



Ponce & South Coast

POP 527,450

Includes »

Ponce.....	146
Around Ponce.....	156
East of Ponce.....	158
Arroyo.....	158
Guayama.....	158
Bahía de Jobos.....	159
Playa Salinas.....	160
Coamo.....	161
West of Ponce.....	162
Yauco & Around.....	162
Guánica & Around.....	163
Bosque Estatal de Guánica.....	165
La Parguera.....	167

Best Places to Eat

- » La Casa de Los Pastelillos (p159)
- » Archipielago (p153)
- » Restaurante La Guardarraya (p163)
- » Alexandra (p165)
- » Aguazul (p170)
- » Café Café (p154)

Best Places to Stay

- » Mary Lee's by the Sea (p164)
- » Copamarina Beach Resort (p165)
- » Ramada Ponce (p153)

Why Go?

The Caribbean-facing south coast offers the chance to unplug, escape the cruise ship crowds and take a DIY journey into Puerto Rico's past.

The proud southern capital of Ponce – the so-called Perla de Sur (Pearl of the South) – stands in elegant disrepair, where haute eateries neighbor slouching colonial facades. Along coastal Hwys 2 and 3, crumbling chimneys of sugar mills stand beside their graying industrial replacements – chemical and pharmaceutical factories. But for all these dichotomies, there's a certain unpolished charm in picturesque southern towns.

The still waters of the south won't compare with the postcard-perfect beaches on the Atlantic, but beyond a typical day at the beach, travelers can kayak the maze of mangroves, hike the arid hills of the dry tropical forest and float in the surreal glow of the Bahía de Fosforescente.

When to Go

With some of the most consistent weather in the world, the dry, sunny climate is always inviting, though the June through August can be blisteringly hot. When school is out during this period, Puerto Rican families fill the sun-washed plazas, wander through colonial buildings and enjoy alfresco dining at the ubiquitous seafood shacks. Even though the arid, breezy atmosphere doesn't change much in winter, the typically languid pace slows to a crawl between September and May, only picking up for local festivals during the extended Christmas holiday.



Ponce & South Coast Highlights

- 1** Fall in love with *Flamingo* June at the **Museo de Arte de Ponce** (p150)
- 2** Stroll the grounds of an immaculately restored coffee plantation at **Hacienda Buena Vista** (p157)
- 3** Connect with the mysterious Taino past, on the ball courts of **Centro Ceremonial Indígena**
- 4** Hike or mountain bike the dusty, birding trails at **Bosque Estatal de Guánica** (p165)
- 5** Stagger down the crooked streets of **La Parguera** (p167) after snorkeling its cays
- 6** Soak at the **Baños de Coamo** (p162), once thought to be the fountain of youth
- 7** Sway on a hammock while lunching on golden, octopus-stuffed pastries at **La Casa de Los Pastelillos** (p159) in Guayama