



# West Coast

POP 364,600

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## Best Places to Eat

- » A 2 Tiempos (p197)
- » Horned Dorset Primavera (p181)
- » La Marea (p192)
- » La Rosa Inglesa/English Rose Inn (p181)
- » E Franco & Co (p186)
- » El Bohío (p194)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Parador Bahía Salinas Beach Resort & Spa (p189)
- » Blue Boy Inn (p179)
- » Villa Vista Puerto (p189)
- » Casa Islena (p179)
- » Horned Dorset Primavera (p180)
- » Centro Vacacional Boquerón (p191)

## Why Go?

Across much of Puerto Rico the most impressive sight is the languid, azure sparkle of ocean, but in the west it's the visceral opposite – a place to get out in the water, paddle like mad and ride one perfect wave after another back toward shore. Its *pièce de résistance* is Rincón, a surfin' safari outpost (named in a Beach Boys song, for goodness' sake!) where grizzled beach bums, moneyed surf junketeers and stoned locals catch waves in the salty dawn and mingle around beach bonfires at twilight.

As well as taking the drop on flawless surf, Porta del Sol (Gateway to the Sun) is a grandiose land of stormy shorelines, low-key resorts and down-to-earth fishing villages, where deep-fried cod fritters from a Caribbean food shack are considered a gourmet meal and the spirit of slacker independence is as mellow as the stunning sunsets are arresting.

## When to Go

Welcome to the endless summer: the west coast is pleasantly hot all year round. It gets heavy rain in late summer and early fall, but otherwise, expect it to be sunny, breezy and around 80°F nearly every day. If you're here to surf, winter is ideal. Cold fronts bring big waves to the western beaches, when average crests of 5ft or 6ft can grow as large as 25ft. In December and February, you may also spot migrating whales offshore. Those who aren't here to ride will find the calmer waters more inviting for swimming and deep-sea fishing in summer.

## History

The consensus is that Columbus first arrived in Puerto Rico in November 1493 and docked somewhere off the west coast (though there is some dispute as to actually *where*). Fifteen years later he was followed by Juan Ponce de León, who landed near Cabo Rojo before heading off north to found the settlement of Caparra. San Germán, the island's second-

oldest city, was founded near Mayagüez in 1511 and moved to its present site in 1573. More recently, the west has spawned many great liberal thinkers including Dr Ramón Emeterio Betances, the inspiration behind the revolutionary Grito de Lares (p245) in 1868. The details of this abortive rebellion were fine-tuned in a series of safe houses on the outskirts of Mayagüez.



## West Coast Highlights

- 1** Surf beside beach bums and vacationing businessmen on the legendary breaks of **Rincón** (p175)
- 2** Peer at the endless sea from the top of the **Los Morrillos Lighthouse** (p188), overlooking Playa Santa
- 3** Wander along the long stretches of sand before bar-hopping down the strip in **Boquerón** (p193)
- 4** Explore historic streets and some of the west's best food in **San Germán** (p195)
- 5** Swim alongside curious manatees at **Playa Santa** (p188)
- 6** Get giddy on **Sangria de Fido** (p186), the local punch of Mayagüez
- 7** Lunch on fresh seafood in **Playa de Joyuda** (p194), Puerto Rico's 'Gourmet Golden Mile'