

Docking

“Welcome to the gateway to the future!”

“You can already see behind me the looming shape of Gateway Station, mankind’s greatest space faring achievement since the moon colonies! This massive multilevel structure is responsible for the drop in incidence of all orbital mishaps by more than 85% the first year it became operational! In a few moments we’ll begin docking procedures with Gateway Station and you can all continue your tour from the inside. In the meantime, let’s find out more about this fabulous installation from the man in charge, Captain Reiketsukan himself.”

“June 28th, 2031 marked a black day for all of mankind as NASA Shuttle Adamant and European Union Transport Memento entered in a catastrophic collision due to miscommunication. The debris from the two ships fell from orbit and created what is now the Champs Élysées Crater, even today a reminder of what can happen without proper planning. Eight years later, thanks to a phenomenal global effort, Gateway Station was born at the Lagrange Point. There have been no major orbital accidents since.”

“Gateway Station is an undeniable achievement in the realm of aeronautics. A multi-decked installation able to house its crew complement of more than a thousand people as well as provide shelter and entertainment for the daily visitors who go through its customs check. Thanks to a rigorous protocol followed to the letter by the loyal Gateway Station staff, all transport of people and merchandise between the Earth’s orbit and its surface has not only been streamlined and made more efficient, but it has also become the safest it has ever been in more than three decades.”

“The main factor behind this amazing improvement is Caesar, Gateway Station’s artificial intelligence. Responsible for the billions of calculations that are necessary to carry out such a massive operation, as well as running nearly every principal system on the station itself, Caesar is the second sentient AI ever put to use for the greater public. Unlike his predecessor Cleopatra, however, Caesar has been developed away from the emotional path and instead made into possibly the greatest scholarly mind the world has ever known. It is through this dedicated quest for a smooth and perfect operation that Caesar has made Gateway Station the perfect management tool for mankind’s space travel.

“Now, the scientific minds of the UN Space Agency are hard at work to upgrade Caesar to a new level of function that will allow the station to expand and begin to handle not only orbital travel, but interplanetary customs as well. It is truly a great day for man and AI alike.”

“As you can understand from Captain Reiketsukan’s little speech, Gateway Station is very complex! Though it just looks like a big cone from here, it’s actually the home of a recreation deck, commercial stores and restaurants, apartments, high-tech laboratories and all that’s needed to run it! Tourists like you can explore the recreation and commercial areas freely, but the people who work here often have access to the rest of the station. Speaking of security, here’s a presentation to explain it!”

“Greetings, visitors!”

“You may know about Gateway Station, but do you know how your safety and the safety of all others staying aboard this great big pie in the sky are ensured? Just like most of the residential, public and commercial areas on the surface, everything relies on the Personal Area Network – the PAN!”

“By working with your own body’s personal energy field, the PAN uses your compatible clothing and accessories to set up a computer network all around you. When you touch or come close to sensors all over the station, Caesar communicates with your PAN and finds out who you are and which places you’re authorized to go! After that, it’s as simple as opening the door for you, or closing it to prevent you from putting yourself in danger. Remember: Gateway Station has a lot of very sensitive areas that are reserved for the people who make sure everything goes smoothly! It’s your responsibility as a visitor and guest to stay where your tour guide instructs you. If you’re ever lost, simply access the closest terminal and ask Caesar to help you!”

“Also, in case of an emergency, Caesar will be able to instantly access your PAN and set your clothing to a fluorescent color based on your status so that rescue crews can give you the most appropriate kind of help you need! As you enter through initial customs, be sure to you’re your personal computers and data devices set to Open, as Caesar will take this opportunity to send you all the necessary information you need to help you get around Gateway Station and have a great time.”

“Welcome to our station!”

“Wasn’t that informative? If you have any questions, be sure to ask your teacher or assigned guide. ...I’ve just gotten word that we’ve been cleared for docking. We’ll be approaching the Customs Deck just in a minute, which is the widest part of Gateway Station. In fact, while we still have time, let’s see another presentation to tell us how the station works from the inside!”

“Gateway Station is not only a marvel of modern engineering, but it is also a collection of humanity’s greatest achievements in terms of science and technology. Its sterling feature is its Redirected Inertia Environmental System, or RIES for short. By having the conically shaped station rotate around its main axis, centripetal forces are naturally directed against the outer walls. The RIES, through a series of Newton Chambers, accumulates these forces and diverts them downward, creating an artificial gravity throughout the station that is not only identical to that of the Earth, but also distributed among the decks equally.”

“The RIES are all interconnected and hardwired into Gateway Station’s primary systems, fueled by the station’s three fusion reactor columns. Caesar has no direct control over the station’s gravity, as there is no need – as long as the station spins, gravity remains a constant.”

“Fascinating! And just in time, the shuttle is about to dock with the station. Now, be sure to remain in your seats and the restraints will do the rest in case we go through some turbulence. Once we’re docked, simply take your luggage and carry-on, exit through the airlocks at the front and then meet with your teachers or guides. Thanks for flying with us, and welcome to Gateway Station!”

