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Cape Canaveral Air Force Station

Citrus groves along the sandy shores of Florida's 'Space Coast' share the land with groves of launch complexes - towering structures whose fruit is the knowledge gained through the exploration of space. The Banana River, which separates Cape Canaveral from Merritt Island, appears in the lower right. In the upper right an enormous cruise ship can be seen exiting Port Canaveral, America's busiest cruise port, probably on its way to an adventure somewhere in the Caribbean. A runway, oriented to take advantage of the prevailing offshore winds, sits directly center.

Dozens of these storied launch sites have come and gone since the U.S. decided to challenge its terrestrial constraints in the early 1950s. Some have been modified over the years to support the rapidly-evolving needs of next generation launch vehicles, while many others were demolished entirely to make way for new facilities. A few have been set aside as historical landmarks, including LC-34, the site of the tragic Apollo 1 fire which claimed the lives of three astronauts in 1967.

Kennedy Space Center (KSC), where the Apollo Saturn V and Space Shuttle launches took place, is actually separate from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station (CCAFS) and just out of frame in this image. KSC is primarily a civilian facility, while CCAFS is primarily military.

Today the U.S. has lots of active launch sites in places like California, New Mexico, Nevada, Virginia, and Alaska. Many more are operated by spacefaring nations around the world.



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