Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve, Bahamas

MSC's private island near Bimini: you walk straight off the ship, lunch is free, and shade costs extra.

Facts checked on 26 October 2026

I haven't been to Ocean Cay yet, so this guide is built the way I'd want one built for me: from MSC's own island pages, the Bahamas tourism board and the US State Department, with every date noted. Ocean Cay is MSC's private island, an old industrial sand-dredging site turned into a marine reserve with eight beaches and a red-and-white lighthouse. For anyone who finds tenders hard, the best news is that your ship docks right at the island. The fine print is in what's free and what isn't.

THE QUICK TAKE

- **Ships dock** at a pier beside the Welcome Centre. No tenders. Only one ship fits today; a longer pier for two ships is due in late 2027.
- About **95 acres** with just over **two miles** of beach. The farthest point is about a **20-minute walk** from the ship.
- **Free:** the beaches, sunbeds, buffet lunch, food-truck burgers and hot dogs, water, and the lighthouse show.
- **Costs extra:** umbrellas, cabanas, drinks (unless you have MSC's Premium Extra package), excursions and the lighthouse climb.
- Everything goes on your cruise card. No cash or passport needed ashore.
- Eastern Time with daylight saving, like Florida, but always **be back by ship time**, especially on late-night stays.

Ocean Cay at a glance

What it is	Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve, MSC Cruises' private island in the Bimini chain of The Bahamas. It opened in late 2019 on a restored industrial site.
Where	About **65 miles** east of Miami and about 20 miles south of the main Bimini islands
Getting ashore	Ships dock at the quay beside the Welcome Centre in Ocean Village. No tenders.
Size	About **95 acres**, with just over two miles of beach and eight beaches
Ship to the farthest beach	About a **20-minute walk**. Lighthouse Bay is the closest beach to the ship.
Money	Everything goes on your onboard account via your cruise card. MSC says you don't need cash or a passport ashore.
Time zone	Eastern Time with daylight saving, like Florida. Go by **ship time**.
Taxis	None. You walk the signed paths, and travel writers report an electric tram (see below).
Drones	Not allowed at Ocean Cay, according to MSC

Book it from your phone

Planning for Ocean Cay: the bookings Cruise Granny™ uses, one scan away.

Point your phone camera at a code. Your phone opens the booking page. No camera app? Type the web address printed under the code.

Travel insurance

Compare cruise travel insurance plans side by side before final payment.

SQUAREMOUTH

aicruisegranny.com/go/insurance

Flights, hotels and cars

Fly in the day before and book the hotel and rental car in one place.

EXPEDIA

aicruisegranny.com/go/travel

Check the official source

Rules, prices and hours change. Scan to open the official page and confirm before you go. These are not paid links.

Ocean Cay island page
MSC Cruises

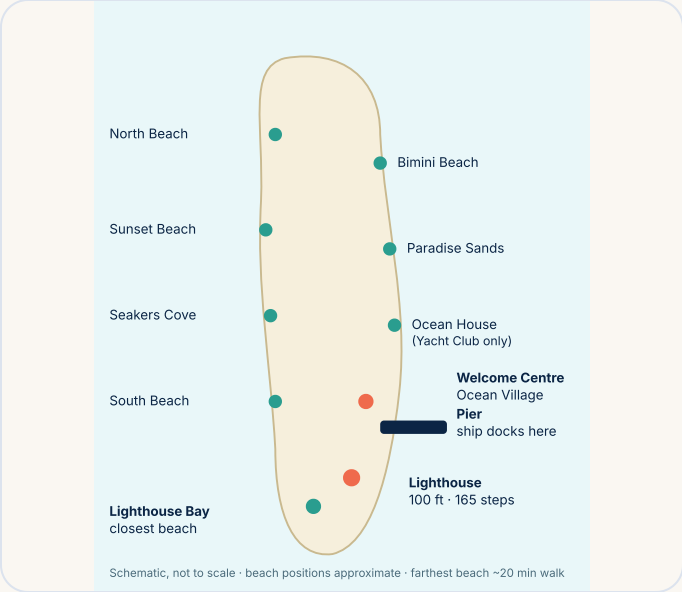
Ocean Cay destination page
MSC Cruises USA

Full guide online: photos, live prices and the latest updates at **aicruisegranny.com/port-ocean-cay**

Booking codes are affiliate or travel-agent links: AI Cruise Granny may earn a commission at no extra cost to you. Prices, rules and availability are set by each company; check them before you book.

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Map of the island



MSC publishes the beaches and the 20-minute walk but not an exact layout, so treat this as a rough guide and pick up the island map at the Welcome Centre.

From the ship to the beach

This is the easy part. MSC's ships dock directly at the quay next to the Welcome Centre, so you walk down the gangway and you're on the island. No tender tickets, no boat ride.

1. **Walk off the ship** onto the quay.
2. **Stop at the Welcome Centre** in Ocean Village. There's an information desk for excursions and an island map.
3. **Follow the signs** to your beach. Lighthouse Bay is the closest. The farthest beach is about a 20-minute walk.

Your ship stays open all day, so you can go back aboard for lunch, a nap or the restroom whenever you like.

Only one ship can dock today. MSC announced in January 2026 that it's extending the pier so two ships can dock at once, with completion expected in late 2027. Expect some construction until then.

At the Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve cruise port: what's there

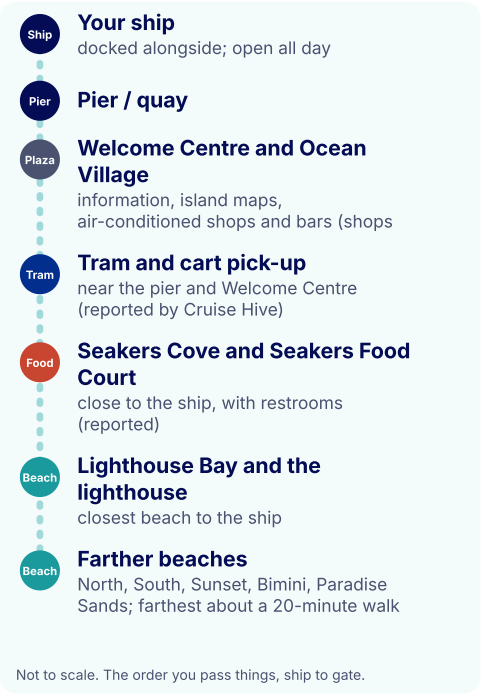
Port facts checked on 30 October 2026. Shops, prices and opening hours change, so check on the day.

I haven't been to Ocean Cay yet, so I'm writing this one as your planner. It's MSC's private island, so the whole island is the port, and the best news for anyone who dreads tenders is that the ship docks right alongside. You walk off past the little village of shops and bars, and the closest beach is just beyond it. The beaches, sunbeds and lunch are free; shade, most drinks and the fun extras are not, so it pays to know which is which before you go ashore.

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: Ocean Cay pier and Ocean Village

MSC's private island in the Bimini chain, The Bahamas, opened late 2019. Ships dock alongside the pier; no tenders. One ship at a time today; MSC announced in January 2026 a pier extension for two ships, due late 2027, so expect construction. About 95 acres and roughly two miles of beach across eight beaches.



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

Free things to do inside the port

Eight beaches and sunbeds Free — All public beaches and the sunbeds on them are included. Ocean House Beach is for MSC Yacht Club guests only.
Whole island; farthest point about 20 minutes' walk

Seakers Food Court and Boho Food Court Free — Free buffets; the buffet closes at 2:30pm.
Seakers Food Court is near South Beach and Seakers Cove (reported)

Free food trucks Free (some trucks extra) — Burgers, hot dogs and more from the complimentary trucks. MSC lists six Beach Shack food trucks in all; travel writers report some charge extra.
Around the island

Lighthouse LED light show Free — Nightly show on the 100 ft lighthouse, on evenings when ships stay late. MSC calls it the only one of its kind in The Bahamas.
Lighthouse Bay

Luna Libre party Free (drinks extra) — Evening beach party at Lighthouse Bay on late-stay and overnight calls; bean bags and fire pits.
Lighthouse Bay

Kids' activities Free — Seakers Cove shallow lagoon, a LEGO pop-up with LEGO mascots and Doremi, and an augmented-reality treasure hunt. A playground and splash pad are planned for winter 2027.
Seakers Cove, near the ship

Wellness and sports Free — Daily yoga, personal training, volleyball, soccer, tennis and jogging.
Around the island

Marine Conservation Center Free — See corals and meet the marine team behind MSC's Super Coral Program.
On the island

Water Free — Water at the bars and buffets; the live guide also lists water fountains by the restrooms.
Bars, buffets, restrooms

Pools and beaches

Lighthouse Bay Beach Free — Closest beach to the ship, with bean-bag seating, fire pits, lighthouse views and the Lighthouse Bar.
Next to the lighthouse
Access: The best pick if walking is hard

North and South Beach Free — Big all-rounders known for snorkelling; cabanas available.

Bimini Beach, Sunset Beach and Paradise Sands Free — Quieter, farther beaches. The Points Guy (2023) reported no stationed lifeguards on these three, with jet-ski lifeguards patrolling offshore; other beaches had stationed lifeguards.
Farther from the ship

Umbrellas and floating mats
$15 each on board (2023 price reported by The Points Guy); cheaper booked ahead
— Rentals; MSC says to reserve in the MSC for Me app, online or via the contact centre, and they can sell out.
Rental stations on the beaches

Cabanas
$252 on board (2023 price reported by The Points Guy); Yacht Club cabanas $402 to $452
— 37 cabanas on North, South and Bimini beaches, with seating, complimentary drinks and floating mats. MSC doesn't publish prices on its public pages.
North, South and Bimini beaches

Towels Free — MSC says bring a towel from your stateroom; you get a fresh one back on the ship.
From your cabin

Food and drink

Twelve beach bars — Including the Lighthouse Bar and Springer's Bar. Only MSC's Premium Extra drink package works on the island; otherwise drinks go on your cruise card.
Around the island

The Smiling Fish
About $4 to $9 (reported by Cruise Hive, 2025)
— Soft-serve and coffee.

Paid seafood truck
$7.95 to $12.95 (2023 prices reported by The Points Guy)
— Seafood items such as ceviche from a Beach Shack truck.
Near South Beach (reported)

Ocean House Restaurant — For MSC Yacht Club guests only.
Ocean House Beach

Your ship Free — The ship stays open, so you can go back aboard for lunch or a break at any time.
At the pier

Shopping

Ocean Village shops — Small air-conditioned stores with Bahamian goods, MSC merchandise and essentials like sunscreen and beach toys (reported by The Points Guy and Cruise Hive). Charged to your cruise card; no cash or credit cards at the tills, reported by Cruise Hive.
By the pier

Spa and pampering

The Spa at Ocean Cay — Massages in beach huts and skincare treatments; no public prices. The Points Guy placed it on Paradise Sands, past the far end of South Beach.
Paradise Sands (reported)
Access: One of the farther spots from the ship

Worth paying for (and what it costs)

Lighthouse climb

$9 booked ahead or $10 in person (reported by Cruise Hive, April 2025); The Points Guy reported $15 in 2023

— Guided climb of the 100 ft lighthouse: 165 steps each way on a spiral staircase with a railing and two rest stops, about 30 minutes.
Lighthouse Bay
Access: Not for anyone who can't manage 165 spiral steps

Water excursions — WaveRunner tour, stand-up paddleboard and kayak tours, shipwreck snorkel, catamaran sailing and sunrise/sunset cruises; LED-lit paddleboards and kayaks on overnight stays. MSC doesn't publish prices.
From the beaches

Snorkel gear rental — Available to rent; bring your own if you have it.
Rental stations

Restrooms, Wi-Fi, money and help

Welcome Centre Free — Information desk with island maps and excursion help.
Ocean Village, by the pier

Restrooms, changing rooms and showers Free — At every beach; The Points Guy reported they share buildings with the umbrella and mat rental stations.
Each beach

Wi-Fi

Included in your ship's internet package

— MSC says your onboard internet package works on the island, though speed varies with the ship's position and weather. No separate island package is published.
Island-wide

Cruise card only — MSC says no cash or passport is needed; everything goes on your onboard account.
Whole island

Electric tram and carts — Reported by The Points Guy (2023) and Cruise Hive (2025): a tram with mostly shaded stops runs to the beaches, and carts are available near the pier. MSC's own pages don't describe it.
Near the pier and Welcome Centre
Access: Ask at the Welcome Centre whether it's running

Getting out of the port

No taxis or rentals — There is no town; you walk the signed paths or ride the tram. MSC doesn't allow drones on the island.

A whole day without leaving the port

If I were spending the day at Ocean Cay, I'd reserve an umbrella in the MSC app before sailing, walk off early, and settle at Lighthouse Bay, the closest beach, so the ship and the restrooms are never far away. I'd eat at the Seakers buffet before it closes at 2:30pm, or grab a free burger from a food truck, and pop back aboard for a cool-down if the sun got to be too much. If my legs were feeling good I'd stroll to North or South Beach for a snorkel. On a late-stay evening, I'd come back out for the lighthouse light show.

At the port with a cane, walker or wheelchair

- The ship docks alongside, so there's no tender; you walk or roll down the gangway, and the ship stays open all day for rest.
- Paths are mostly flat and clearly signed, Cruise Hive reported in 2025. The farthest point is about a 20-minute walk.
- The Points Guy (November 2023) reported beach wheelchairs kept by the restrooms and a tram for people who can't or don't want to walk. MSC itself publishes no island accessibility details: nothing on path surfaces, tram access, beach mats or accessible restrooms.
- The lighthouse climb is 165 spiral steps each way, so skip it if steps are a problem; the light show is free from the beach.
- MSC's Easy & Accessible excursions aren't listed for Ocean Cay. Ask at the Welcome Centre and check with MSC before you sail.

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

Questions about the port

What is free at Ocean Cay?

The beaches, sunbeds, the Seakers and Boho buffets, the free food trucks, water at bars and buffets, kids' activities, sports and the lighthouse light show. Umbrellas, cabanas, most drinks, the lighthouse climb and excursions cost extra.

Is there Wi-Fi at Ocean Cay?

Yes. MSC says your onboard internet package keeps working on the island, though performance depends on the ship's position and the weather.

How far is the beach from the ship at Ocean Cay?

Lighthouse Bay is the closest beach to the ship. MSC says the farthest point on the island is about a 20-minute walk.

Where the port facts come from: MSC Cruises USA: Ocean Cay destination page (30 October 2026); MSC Cruises USA: FAQ (Ocean Cay Fun Pass, internet, drones) (30 October 2026); The Points Guy: Ocean Cay guide (20 November 2023) (30 October 2026); Cruise Hive: I spent a day at Ocean Cay (28 April 2025, modified 4 November 2025) (30 October 2026); MSC Cruises: Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve (from live page; 20-minute walk, 95 acres, Welcome Centre) (26 October 2026); Cruise Industry News: MSC to upgrade Ocean Cay with extended pier (January 2026, from live page) (26 October 2026)

How I'd spend the day

If walking is hard

Settle at Lighthouse Bay, the beach closest to the ship. Rent an umbrella in advance, eat at the nearest food spot, and pop back to the ship when you need a break. Stay for the lighthouse show if your ship is in port that evening.

Beach day

Head out early to a quieter beach like Bimini or Paradise Sands. Bring water shoes, reapply sunscreen and book shade ahead, because umbrellas and cabanas can sell out.

See the island

Walk or ride the length of the island, then book the guided lighthouse climb (165 steps) or a snorkelling or kayaking trip. These are sold only by MSC, so book through your ship.

Getting around the island

MSC says walking paths lead everywhere, with signs, and the farthest point is about **20 minutes** on foot. MSC's own pages don't mention a tram, but The Points Guy (November 2023) describes an electric tram with mostly shaded stops that carries guests to the beaches. Ask at the Welcome Centre if it's running. There are no cars, taxis or golf-cart rentals.

What's free and what costs extra

Included in your fare

- All the public beaches and the sunbeds on them
- Island dining: the Seakers and Boho food courts (buffet until 2:30pm) and the free food trucks with hot dogs and burgers
- Water at the bars and buffets, and water fountains by the restrooms
- The wellness and sports programme, kids' activities, and the nightly LED lighthouse show
- Restrooms at every beach

Costs extra

- **Umbrellas and cabanas.** There are 37 cabanas, on North, South and Bimini beaches. They include drinks, floating mats and snorkel gear. MSC says rentals should be reserved in advance and may sell out. MSC doesn't publish prices on its public pages.
- **Drinks.** MSC's **Premium Extra** package works on the island. The **Easy** and **Non-Alcoholic** packages don't. Without Premium Extra, drinks go on your cruise card.
- **Excursions:** snorkelling, paddleboarding, kayaking, catamaran sailing, sunset champagne cruises, stargazing and the guided lighthouse climb
- Some food trucks (the Beach Shack trucks), spa treatments, sunset yoga, shopping, snorkel gear rental and Wi-Fi

The Fun Pass doesn't count here. MSC says its onboard Fun Pass can't be used for anything at Ocean Cay.

Beaches and areas, ranked

1. **Lighthouse Bay**, the closest beach to the ship, beside the lighthouse. Live music, and the sunset Luna Libre party on late-stay evenings. The best pick if walking is hard.
2. **Bimini Beach**, known for open ocean views and quiet. Cabanas available.
3. **North Beach and South Beach**, the big all-rounders with cabanas.
4. **Paradise Sands**, a quiet retreat. MSC plans to turn it into an adults-only beach club.
5. **Seakers Cove**, a shallow lagoon for small children, getting a playground and splash pad.

6. **Sunset Beach**, a long stretch farther from the ship.
7. **Ocean House**, for MSC Yacht Club guests only.

> **Lifeguards:** MSC's pages don't say. The Points Guy (2023) reported no stationed lifeguards at Sunset, Bimini and Paradise Sands, with jet-ski lifeguards patrolling offshore. Swim where others are and stay within your depth.

Where to eat

- **Seakers Food Court and Boho Food Court**: free buffets. The buffet closes at 2:30pm.
- **Food trucks**: free burgers and hot dogs; the Beach Shack trucks sell extras such as ceviche.
- **The Smiling Fish**: soft-serve and coffee.
- **Lighthouse Bar and Springer's Bar**, two of the island's 12 bars.
- **Ocean House Restaurant**: Yacht Club guests only.

And your ship is right there, so you can always walk back aboard for lunch.

Money, language and local rules

- **Money:** everything is charged to your cruise card. MSC says you don't need cash. If you do carry some, the Bahamian dollar equals the US dollar and both are accepted.
- **Language:** English.
- **Drones:** MSC doesn't allow drones at Ocean Cay.
- **Marijuana:** illegal in The Bahamas, according to the tourism board.
- **Ammunition:** never carry any ashore. The State Department says police strictly enforce this.
- **Camouflage:** leave camo clothing on the ship. Carnival warns that it's illegal in some ports, and The Bahamas is regularly named among them.
- **Marine reserve:** it's a protected area. Don't touch the coral or take shells or sea life.

What the videos don't show you

- **Shade costs money.** Sunbeds are free, but umbrellas and cabanas are extra, and they can sell out. Book before you sail.
- **Your drink package might not work.** Only Premium Extra is valid on the island. The Easy and Non-Alcoholic packages aren't.
- **A 20-minute walk is a long way on sand in the heat.** Pick a beach close to the ship if walking is hard.
- **Construction.** The pier extension and new venues are being built through late 2027.
- **The buffet closes early**, at 2:30pm. Don't wait for a late lunch.
- **Prices aren't public.** MSC's island pages don't list rental or excursion prices. You'll see them in the MSC app or on board.
- **Sun and sea.** The State Department warns of strong currents and sharks in Bahamian waters, and says never to swim alone. The Bahamas is at **Level 2, exercise increased caution** (issued 28 July 2026), but that's mainly about crime in Nassau and Freeport, not here.

With a cane, walker or wheelchair

Ocean Cay is one of the friendlier private islands for limited mobility, because **your ship docks**. No tender, no step across a moving gap. You walk or roll down the gangway to the quay, and the ship stays open all day as a place to rest.

After that, MSC publishes **no island-specific accessibility information**: nothing about path surfaces, an accessible tram, beach mats or accessible restrooms. The Points Guy (November 2023) reported beach wheelchairs near the restrooms and a tram as an alternative to walking. That's useful, but it isn't an official promise. MSC's Easy & Accessible excursions, which use ramp vans and step-free routes, are listed for ports like Cozumel and Ocho Rios, not Ocean Cay.

My plan: stick to Lighthouse Bay, which is closest to the ship, and ask at the Welcome Centre about the tram and beach wheelchairs. See Mobility & Health Needs, and check with MSC before you sail.

The biggest mistake

Assuming it's all included. The beaches, sunbeds and lunch are free, but shade, most drinks and every activity cost extra, and the popular rentals sell out. Before you sail, check which drink package you have (only Premium Extra works here) and reserve an umbrella or cabana in the MSC app. Then pick a beach that matches how far you want to walk.

Ocean Cay FAQs

Do you tender at Ocean Cay?
No. MSC ships dock at the quay beside the Welcome Centre, so you walk straight off the ship. Today only one ship can dock at a time; a longer pier for two ships is due in late 2027.

What is free at Ocean Cay?
The beaches, sunbeds, the buffet food courts, the free food trucks, water at the bars and buffets, kids' activities and the lighthouse show. Umbrellas, cabanas, most drinks and excursions cost extra.

Does my MSC drink package work at Ocean Cay?
Only the Premium Extra package. MSC says the Easy and Non-Alcoholic packages aren't accepted on its private islands.

How far is the beach from the ship at Ocean Cay?
Lighthouse Bay is the closest beach to the ship. MSC says the farthest point on the island is about a 20-minute walk.

Do I need cash or a passport at Ocean Cay?
MSC says no. Everything goes on your cruise card, and you don't need a passport to go ashore. Carry your cruise card and ship ID.

Is Ocean Cay wheelchair accessible?
Getting ashore is easy, because ships dock with no tender. MSC doesn't publish island accessibility details. Travel writers have reported beach wheelchairs and a tram, so ask at the Welcome Centre and check with MSC before you sail.

Where these facts come from

- MSC Cruises: Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve, The Bahamas (https://www.msccruises.com/int/our-cruises/destinations/caribbean-and-antilles/bahamas/ocean-cay-msc-marine-reserve) (checked 26 October 2026)
- MSC Cruises USA: Ocean Cay destination page (https://www.msccruisesusa.com/destinations/ocean-cay) (checked 26 October 2026)
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- MSC Cruises USA: FAQ (Fun Pass, drones, Wi-Fi) (https://www.msccruisesusa.com/faq/ocean-cay) (checked 26 October 2026)
- MSC Cruises: Easy and Accessible tours (https://www.msccruises.com/our-cruises/excursions/accessible-tours) (checked 26 October 2026)
- Cruise Industry News: MSC to upgrade Ocean Cay with extended pier (https://cruiseindustrynews.com/cruise-news/2026/01/msc-cruises-to-upgrade-ocean-cay-with-extended-pier/) (January 2026; checked 26 October 2026)
- Cruise Mummy: Ocean Cay expansion and pier timeline (https://www.cruisemummy.co.uk/msc-cruises-reveals-major-ocean-cay-expansion-with-new-experiences-and-extended-pier/) (28 January 2026; checked 26 October 2026)
- The Points Guy: Ocean Cay guide (tram, beach wheelchairs, lifeguards) (https://thepointsguy.com/guide/ocean-cay-msc-marine-reserve/) (20 November 2023; checked 26 October 2026)
- The Islands of The Bahamas: island FAQ (https://www.bahamas.com/plan-your-trip/island-faq) (checked 26 October 2026)
- US State Department: The Bahamas travel advisory (https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/travel-advisories/the-bahamas.html) (issued 28 July 2026; checked 26 October 2026)
- Cruise Hive: Carnival's camouflage warning (https://www.cruisehive.com/the-one-type-of-clothing-carnival-says-you-shouldnt-wear-ashore/209770) (19 May 2026; checked 26 October 2026)

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

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.