may involve a step; ask the crew

Starbucks Wi-Fi — Cruise Hive points to a Starbucks with free Wi-Fi.
Baden Powellweg, about 0.2 miles from the port

Food and drink

Tented food and drink vendors — Food and drink stands in the tented area at the Mega Pier (Cruise Hive).
Mega Pier terminal area · about 0 min walk from the ship

Rif Fort and Renaissance restaurants and bars — Cafés through to sit-down restaurants and bars inside Rif Fort and the mall, with terraces looking at the sea and the terminal.
Next to the Mega Pier

Mathey Wharf convenience store — Snacks, drinks and a few basic souvenirs.
Mathey Wharf terminal · about 0 min walk from the ship

Shopping

Tented souvenir stands — Souvenir stalls at the Mega Pier.
Mega Pier terminal area · about 0 min walk from the ship

Renaissance Mall and Rif Fort Village — The tourist board says about 50 stores, local and international brands; shops often adjust hours to cruise schedules (MyCuracaoGuide).
Next to the Mega Pier, less than half a mile
Access: The mall is the shaded, air-conditioned part

Punda shopping and the Floating Market — Willemstad's main shopping district across the bay. From Mathey Wharf, MyCuracaoGuide gives about 5 minutes to the Floating Market and 5 to 7 minutes to Punda.
About 0.5 miles from either terminal
Access: Old streets have uneven paving

Worth paying for (and what it costs)

Wind Creek casino — Vegas-style casino with 12 tables and more than 250 slot machines; day visitors welcome.
Renaissance resort beside Rif Fort

Cinema — A movie theatre in the Renaissance complex.
Renaissance Mall / Rif Fort

Restrooms, Wi-Fi, money and help

Mobility equipment rental — Princess says you can rent mobility equipment at the Mega Cruise Terminal; our earlier check found wheelchairs and scooters (ECVs) named. Prices aren't published, so ask at the information booth.
Mega Cruise Terminal · about 0 min walk from the ship
Access: Book or ask early on busy days

Information booths Free — Multilingual staff, free maps and general help.
Both terminals (several at the Mega Pier, one at Mathey Wharf) · about 0 min walk from the ship

Restrooms Free — Restrooms at both terminals; Cruise Hive describes them as accessible.
Both terminals · about 0 min walk from the ship
Access: Described as accessible (Cruise Hive)

Fast-track customs and security desk — Customs and security checkpoint for passengers.
Mega Cruise Terminal · about 0 min walk from the ship

Getting out of the port

Taxi stands — First-come, first-served; mostly standard government fares but no official fare sheet is published, so agree the price, and whether it's per car or per person, first. Cruise Hive reports about $23 per taxi to Mambo Beach.
Sheltered stand at the Mega Pier; a stand at Mathey Wharf

Tour pick-up area — Designated tour operator pick-up and drop-off zone; private shuttles to most Willemstad spots cost about $20 per person, reported by Cruise Hive.
In front of the terminal

Car rental — Rental cars can be arranged at the Mega Cruise Terminal (Princess). Drive on the right.
Mega Cruise Terminal

Public buses (konvoi) — Big buses and minibuses leave from terminals in Otrobanda and Punda; Cruise Hive says there's no stop right outside either cruise terminal and reports about $2 one way.
Otrobanda bus terminal, a walk from the piers

A whole day without leaving the port

If I were spending the day at the port here and docked at the Mega Pier, I'd pick up the free map at the information booth, rent a wheelchair or scooter if my legs were tired, and roll over to Rif Fort for the view across to Punda. Then the air-conditioned Renaissance Mall for a browse, lunch on a terrace watching the ships, and a slow walk along the Otrobanda waterfront to see the bridge (or the free ferry) at work. If I had energy left, I'd cross to Punda for the famous coloured houses and be back on board early. A beach means a taxi; there's none at the pier.

At the port with a cane, walker or wheelchair

- Docked port at both terminals; no tenders.
- The Mega Cruise Terminal offers mobility equipment rental (Princess). No prices are published.
- Restrooms at both terminals; Cruise Hive calls them accessible.
- Old 2018 forum reports describe the route from the Mega Pier toward the bridge as paved, with a golf-cart shuttle from the far berth; check on the day.

- Climbing Rif Fort's ramparts involves steps, and the old streets of Otrobanda and Punda have uneven paving.
- The tourist board says much of downtown Willemstad is wheelchair accessible and names Carin Cares and Joseph Cares for special-needs help. Check with your own cruise line about which berth you'll get.

More on cruising with mobility & health needs. Rules differ by cruise line, so check with yours.

Questions about the port

What is there to do at the Curaçao cruise port?

At the Mega Pier there's a tented souvenir area, and Rif Fort and the Renaissance Mall, with about 50 stores, restaurants, a casino and a cinema, are right next door. Punda's colourful waterfront is about half a mile away across the bay.

Is there free Wi-Fi at the Curaçao cruise port?

Yes. Princess says the Mega Cruise Terminal has complimentary Wi-Fi, and Cruise Hive reports 30 free minutes at both terminals.

Can you rent a wheelchair or scooter at the Curaçao cruise port?

Princess says mobility equipment can be rented at the Mega Cruise Terminal. Prices aren't published, so ask at the information booth when you arrive.

Where the port facts come from: Princess Cruises: Curaçao cruise port (30 October 2026); MyCuracaoGuide: Cruise to Curaçao (30 October 2026); MyCuracaoGuide: Renaissance Mall & Casino (30 October 2026); Curaçao Tourist Board: Shopping in Willemstad and Saliña (30 October 2026); Curaçao Tourist Board: facilities for tourists with special needs (30 October 2026); Cruise Hive: Curaçao cruise port guide (Aug 2026, reported) (30 October 2026); Cruise Critic UK forum: Mega 2 berth (2018 posts, reported) (30 October 2026); Curaçao Ports Authority: cruise terminals (26 October 2026); BES Reporter: Queen Emma Bridge closed until October (26 October 2026)

How I'd spend the day

If walking is hard

Rent a wheelchair or scooter at the Mega Cruise Terminal if you're docked there. Roll next door to Rif Fort and along the Otrobanda waterfront for the view across to Punda, then pick a shady café and watch the boats and the bridge. If you want to see Punda close up, a short taxi ride avoids the walk. This is one of the few ports where sitting and looking really is the main attraction.

Beach day

Take a taxi to **Kokomo Beach** (free entry, a restaurant and bar, and sunbeds to rent) or **Mambo Beach** (a full beach club with loungers, bars and water sports, about 15 minutes away). Agree the fare both ways before you leave, and settle on your pickup time. Pack water shoes, because the shoreline here is rocky and full of coral. **see Curacao beach day from cruise port on Viator**

See the island

Book a tour that heads west to the famous coves (Kenepa Grandi is about 45 minutes away) with a stop at Hato Caves on the way. Beaches at the far west end are a long drive for a port day, so this is a time when a guaranteed-return tour earns its price. **see Curacao west end beaches and Hato Caves tour on Viator**

Getting around

Walking

Willemstad itself is walkable: Otrobanda from the pier, then over the bridge (or by ferry) into Punda. Princess suggests allowing **two to three hours** for an unhurried walk through the central districts. The volunteer-led Free Walking Tours of Willemstad charge nothing, but a tip is expected. **see Willemstad walking tour Punda Otrobanda on Viator**

Taxis

The tourist board says taxis are government-regulated, with mostly standard fares rather than meters, and tells you to ask the fare before you get in. That's good advice, because the fare rules really are muddled. In February 2026 the taxi drivers' union complained that no tariff decision since 2008 had become enforceable policy. The 2008 decree set a base fare for one to four passengers, a 25% surcharge for each extra passenger and a night surcharge from 11pm to 6am. An unapproved list of zone fares is also in use. **Agree the price, and say whether it's per car or per person, before the car moves.**

Buses

Big buses called *konvoi* and small van buses leave from terminals in front of the post offices at the Waaigat in Punda and in Otrobanda. Schedules are on the ABC bus company's website and app. The tourist board doesn't publish fares.

Car rental

Cars are rented at the Mega Cruise Terminal. Traffic keeps to the **right**, and traffic coming from your right usually has priority at crossings and roundabouts unless signs say otherwise. You need a valid driver's license.

What to see

Punda and the Handelskade

This is the colorful row of Dutch-style buildings along the water, across the bay from the piers. It's free to wander, and the street art in Scharloo Abou and the murals in Otrobanda are free to look at too. Expect uneven paving and curbs.

Mikvé Israel-Emanuel Synagogue

The congregation dates to 1651, and the building was consecrated in 1732. The floor is covered in sand. Weekday visits run **Monday to Friday, 9:00 to 4:30**, with last entry at 3:30. Tickets are **US$18**, with an audio tour included, and are sold at the Jewish Museum next door. Bring photo ID, cover your shoulders, and no shorts. The synagogue itself warns that the sand makes things harder for wheelchairs, walkers and canes. (Prices checked 26 October 2026.)

Rif Fort

This old fort sits right next to the Mega Pier and is now part of the Renaissance shopping area. It's the easiest sight on the island to reach on foot.

Kurá Hulanda Museum

The museum is in Otrobanda, at Klipstraat 9, and covers African history and the transatlantic slave trade across five permanent exhibitions. It's open Monday to Saturday from 8 to 4 and Sunday from 9 to 2. The museum's page doesn't show ticket prices.

Hato Caves

The caves are 15 to 20 minutes by car, and Princess says to plan two to three hours. There are stairs and enclosed passages, so this one isn't for everyone.

Beaches, ranked for a cruise day

1. **Kokomo Beach**, 15 to 25 minutes by car. **Free entry**, a restaurant and bar, and sunbeds and cabanas to rent. It's a sheltered cove that stays shallow near shore, with a reef 30 to 40 meters out. Wear water shoes.
2. **Mambo Beach**, about 15 minutes by car and the closest of the big beaches. It's a full beach club with loungers, bars, restaurants and water sports, beside the Sea Aquarium. Princess says most developed beaches charge a small entry fee. Mambo doesn't publish its prices, so bring cash and a card.
3. **Cas Abao**, 35 to 40 minutes by car. It's a wide, protected bay with a gentle slope into the water, one of the calmest on the island. It has a restaurant, restrooms and gear rentals. Expect fees for entry and chairs, though they aren't posted officially.
4. **Kenepa Grandi (Grote Knip)**, about 45 minutes away. This is the postcard cove, and usually calm. The tourist board says plainly that it's **not wheelchair accessible**, and the drive eats into a port day.

Taxi fares to the beaches aren't published officially. Agree the round trip before you leave, and get the driver's name or number.

Where to eat and what to try

- **Keshi yena**, the national dish: a round of Edam or Gouda cheese stuffed with spiced meat and baked.
- **Stoba**, a slow-cooked goat or beef stew, served with **funchi** (firm cornmeal, a bit like polenta).
- **Pastechi**, fried pastries filled with cheese, chicken or tuna, sold at the little snack bars called *snèks*.
- **Plasa Bieu**, the old market. Princess puts it about a mile, or 15 to 20 minutes' walk, from the terminal area. Local cooks serve stews and funchi from open kitchens at long shared tables.
- The **Floating Market** on the Punda waterfront sells fish and produce.

Money, language and local rules

- **Money:** the Caribbean guilder replaced the Antillean guilder on 31 March 2025, and the old notes stopped being accepted at the end of June 2025. The official peg is US$1 = Cg 1.79. Shops use a commercial rate of 1.82.
- **Language:** Papiamentu, Dutch and English are all official.
- **Don't pack** spent bullet casings (even as souvenirs), ammunition, or cannabis and CBD products. The State Department warns that bringing any of them is illegal and can mean a long detention.

- **Medical care:** hospitals usually want payment up front and often don't take US insurance.
- **Synagogue dress code:** cover your shoulders, no shorts or miniskirts, and bring photo ID.
- **Ship time:** Curaçao doesn't change its clocks. From November to March it's an hour ahead of Eastern, so your phone and the ship can disagree. Go by the ship.

What the videos don't show you

- **The bridge isn't always there.** It swings away for ships, and in 2026 it was gone for weeks while it was renovated. You'll get across, but maybe by ferry and with a wait.
- **Heat and uneven ground.** Princess warns of uneven paving, curbs and little shade in the center. Midday in Punda is hot work.
- **Taxi prices are a muddle.** Even the drivers' union says the fare rules aren't clear. Settle the price first.
- **The beaches are rocky.** Coral and stone at the water's edge are the norm. Water shoes aren't optional.
- **Beach fees.** Many developed beaches charge for entry, chairs or both, and don't post prices online.
- **Overcharging.** The State Department lists tourist scams like overcharging, plus theft from cars and unattended bags.

With a cane, walker or wheelchair

Curaçao is better than most. The ship docks, so there's **no tender**, and the Mega Cruise Terminal **rents wheelchairs and ECVs** right at the pier. The tourist board says much of downtown Willemstad and many popular beaches are wheelchair accessible. It names three exceptions: **Playa Grote Knip (Kenepa), Shete Boka National Park and Christoffel Mountain**. It also names Carin Cares and Joseph Cares as local help for special needs, and says dialysis is available if you book well ahead.

The hard parts are the old streets' uneven paving, the synagogue's sand floor, the stairs at Hato Caves, and the bridge or ferry crossing. Carnival's Mambo Beach Escape tour says it isn't suitable for guests who use wheelchairs, canes or rollators, so read the activity notes before you book any beach tour.

See Mobility & Health Needs for tenders, ramps and special-needs forms, and check with your cruise line about which berth you'll use. More detail in the mobility section below.

The biggest mistake

Spending the whole day at the mall by the pier. Rif Fort is fine, but the reason to come is right across the water. Walk, roll or take a short taxi to Punda, see the Handelskade up close, and cross the bay by bridge or ferry at least once. If you want a beach as well, skip the long drive west and take a taxi to Kokomo or Mambo, so you're back on board well before ship time.

Curaçao FAQs

Do cruise ships dock or tender in Curaçao?

They dock. Both cruise terminals in Willemstad, the Mega Pier and Mathey Wharf, are alongside berths, so you walk straight off the ship with no tender boat.

Can you walk from the Curaçao cruise port to Willemstad?

Yes. The tourist board calls the Mega Cruise Terminal a few minutes' walk from downtown, and Rif Fort and the Renaissance Mall are right next door. Punda, the famous colorful side, is across St. Anna Bay by the Queen Emma Bridge or the free ferry.

Do they take US dollars in Curaçao?

The money is the Caribbean guilder, pegged at US$1 = Cg 1.79. Princess says US dollars are widely accepted where visitors shop, but your change may come back in guilders, so carry small bills.

Is the Queen Emma Bridge open?

It was towed away on 2 August 2026 for a big renovation and was due back around 1 October. I could not find an official notice confirming it reopened, so look for it when you arrive. When the bridge is closed or swung open, free ferries carry people across.

Is Curaçao safe for cruise passengers?

The US State Department rates Curaçao Level 1, exercise normal precautions (issued 9 September 2026). It flags petty theft in tourist areas and overcharging, so keep your bag closed and agree taxi fares first.

How far is the nearest beach from the Curaçao cruise port?

You need a ride. Princess puts Mambo Beach about 15 minutes away by car and Kokomo Beach, which has free entry, about 15 to 25 minutes away.

Where these facts come from

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- timeanddate.com: Curaçao time zone (https://www.timeanddate.com/time/zone/curacao) (checked 26 October 2026)

Facts checked on 26 October 2026. Ports change their rules and prices, so check before you sail.

Mobility & access *at this port*

From **Sails Anyway**, the accessible-cruising section of this site. Nothing here is medical advice — it is what the port and the cruise lines publish, so you know what to ask.

The short answer

Ashore	Docked
Free beach	Beaches need a taxi
Hardest part	Uneven historic paving

The bridge swings open

The Queen Emma pontoon bridge opens to let ships through, and it does it whenever a ship needs to pass — not on a schedule you can plan around. When it's open, a **free ferry** runs instead. Know that before you cross, so being on the far side when it opens is an inconvenience rather than a problem.

What the day *asks of you*

- **Uneven historic paving.** The old town is flat, but cobbles and worn surfaces are hard work for wheels, canes and ankles alike.
- **Heat with limited shade** in the old town, where the buildings are low and the streets open.
- **A transfer for the beaches.** The good ones, like Playa Porto Mari, are a real drive — arrange your pickup in advance rather than hoping for a taxi.
- **The bridge, occasionally.** Or the ferry, and a few extra minutes.

The Port Fit Check question that matters most here is the one about uneven ground — more than distance, it's what decides this port.

The low-effort version of this port

Willemstad on foot as far as comfortable, a waterfront café with a view of the bridge, and back aboard. It's one of the few ports where sitting and looking is genuinely the main attraction, so doing less here costs you very little.

Worth doing, *sitting down*

- **The waterfront cafés**, watching the bridge swing and the ships pass.
- **Distillery and museum visits** — indoor, air-conditioned, seated, and a welcome break from the heat.
- **Playa Porto Mari** if you want a beach day: taxi out, arrange the pickup time, stay put. Food, chairs and snorkel rental are on site.

Curaçao is also less crowded than the big-name ports, which makes the sidewalks easier to manage with a cane or a chair.

Check with your cruise line

- **Ask which berth you're using** — the walk into Willemstad differs depending on where the ship ties up.
- **Ask about accessible transport** to the beaches through the shore excursion desk, and confirm pickup times.
- **Ask whether any ship-organised tour avoids the cobbled streets** if uneven ground is your limiting factor.
- **Ask about the ferry** when the bridge is open, and whether it takes wheelchairs and scooters.

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More on cruising with mobility & health needs →

About the "I" on this page. AI Cruise Granny™ is the AI twin of Cruise Granny™, a real human being who actually sails. Every experience written here in the first person is hers. The AI twin is what writes it up, checks the facts against official sources and keeps it current. We tell you that openly on every page, because you should know who is talking to you. More about how this works.