

Overview of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is simply paradise, replete with pristine beaches lined with coconut palms, azure oceans and topped off with a gorgeous tropical climate. A Caribbean island with a difference, Puerto Rico's unmistakable Spanish colonial heritage mixes with its status as a United States territory. Its American customs dovetail nicely with its rich traditional Latin American culture, typified by the fact that hamburgers are as endemic as such island dishes as sancocho.

The second thing that makes Puerto Rico different from other Caribbean holiday Meccas is that it remains largely underdeveloped except for its coastal region around the capital, San Juan. The island's beaches are magnificent and mostly non-commercialised, meaning there's a chance for a more rustic island getaway. They're easily reached from San Juan and its myriad large resorts thanks to the island's relatively compact size.

Exploring Puerto Rico's coast and interior is a delight. Roads are excellent and there are numerous interesting attractions and unrivalled experiences, from one of the world's largest radio telescopes to the magical experience of swimming at night among tiny phosphorescent creatures on the offshore island of Vieques.

Puerto Rico, like many other Caribbean islands, was originally inhabited by Taino Indians until the arrival of Christopher Columbus and the instigation of Spanish rule and settlement. The island's capital and larger towns have preserved their Spanish heritage as tourist attractions, full of old charm and interest.

Along with its breathtaking scenery and wonderfully laid-back island atmosphere, Puerto Rico is a hybrid of old and new, which makes it an intriguing cultural destination rather than just another tropical island paradise.

Key Facts

Language:

Spanish and English are the official languages of Puerto Rico.

Passport/Visa:

All passport holders must have an onward or return ticket and documents necessary for further travel. Entry requirements for Puerto Rico are the same as for the United States of America. When arriving from mainland USA there is no immigration control. It is highly recommended that passports have at least six months validity remaining after your intended date of departure from your travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

Currency:

The United States Dollar (USD) is the unit of currency, which is divided into 100 cents. It is often referred to as the 'peso' in Puerto Rico. ATMs and bureaux de change are freely available and all major credit cards and travellers cheques are generally accepted. Banking hours are 9am to 3.30pm.

Electricity:

Electrical current is 120 volts, 60Hz. Two-pin flat attachment plugs are in use.

Travel to Puerto Rico

Overview

Puerto Rico is a paradise in many a tourist's mind, and for good reason. A tropical Caribbean destination with cultural interests and lots of character thrown in, Puerto Rico certainly delivers on all fronts.

For those with a penchant for the outdoors, Puerto Rico will not disappoint. The country makes for a brilliant natural playground, offering beautiful islands, undeveloped beaches, caves, and a mountainous region to explore, as well as quaint villages and towns. Surfing and scuba diving are popular choices in areas such as Vieques's bioluminescent bay or on the western shores, while adventuring through the caves in the Camuy Cave Park is thrilling.

Apart from the obvious sun-soaking at the likes of Isla Verde or the Rincon shoreline, holidaymakers will also get the chance to indulge in Puerto Rico's interesting history. The fortress of San Felipe del Morro, built in 1540, makes for a great cultural excursion.

The historic San Juan, with its fascinating colonial architecture dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries, will delight history lovers. For those looking for art and culture, sculptures are a common sight in San Juan and there are wonderful museums such as Puerto Rico's showcase art gallery, Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico.

Home to a diverse and vibrant nightlife scene, as well as many fine restaurants offering memorable fusion cuisines, a night out in Puerto Rico's San Juan will offer tourists some good fun and fantastic gastronomy. What's more, the tropical temperatures in Puerto Rico mean that visitors can enjoy its offerings all year round.

Climate in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico enjoys a warm, tropical climate with temperatures of around 82°F (27°C) throughout the year. The temperature in the south is usually a few degrees higher than the north and temperatures in the central interior mountains are always cooler than the rest of the island.

The dry season is usually from November to May but short showers can be expected throughout the year. The hurricane season is between June and November, but generally there is plenty of warning.

Health Notes when travelling to Puerto Rico

There are no vaccination certificates required for travel to Puerto Rico. Cases of dengue fever occur annually and mosquito protection measures are essential, while it's best to drink bottled water to avoid stomach upsets. Medical services are good but can be expensive so travel insurance is advised.

Safety Notes when travelling to Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is still recovering from Hurricane María with regular power and communication outages and unstable buildings.

Visits to Puerto Rico are usually trouble-free but travellers should take sensible precautions to avoid petty theft.

Many travel and health authorities classify Puerto Rico as having a high risk of Zika virus transmission. Visitors are advised to seek advice from health professionals before travel.

Customs in Puerto Rico

Social etiquette in Puerto Rico is typically Latin American, with some North American influences such as a stronger sense of female independence, and a toning-down of the machismo ideal. Western visitors to the country should feel comfortable in most social situations.

Hygiene, cleanliness, and personal appearance are viewed as matters of self-respect, so travellers who've been on the road for a little while might consider neatening up their beards or trimming their hair, especially if they want to make a good first impression.

A final, important aspect of Puerto Rican social life, is the concept of *relajo*. Generally shy of direct confrontation and open criticism, *relajo* refers to the gentle, joking manner in which Puerto Ricans will bring up uncomfortable issues around each other. Visitors should be aware of this technique, as they may, on occasion, be required to read between the lines to discover what locals are really trying to express.

Duty Free in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico's customs regulations are the same as those for the United States. Visitors over 21 may bring in the following items without paying duty: 200 cigarettes or 100 cigars or 2kg of tobacco; 1 litre of alcohol; and gifts valued up to US\$100.

There is a long list of restricted and prohibited items which may not be imported or imported only under license, ranging from fireworks and matches to pre-Columbian sculpture and Cuban cigars. If in doubt, consult your nearest US Embassy for advice. Any merchandise from embargoed countries (Afghanistan, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Serbia and Montenegro and the Sudan) may not be brought onto US soil.

Doing Business in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory although the resemblance is closer to Latin America. English is understood by many on the island, but Spanish may also be the language in which business is conducted. Dress codes will vary according to different sectors, but suits are favoured on very formal occasions. Shaking hands is common for both men and women. Business hours are generally 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, with an hour taken at lunch.

Communication in Puerto Rico

The international access code for Puerto Rico is +1 787 and +1 939. The outgoing code is 011 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 01144 for the United Kingdom). The outgoing code is not needed for calling the US, Canada, and most of the Caribbean. Mobile phones work throughout the island and local operators use CDMA networks that are not compatible with GSM phones, as used outside North America. Internet cafes are available in most towns and resorts.

Tipping in Puerto Rico

Some restaurants and hotels automatically add a 10-17 percent service charge to the bill. If not, a 15 percent tip is expected. Taxi drivers and bar staff also expect tips.

Passport/Visa Note

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Entry Requirements

Entry requirements for Americans:

Valid passport or passport replacing documents are required. Visa not required.

Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadian citizens require a passport valid for period of intended stay. No visa is required.

Entry requirements for UK nationals:

British citizens require a passport valid for period of intended stay. A visa is not required for stays of up to 90 days.

Entry requirements for Australians:

Australian citizens require a passport valid for period of intended stay. A visa is not required for stays of up to 90 days.

Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish citizens require a passport valid for the period of intended stay. No visa is required for stays of up to 90 days.

Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

New Zealand nationals require a passport valid for the period of intended stay. A visa is not required for touristic stays up to 90 days.

Entry requirements for South Africans:

South Africans must hold a passport valid for period of intended stay and a visa is also required, unless holding a valid US visa.

Tourist Offices

The Puerto Rican Tourist Company, Old San Juan: +1 787 721 2400 or <http://www.gotopuertorico.com>

Puerto Rico Embassies

In Canada:

United States Embassy, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 238 5335.

In the United Kingdom:

United States Embassy, London, United Kingdom: +44 (0)20 7499 9000.

In Australia:

United States Embassy, Canberra, Australia: +61 (0)2 6214 5600.

In Ireland:

United States Embassy, Dublin, Ireland: +353 (0)1 668 8777.

In New Zealand:

United States Embassy, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 (0)4 462 6000.

In South Africa:

United States Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 431 4000.

Foreign Embassies in Puerto Rico

Canadian Embassy

Canadian Embassy, Washington DC, United States (also responsible for Puerto Rico): +1 (202) 682 1740.

British Embassy

British Consulate, San Juan: +1 787 850 2400.

Australian Embassy

Australian Embassy, Washington DC, United States (also responsible for Puerto Rico): +1 202 797 3000.

Irish Embassy

Irish Embassy, Washington DC, United States (also responsible for Puerto Rico): +1 202 462 3939.

New Zealand Embassy

New Zealand Embassy, Washington DC, United States (also responsible for Puerto Rico): +1 202 328 4800.

South African Embassy

South African Embassy, Washington DC, United States (also responsible for Puerto Rico): +1 202 232 4400.

Currency

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Exchange rate for 1 USD - U.S. Dollar

0.00 BMD Bermudan Dollar	0.93 EUR Euro	0.80 GBP U.K. Pound Sterling	152.99 JPY Japanese Yen	1.37 CAD Canadian Dollar	0.91 CHF Swiss Franc
1.52 AUD Australian Dollar	39.40 UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia	443.91 KZT Kazakhstani Tenge	93,075.00 LBP Lebanese Pound	4.86 LYD Libyan Dinar	6.86 BOB Bolivian Boliviano
0.00 NPR Nepalese Rupee	0.00 OMR Omani Rial	0.00 QAR Qatari Rial	1.35 SGD Singapore Dollar	10.82 SEK Swedish Krona	0.00 TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar
0.00 VEF Venezuelan Bolivar	58.11 DOP Dominican Peso	0.00 HRK Croatian Kuna	16.95 MXN Mexican Peso	610.53 XOF West African CFA Franc	0.00 PGK Papua New Guinean kina
0.00 BSD Bahamian Dollar	0.00 FJD Fiji Dollar	0.00 HNL Honduran Lempira	133.87 DZD Algerian Dinar	0.00 MMK Myanma Kyat	0.00 BWP Botswana Pula
3.72 PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol	938.44 CLP Chilean Peso	386.84 AMD Armenia Dram	23.29 CZK Czech Koruna	17.63 MDL Moldova Lei	139.89 ISK Icelandic Krona
12,582.40 UZS Uzbekistan Sum	3.72 ILS Israeli New Sheqel	0.71 JOD Jordanian Dinar	0.00 KWD Kuwaiti Dinar	38.15 UYU Uruguayan Peso	0.00 MUR Mauritian Rupee
0.00 NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba	10.88 NOK Norwegian Krone	4.03 PLN Polish Zloty	3.75 SAR Saudi Riyal	0.00 LKR Sri Lanka Rupee	36.79 THB Thai Baht
3.66 AED U.A.E Dirham	5.09 BRL Brazilian Real	4.63 RON Romanian New Leu	7.81 HKD Hong Kong Dollar	610.53 XAF Central African CFA Franc	25,405.70 VND Vietnamese Dong
878.36 ARS Argentine Peso	0.00 XCD East Caribbean Dollar	0.00 GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal	10.06 MAD Moroccan Dirham	0.00 BHD Bahrain Dinar	1.00 PAB Panamanian Balboa
1.70 AZN Azerbaijan Manat	3,920.00 COP Colombian Peso	88.42 KGS Kyrgyzstan Som	362.00 HUF Hungarian Forint	10.89 TJS Tajikistan Ruble	16,073.70 IDR Indonesian Rupiah
47.95 EGP Egyptian Pound	1,358.84 KRW South Korean Won	7,456.52 PYG Paraguayan Guaraní	4.74 MYR Malaysian Ringgit	508.31 CRC Costa Rican Colón	1.67 NZD New Zealand Dollar
277.87 PKR Pakistani Rupee	91.39 RUB Russian Rouble	18.51 ZAR South African Rand	3.13 TND Tunisian Dinar	0.00 BBD Barbadian Dollar	1.82 BGN Bulgarian Lev
32.33 TRY Turkish Lira	57.28 PHP Philippine Peso	32.31 TWD New Taiwan Dollar	1,164.84 NGN Nigerian Naira	0.00 XPF CFP Franc	0.00 GHS Ghanaian Cedi
0.00 JMD Jamaican Dollar	0.00 ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder	0.00 BND Brunei Dollar	108.90 RSD Serbian Dinar	7.24 CNY Chinese Yuan	6.94 DKK Danish Krone
3.49 TMT New Turkmenistan Manat	83.42 INR Indian Rupee				

Port of Call - Old San Juan

San Juan is the most important cruise hub in the Caribbean, welcoming over a million cruise passengers yearly. The modern side of Puerto Rico's capital sits comfortably alongside its five centuries of history as one of the oldest cities in the western hemisphere. Passengers delight in the magical Old Town, with its many outstanding restaurants and unique shops. New San Juan also has its charms, and the natural attractions on the city's periphery are also worth exploring. Cruise ships dock in Old San Juan, although during busy periods overflow ships dock at Frontier Pier or Pan-American Pier, both around 15 minutes away from the Old City. The port facilities are outstanding, allowing for a seamless transition between cruise ship and city attractions. Over 28 cruise companies are based in San Juan, making it the largest home-base port in the world.

Shopping in Old San Juan

San Juan is a bargain centre plus no tax is levied on purchases. Plazas Las Americas is the largest mall in the Caribbean with over three miles (4.5km) of shops. The Condado and Isla Verde neighbourhoods have good designer boutiques, while the Old Town has numerous family-run stores selling traditional crafts such as the collectible *santos* (carved religious idols).

Best Buy: Bacardi rum, Alta Rica coffee beans, *mundillo* hand-crafted lace

Dining in Old San Juan

Escambrón - a local classic off the beaten track; near hotel Normandie Barrachina - inventor of the Piña Colada; great Puerto Rican food Morton's - one of the best steakhouses in the world

Best Dish: Buttered *mallorcas* at La Bombanera

Overview of the Attractions in Puerto Rico

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Public Holidays in Puerto Rico

	2020	2021
Memorial Day	Sat. May 25	Fri. May 31
Easter	Fri. April 12	Thu. April 4
Emancipation Day	Fri. March 22	Fri. March 22
New Year's Day	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
Martin Luther King Jr Day	Sat. January 20	Thu. January 18
President's Day	Sat. February 17	Thu. February 15
Epiphany	Sat. January 6	Sat. January 6
USA Independence Day	Thu. July 4	Thu. July 4
Constitution Day	Thu. July 25	Thu. July 25
Labour Day	Sat. September 7	Fri. September 6
Columbus	Sat. October 12	Fri. October 11
Veterans Day	Mon. November 11	Mon. November 11
Discovery Day	Tue. November 19	Tue. November 19
Thanksgiving Day	Tue. November 26	Mon. November 25
Christmas Day	Wed. December 25	Wed. December 25