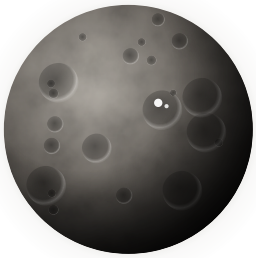


Ceres Waystation — Destination Guide

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Ceres Waystation is a six-hour stop in the asteroid belt — the dividing point between the inner and outer solar system legs of the Outer Reaches Tour and Grand Solar Tour. Its gravity is 0.03g, making it the most dramatic low-gravity environment on any itinerary. This guide covers the Waystation Hub, the surface walk, The Leap, and the Occator Crater Rim tour.

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1. Ceres Waystation Overview

Ceres is the largest body in the main asteroid belt and the only dwarf planet in the inner solar system and the closest dwarf planet to Earth. It is approximately 940 kilometres in diameter. The Ceres Waystation is a permanent commercial and scientific installation operated by the Asteroid Belt Authority; Pelorus Voyages is one of several expedition operators with licensed access.

The Waystation Hub is a pressurised facility with a commercial concourse, a restaurant serving local and transported food, a communications relay centre, and a small exhibition on asteroid belt geology and the history of Ceres exploration. The exhibition includes the original Dawn spacecraft mission results and the subsequent discoveries about Ceres's subsurface ocean and the Occator bright deposits. It takes approximately 45 minutes to walk through and is freely accessible to all Pelorus Voyages passengers.

The Waystation's position as the outer system's main resupply and emergency hub means it has capabilities beyond its apparent size: a full medical facility, emergency docking infrastructure, and the best communications relay of any stop on the ORT or GST itinerary. The Ceres emergency dock is the primary diversion point for medical emergencies occurring anywhere on the outer system legs; the facility can stabilise and hold a patient for up to 30 days while awaiting a medical repatriation flight from Earth.

Ceres's distance from the Sun (approximately 2.7 to 3.0 AU depending on orbital position) means sunlight is significantly weaker than at Earth. The surface is dark and cold. Jupiter is distinctly non-stellar to the naked eye from the surface; Saturn is a bright point. The Milky Way at this distance from the Sun is visible with a clarity not achievable from the inner solar system.

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2. Six Hours on Ceres — What to Expect

The six-hour stop at Ceres is structured around one or two focused experiences. It is not a multi-day destination — the stop provides access to the surface walk (including the Occator Crater Rim option) and The Leap, but not both in leisurely combination. The timing is tight if both are desired; most passengers choose one primary excursion.

The six hours unfolds roughly as follows: - Docking and Waystation Hub processing: 20–30 minutes - Surface excursion: 1.5–2.5 hours depending on options chosen - Waystation Hub concourse, exhibition, and meals: remaining time - Tether return and muster processing: 10 minutes plus 45-minute muster deadline

Important timing constraint: The Leap platform closes 60 minutes before the departure window — 15 minutes before the general muster deadline of 45 minutes. Passengers doing The Leap must plan to finish 60 minutes before departure, not 45.

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3. The Ceres Surface Walk

The Surface Walk is the central experience of the Waystation stop. At 0.03g — approximately one-thirtieth of Earth's surface gravity — movement is unlike anything at any other stop on the itinerary. Walking as you would on Earth will send you airborne. A slow step forward generates an upward arc. The guide briefing before the walk covers movement technique in detail, and the first 10 minutes are conducted as a supervised familiarisation segment.

Tether protocol — all passengers are connected to a guide tether line anchored to fixed anchor points along the walking route during the standard surface walk. The tether allows full freedom of movement across the walking surface but prevents drifting beyond approximately 15 metres. A single deliberate push off the surface — both feet planted, pushing straight up — carries a passenger to roughly 15 metres

before the tether draws taut. The return descent takes 20 to 30 seconds. Guides encourage at least one full arc during the familiarisation segment; it is the defining kinesthetic experience of the Ceres stop.

Tether detachment is prohibited during the standard surface walk. The only permitted tether detachment at Ceres is at The Leap platform, which is a separately bookable experience with its own requirements (see Section 4). Passengers who detach a tether during the standard walk without authorisation are in immediate breach of the surface excursion safety agreement and will be returned to the Waystation Hub.

Minimum age for the surface walk: 8 years old. A waiver is required; parental co-signature for passengers under 18.

Tether return at end of excursion — surface tether lines must be returned and logged at the equipment station before entering the pressurised Waystation Hub. This process takes approximately 10 minutes. Factor this into excursion end time against the 45-minute muster deadline.

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4. The Leap

The Leap is an optional tether-detachment experience at the Ceres Waystation jump platform. It must be booked separately and is not part of the standard surface walk.

At 0.03g, a passenger who detaches their tether at the jump platform and pushes off travels upward for approximately 45 to 55 seconds before reaching an apex of 80 to 100 metres. They then drift back down over the same period. The full detached arc lasts approximately 90 to 110 seconds before the guide retrieves the passenger using the pole catch system at the platform base. The entire experience from platform mount to ground return is approximately five minutes.

There is no sensation of falling during The Leap. The ascent and descent at 0.03g are gradual enough that the vestibular system registers the motion as gentle drift rather than fall. Passengers consistently describe the experience as floating. The view from the apex — roughly 100 metres above the Ceres surface, the asteroid belt extending in all directions, the Sun reduced to a bright point — is the most frequently cited memorable moment of the Ceres stop.

Requirements and booking:

Requirement	Detail
Minimum age	16 years old — firm, no parental consent override
Waiver	Must be signed at **Moon Base 7** before the vessel departs for the outer system
Cannot sign waiver at Ceres	The Ceres Waystation team does not have waiver processing capability
Platform closing time	60 minutes before the departure window (not the 45-minute general muster deadline) — the earlier close allows time for the post-Leap briefing, equipment return, and tether logging
Excursion status	Add-on at all cabin classes; purchased separately

The Moon Base 7 waiver rule is the most commonly overlooked detail about The Leap. Passengers who arrive at Ceres without a signed waiver on file cannot participate under any circumstances, regardless of how much time remains or how strongly they feel. The waiver requirement is not a formality that can be waived itself — it involves medical documentation systems at Moon Base 7 that have no equivalent at Ceres. Any passenger intending to do The Leap must inform the Pelorus Voyages expedition coordinator at Moon Base 7 check-in and request the waiver document.

Active mining operations — The Leap platform is occasionally closed during active mining operations windows at the Waystation, which restrict access to the surface jump zone. The operations schedule is published at the Waystation Hub on arrival; the excursion coordinator notifies Leap bookings of any conflicts on the day.

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5. Occator Crater Rim Tour

Occator Crater is the most visually distinctive feature on Ceres. Approximately 92 kilometres in diameter and 4 kilometres deep, its central mound is covered in bright, reflective sodium carbonate deposits — salts left behind by briny water that percolated from a subsurface reservoir through crater-floor fractures and then evaporated in the near-vacuum, leaving the mineral content behind. The bright spots were visible from Earth-based telescopes and puzzled astronomers for decades before the Dawn spacecraft provided close imaging in 2015.

The Occator Crater Rim Tour is available as part of the standard surface excursion package for Navigator and Pathfinder passengers, or as an add-on for Pioneer passengers. The tour is conducted on the exterior rim, which provides an elevated view down into the crater floor and a clear line of sight to the main deposit complex.

The low-g scramble option is available for passengers aged 16 and above. The rim in several sections is uneven enough to offer a genuine scramble — low-gravity rock scrambling where each move carries farther and higher than it would on Earth. The general rim tour is available from age 8.

The bright deposits are visible to the naked eye from the rim and are more striking in person than in photographs, due to the contrast with the surrounding very dark regolith and the low, dim sun angle at Ceres's distance from the Sun. The guide explains the geological history: the subsurface ocean hypothesis, the evidence that liquid water may still be present at depth, and the implication that Ceres — like Enceladus — may harbour conditions relevant to astrobiology.

Naming note — the deposits are also referred to in some older maps and tourist materials as "Cerealia Facula" (the central bright spot) and "Vinalia Faculae" (the surrounding deposits). All three names refer to features within the same crater. Pelorus Voyages guides use "Occator Crater" and "bright deposits" to avoid confusion between the crater-level and feature-level nomenclature.

The crater floor is restricted under the Ceres Scientific Preservation Protocol. The rim tour provides the best available civilian view of the deposits without requiring entry into the restricted zone.

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6. Timing Your Ceres Stop

The six-hour window at Ceres is the tightest of any surface stop on the ORT or GST. The table below shows how a typical stop might unfold for a passenger doing both the surface walk and The Leap.

Time (hours before departure window)	Activity
6h	Docking completed; Waystation Hub processing
5h 30m	Surface walk begins (familiarisation segment)
4h 30m	Leap platform boarding
4h 15m	The Leap complete; return to surface walk area
3h 30m	End surface activity; tether return at equipment station
3h 20m	Enter Waystation Hub; concourse, exhibition, meal
1h	**Leap platform closes** — must have completed Leap by this point
45m	**General muster deadline** — at Waystation Hub Central, Dock 4
0	Departure window opens

This schedule is tight and leaves limited margin. Passengers who want both the Occator Crater Rim tour and The Leap on the same stop should confirm with the expedition coordinator that the timing is achievable given any active mining operations schedule on the day.

Passengers who prioritise the surface walk and crater rim tour without The Leap have a more relaxed schedule, with time for the geology exhibition and a meal at the concourse.

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