

Port of Galveston Streamlines Port Operations with NetSuite + Harbour Mastery Maritime ERP



Cloud-based Harbour Mastery and Oracle NetSuite ERP transformed Port of Galveston's cruise, cargo, ground transportation, fishing fleet, and real estate operations and unified their eCommerce operations.

Introduction

Located at the entrance to Galveston Bay and the Houston Ship Channel, the Port of Galveston is Texas's only cruise home-port and a vital Gulf gateway for passengers and international trade. In 2024, it welcomed over 1.5 million cruise passengers—and forecasts more than 1.75 million in 2025—making it the fourth-busiest cruise port in the U.S., with ambitions to break into the top three. Simultaneously, its 840-acre complex handles roll-on/roll-off cargo, dry bulk, refrigerated fruit, export grain, and general and project cargo on Galveston Island. At the same time, Pelican Island hosts ship and rig repair plus liquid bulk operations, truly living up to its “Port of Everything” moniker.

As the port embarks on a new chapter—capping off a \$156 million investment in its fourth cruise terminal later this year—the leadership continues to reduce its fragmented systems and streamline new operations.

At the same time, customer demand for 24/7 working relationships has been driving the port towards new eCommerce solutions.

The Challenge: Rising Complexity

In 2017, Port Leadership identified challenges to be overcome as they searched for a new ERP solution:

“Our diverse and unintegrated legacy systems had become too complex to manage operations, transactions, and accounting efficiently,” noted Mark Murchison, CFO.

Managing revenue, purchasing, payroll, and lease billing across four platforms meant endless spreadsheet workarounds. Meanwhile, cruise parking, tariff negotiations, cargo reservations, and real estate billing all lived in silos—limiting visibility and slowing decision-making.

The Solution: A Maritime-Built ERP Inside NetSuite

After reviewing multiple vendors, Port leadership chose Oracle NetSuite OneWorld paired with Harbour

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Rodger Rees

Port Director & CEO | Port of Galveston

Mastery's i-Seaports for NetSuite—a native maritime suite of modules seamlessly built inside NetSuite to automate:

- **Agent Services:** 24/7 online reservation and service-requests management by the Operations Team
- **Vessel & Cargo Logistics:** Unified reservation entry and comprehensive financial processing
- **Cruise & Passenger Logistics:** Digital scheduling, boarding-bridge coordination and passenger-parking workflows
- **Real Estate Property Management:** Automated, recurring billing for leases, docks and parking
- **Trade Contracts Management:** Real-time tracking of complex tariff and service agreements

“The adoption of NetSuite OneWorld and Harbour Mastery's i-Seaports came at a critical juncture for initiating our Strategic Master Plan,” reflects Rodger Rees, CEO and Port Director.

“We wanted a cloud-based anywhere/anytime ERP system to position us for growth and diversity in the future,” explains Rodger Rees, Port Director & CEO. “It's cloud-based and 24/7 accessible from all our devices, easily customizable, and gives us a platform for integrating other solutions down the road.”

Implementation: Phased for Speed and Impact

The port adopted a two-phase rollout to minimize risk and deliver immediate value:

Mark Muchison notes: “We designed Phase I to get all revenue generation, purchasing, and accounting integrated, and other modules in place for Phase II,” says Murchison. “That approach let us go live quickly and see ROI from day one.”

1. **Phase I (Core Operations):** Integrated cruise and cargo reservations, tariff and trade agreement management, service-delivery workflows, and automated billing.
2. **Phase II (Support Functions):** Rolled out real estate recurrent billing, CRM-style parking

reservations, payroll, and HR modules—eliminating manual entry and external portals.

Later, a third phase was added to take advantage of the NetSuite Suite Commerce real-time services to clients of the port online 24/7.

3. **Phase III: (24/7 Smart Port):** Galveston engaged Harbour Mastery to implement Oracle NetSuite SuiteCommerce solutions to achieve smart port - 24/7 online services for:

- a. **Ground transportation** providers serving its cruise and cargo terminals,
- b. **Real estate tenants** leasing and renting port properties,
- c. **Home-ported fishing fleet and party boats** operating daily
- d. **SMP Long Term Parking Tenants** registration and monthly billing

Cruise Parking Tenant Revenue is now allocated within NetSuite by Harbour Mastery to specific cruise vessel calls and parking facilities, and details monthly income analytics for parking performance and profitability at a granular level across 12 parking facilities. This enhanced visibility was introduced after the port implemented a third-party cashless online parking reservation system.

The Net-result of Phase III is that Port clients can now see their accounts, print reports, pay their bills, download documents, and make service requests at their convenience with 24/7 access.

Results: Tangible Gains Across Every Operation

1. **Cargo & Cruise Billing**

“We have achieved better management of our complex tariff system—reaching 80 percent coverage in Phase I versus barely 30 percent under our old setup,” reports Brett Milutin, Director of Cargo & Cruise Operations. In Phase II, the port anticipates hitting 95%.

“Our diverse and unintegrated legacy systems had become too complex to manage operations, transactions, and accounting efficiently. We now have a single source of truth for vessel calls and cargo services that saves us time and money.”

Mark Murchison
CFO | Port of Galveston

2. Streamlined Workflows

- **One-Click Reservations → Ready-to-Bill:** Cruise rotations and cargo bookings feed directly into the A/R dashboard.
- **Automated Approvals:** Quality checks and CFO sign-off flow seamlessly before invoice generation.
- **Digital Document Attachments:** Manifests and service records attach to voyage numbers, eliminating paper.

3. Simplified Ground Transportation

Over 200 taxi, limo, and shuttle operators now process port access fees for drop-offs and pickups through a POS-integrated portal that posts deposits directly and links transactions to specific sailings—cutting manual entry by 90%.

4. Real Estate Recurring Billing

The i-Seaports Real Estate module automates monthly invoicing for piers, warehouses, long- and short-term leases, marina slips, and the new 1,600-space garage—freeing finance teams from manual rent tracking.

5. Operational Benefits to Date

- **Intuitive, Browser-based System:** “Anywhere, all-the-time mobile access boosts productivity,” notes Rees.
- **Centralized Data & Fewer Errors:** “A single source of truth for vessel calls and cargo services saves us time and expense we can reinvest in marketing,” adds Milutin.
- **Faster Reporting:** Automated workflows cut billing cycles by days and deliver real-time financial visibility.
- **Scalable Platform:** “NetSuite and i-Seaports give us the flexibility to meet our 20-year Strategic Master Plan,” concludes Rees.

Looking Ahead: Cruising Toward Growth

As the Port of Galveston continues to grow, Harbour Mastery’s i-Seaports for NetSuite lays the foundation for future innovation and efficiency. New functionality and process improvements are on the horizon, all designed to help the port manage increasing volumes, streamline operations, and support exceptional client service.

Some of the upcoming improvements include:

- **Integrated Labor Management:** Migrate to NetSuite’s Workforce and Field Services Management to centralize time, attendance, and PTO tracking, enhancing workforce visibility and control.
- **Advanced Operations Work Logs:** Implement detailed work logs that tie every billable activity to resources, equipment, and materials for improved accountability and billing accuracy.
- **Expanded Agent Services:** Extend the Berth Request system to vessel agents, creating a seamless workflow for berth management across all operational teams.
- **Boarding-Bridge Integration:** Integrate boarding-bridge systems to further reduce manual entry and increase operational efficiency.

With NetSuite + Harbour Mastery’s i-Seaports as its backbone, the Port of Galveston is ready to support record-breaking cruise volumes, optimize cargo throughput, and expand real estate operations—seamlessly. As the new Cruise Terminal 16 prepares to welcome MSC Seascope and Norwegian ships, the port’s unified ERP ensures every new vessel call, parking reservation, and lease agreement flows through a single source of truth—fueling efficiency, accuracy, and growth for years to come.

Customers

