



Gateway Express Car Wash Releases First-Timer?s Guide to Automatic Tunnel Washes for Riverside Drivers

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For many drivers, the first trip through an automatic car wash comes with a few nerves: the rumble of the conveyor, the wall of foam, and the worry that something might scratch the paint or go wrong partway through the tunnel. Gateway Express Car Wash, which operates an express tunnel wash at 3751 Van Buren Boulevard, has released a step-by-step guide explaining what happens during an automatic wash and what first-time customers, new car owners, and electric vehicle drivers should do before, during, and after the ride through.

The topic draws steady interest online. Keyword data from Semrush for the U.S. market, retrieved in October 2026, estimates that the phrase "how to go through a car wash" is searched about 1,000 times a month, while questions about whether car washes damage or scratch a vehicle are searched roughly 2,900 times a month combined. Newer vehicles add another layer of questions. In a January 20, 2026 announcement, the California Energy Commission reported that zero-emission vehicles accounted for 18.9% of new car sales in California in the fourth quarter of 2025, and many of those vehicles have settings that affect how they behave in an automatic wash.

An express tunnel wash takes about three minutes at Gateway Express Car Wash, and the driver does not steer at any point. The driver stays inside the vehicle with the doors and windows closed while a conveyor moves the car through foam, light touch scrubbing, rinsing, and drying stages.

The visit starts at the entrance, where the driver chooses a wash package. A team member then checks the vehicle before it moves forward and guides the driver into position on the conveyor, so there is no need to line up the wheels alone. Drivers who are new to automatic washes are encouraged to tell the team member at the entrance, who can walk through each step before the wash begins.

Before reaching the entrance, a few minutes of preparation help the wash go smoothly. Drivers should close all windows and the sunroof, lower or remove any antenna that does not retract on its own, and remove bike racks, cargo carriers, and other items mounted on the outside of the vehicle. Folding in the side mirrors, on vehicles that allow it, adds extra clearance. Drivers with lifted trucks, dual rear wheels, oversized tires, or aftermarket exterior accessories should ask a team member before entering the tunnel.

Newer vehicles may need one or two settings changed. Rain-sensing windshield wipers should be switched off so they do not activate in the spray, and automatic brake-hold features should be turned off so the car can roll freely on the conveyor. Some electric vehicles include a dedicated setting. Tesla, for example, offers a Car Wash Mode that closes the windows, locks the charge port, disables the automatic wipers, and allows the car to roll in neutral through a conveyor wash. Because procedures differ by make and model, drivers of electric, hybrid, and other late-model vehicles should follow the instructions in their owner's manual.

Once the car is on the conveyor, the driver's role is limited. Drivers follow the team member's directions and the posted signs, which at conveyor washes generally involve shifting into neutral, taking hands off the steering wheel, and keeping feet off the pedals while the conveyor carries the vehicle through the tunnel. At the exit, drivers wait for the signal to proceed, shift back into drive, and pull forward.

Concerns about scratches are among the most common questions from first-time customers. Gateway Express Car Wash uses a light touch system, in which soft cleaning material works together with foam and soap to loosen road film and grime. Its higher wash packages add wash-applied protectants, including sealer wax, a ceramic product, and a graphene product. These treatments are applied during the wash and provide a temporary layer of shine and water beading. They are not the same as professionally installed paint coatings and are designed to be refreshed with regular washing.

After the wash, many customers use the location's free vacuum stations and floor mat cleaning machines to

finish the interior. Every wash includes a dashboard wipe and an air freshener. According to the company's published mission statement, Gateway Express Car Wash aims to provide a fast, clean car wash experience with friendly, attentive service so that customers feel confident in the care their vehicle receives.

As of October 8, 2026, Gateway Express Car Wash's Riverside location held an average rating of 4.8 stars across 61 reviews on its Google Business Profile, with reviewers frequently mentioning staff friendliness and the cleanliness of the facility.

Single washes at the location range from \$12 to \$25 across four packages. The Unlimited Wash Club, a monthly membership that covers unlimited washes at a chosen package level, ranges from \$22.95 to \$39.95 per month. Current hours, prices, and membership details are posted at gatewaycw.com/riverside, and first-time customers with questions can call the team at (951) 977-9900 before their visit.

Gateway Express Car Wash operates express tunnel car washes in Riverside and Long Beach, California. Both locations offer four single-wash packages, Unlimited Wash Club memberships, free vacuum stations, fleet accounts, gift cards, and community fundraising programs. Gateway Express Car Wash is operated by Riverside Express LLC. For more information, visit gatewaycw.com.

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Gateway Express Car Wash

Gateway Express Car Wash is a fast, quality car wash, offering express wash services, unlimited memberships, and premium vehicle care with complimentary vacuums and extras for a shiny finish.

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