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# PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions  
to help you put together your perfect trip

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# UNDERSTAND PUERTO RICO

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you  
can make sense of what you see

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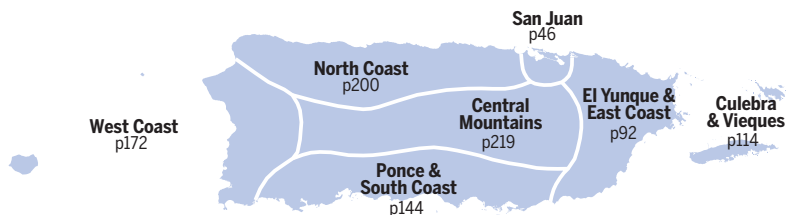
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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**Nate Cavalieri**  
**Beth Kohn**



**Look out for these icons:**



Our author's  
recommendation



A green or  
sustainable option



No payment  
required

# On the Road

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# › Puerto Rico

19°N

67°W

66°30'W

ATLANTIC  
OCEAN

## Lago Dos Bocas

Placid mountain lake area (p207)

## Rincón

Global surfing destination (p174)

## Jayuya

Fresh coffee and stunning mountain views (p230)

18°30'N

Punta Borinquen

Punta Gorda

Punta Higüero

Rincón

Mayagüez

Boquerón

Cabo Rojo (Punta Jagüey)

Sierra Bermeja

La Parguera

Guánica

Punta Brea

Bosque Estatal de Guánica

Bahía de Tullaboa

Guayanilla

Adjuntas

Utuado

Lares

San Sebastián

San Germán

Sabana Grande

Maricao

Montañas de Uroyán

Montañas de Jaicoa

Rio Grande de Añasco

Rio Culebrinas

Rio Guajatao

Rio Camuy

Rio Indio

Rio Grande de Manatí

Rio Cibuco

Manatí

Ciales

Vega Baja

Puerto del Tortuguero

Punta Las Tunas

Barceloneta

Arecibo

Puerto Arecibo

Camuy

Isabela

Punta Sardina

Hatillo

18°N

17°30'N

67°W

66°30'W

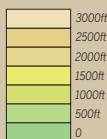
## Bosque Estatal de Guánica

The island's best mountain biking route (p165)

## Ponce

A wealth of top museums (p145)

## ELEVATION



# Top Experiences >



# itineraries

*Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travelers.*



## Seven Days Essential Puerto Rico

Touch down in **San Juan** and get to the beach, either Isla Verde, Condado or Ocean Park. Spend the next day weaving through Old San Juan and posing by the ramparts of El Morro. Take a quick nap, then hit Calle Fortaleza for dinner, drinks and salsa.

Start early on day three and go west, watching the waves explode over the breakers at **Playa Mar Chiquita** and winding up the mountain road to the **Observatorio de Arecibo**. Bunk nearby at the restored plantation of **Hacienda Gripiñas**.

Next morning, wind your way along the Ruta Panorámica, heading up toward Puerto Rico's tallest peak in the **Reserva Forestal Toro Negro**, before making your way to historic **Ponce** to dine and sleep. The next day, head east to sample smoky pork at one of the famed roadside *lechonerías* (eateries specializing in suckling pig) in **Guavate**, then continue east to sleep at a beach house in **Yabucoa**. The cool, green interior of **El Yunque** starts day six, which ends on the white sand of **Playa Luquillo**.

Return to San Juan via **Loiza Aldea**, where you can buy a *vejigante* (Puerto Rican mask) before passing the evening hitting the tables of Isla Verde and Condado in the capital.



## Two Weeks The Grand Tour

Spend four days in **San Juan** and surrounding areas, getting plenty of beach time and making sure to see Old San Juan. Spend at least one night listening to live salsa and taking in the dancefloor action at Nuyorican Café, the best live music club on the island. Head for **El Yunque** for a day of hiking, then spend the night in **Fajardo** and experience the wonder of the bioluminescent bay.

The next morning head east aboard the ferry for **Culebra** – the quieter, more beautiful and less-developed cousin to Vieques. The next few days will go by too quickly, snorkeling and swimming at some of the best beaches in the world, and taking a charter trip off to the abandoned white-sand paradise of Isla Culebrita.

Now that your batteries are fully recharged, it's time to do some exploring. Make for the mainland and follow the quiet road past the sleepy sugar towns of the south coast toward **Ponce**. Spend a couple days exploring the colonial buildings and excellent food in the so-called 'Pearl of the South.' You can visit La Guancha Paseo Tablado, Centro Ceremonial Indígena de Tibes or make a short detour up the mountain on the **Ruta Panorámica** to do some hiking and sip the island's famous coffee.

Definitely allow one day (preferably with an early morning start so you can be done by mid-afternoon when the sun's at its hottest) for the rugged, bone-dry forest of **Bosque Estatal de Guánica**. After hiking, drive scenic Rte 333 along the south coast and stop to swim at tiny mangrove-enclosed beaches and spend the night in an isolated resort.

You can either spend the day swimming the turquoise water of Playa Santa or head right to the final destination, **Rincón**. The last few days of the trip will be spent surfing (or taking lessons) on perfect waves and soaking up the island's best sunsets with an icy rum drink in hand. Complete the circuit, breaking up the drive with a stop at the **Observatorio de Arecibo**, before arriving back in San Juan for your final evening, dining in style at one of Old San Juan's fine restaurants.





Five to 10 Days

## An Escape to Culebra & Vieques

After you land in the capital of **San Juan**, check out the history on offer in the seven square blocks that make up Old San Juan, then hightail it out of town for your island break. A trip to the islands of **Vieques** displays Puerto Rico in its best light: perfect sand, laid-back atmosphere and ramshackle nightlife. Take a scenic flight to leave the capital. It's startlingly cheap and saves you the hassle and expense of renting a car.

Once you touch down in **Isabel Segunda**, pick up your scooter and zip right over to **Esperanza**, the perfect place to get acquainted with the island's beautiful beaches, do a little shopping and slow down to the pace of the tropics. Spend the next few days in Esperanza, spending at least one night in the magically glowing phosphorescent waters at **Bahía Mosquito**. When you tire of lounging around on the beach – and this could be as soon as never – return to Isabel Segunda. Spend a sunny morning out at Fortín Conde de Mirasol, take a quick dip and ditch your flip flops for the nightlife at Al's Mar Azul.

If you haven't quite satisfied your desire for the island life and want to unplug even more, take a ferry back to the mainland and another out to **Culebra** (ferry service between the islands has been suspended). The smaller island just to the north of Vieques is known by Puerto Ricans as a more laid-back alternative to hard-partying Vieques. Culebra doesn't have much by way of fancy resorts and clubs; the focus here is on the world-class beaches, reef snorkeling and wildlife refuges. With few cars on the island and long, deserted stretches of sand, Culebra offers the serenity that can be all too rare on the crowded Puerto Rican mainland. Visitors can soak in the expansive views of the ocean, breathe the fresh island breeze and explore sandy coves. After dark, the little harbor comes alive with affable expats whose love of karaoke crooning is only rivaled by their thirst for cold cans of Medalla. After finding the lolling rhythm of the relaxed place, catch a short flight back to San Juan (its only slightly more expensive than land options) and gape at the aerial views of the rainforest.



## Five Days Exploring the Mountains

Head south from **San Juan** to **Bosque Estatal de Carite** on Hwy 184 for a morning of beautiful hiking and swimming in icy pools (in non-holiday periods Carite is almost empty). On your way, grab lunch from one of the *lechoneras* along the highway near **Guavate**. Head to **Aibonito** next and try to see both coasts of the island from the Mirador La Piedra Degetau.

The next day wind your way west along the island's windiest roads toward the **Reserva Forestal Toro Negro** where you can rouse a park ranger (if you're lucky) and set off on a couple of short hikes, or try your hand at mounting the highest peak in Puerto Rico.

Follow Rte 144 to the mountain town of **Jayuya**, where you can visit the surreal Museo del Cemí and stock up on coffee at the Hacienda San Pedro. Sleep in **Adjuntas** and – if your nerves can handle more blind corners – head north to **Lares** for the island's best ice cream. The final stop on this surreal roller-coaster ride is the **Observatorio de Arecibo**, before heading down the mountain back to the capital.

## Seven Days Puerto Rico's North Coast

**San Juan** makes a great hub for the first few days of exploring. Old San Juan, the beaches on Isla Verde and the SoFo dining district are vibrant introductions to Puerto Rican culture and history. A great day trip heading east will take in a wild diversity of island ecology at **Las Cabezas de San Juan Reserva Natural 'El Faro'** and allows time to pick up a *vejigante* from **Loíza Aldea**. On the third day, head west after breakfast, taking the vine-covered byways along the shore to **Playa Mar Chiquita** and lunch with the locals at a beachside kiosk. Spend the next day underground – either on your own in the rugged caves of **Bosque Estatal de Guajataca** or as part of a tour of the **Cavernas del Río Camuy**. Choose your adventure for your final few days: either the moody breaks of Puerto Rico's *other* surfing capital, **Aguadilla**, or the chirping coquí frogs and misty mountain fog of a lodge in karst country. Hustle back to San Juan and spend the last night downing mojitos until you get the courage to hit the dancefloor to a soundtrack of live salsa.



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Nate Cavalieri

**Coordinating author, Ponce & South Coast, West Coast, North Coast, Central Mountains, Plan Your Trip & Understand Puerto Rico chapters** Nate researched the previous edition of Puerto Rico entirely on bicycle, but didn't have the chutzpah to pedal over the Central Mountains this time around. The sting from this defeat was soothed by exploring the beguiling diversity of Puerto Rican pork dishes. His favorite experiences while researching this edition included scanning

the waters for manatee from the lighthouse at Cabo Rojo, sharing a Medalla with an on-duty cop at a beach bonfire in Rincón and getting a high five from Sammy, the dancing bull mascot of the San Juan Senadores. Nate's authored a handful of titles for Lonely Planet on California, the western United States, Latin America and international volunteering. After a yearlong trip around the world in 2010, he gets a little taste of Puerto Rico every day while walking through his neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York.

Read more about Nate at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/natecavalieri](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/natecavalieri)



### Beth Kohn

**San Juan, El Yunque & East Coast, Culebra & Vieques** Beth has loved Puerto Rico since her first trip here, when she catapulted into a shimmering bioluminescent bay and stayed up for hours listening to the coquí frogs. Her favorite experience this time was tramping up the south road of El Yunque until the jungle swallowed the pavement and her shoes were inundated with water. Next time she'll take

some rubber boots and keep going. An author of many Lonely Planet guides, including *Mexico and South America on a Shoestring*, you can see more of her written and photographic work at [www.bethkohn.com](http://www.bethkohn.com).

Read more about Beth at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/bethkohn](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/bethkohn)

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