



Culebra & Vieques

POP 10,350

Includes ➔

Culebra.....	118
Vieques	128

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Zaco's Tacos (p125)
- ➔ El Panino (p125)
- ➔ El Quenepo (p140)
- ➔ Coqui Fire Cafe (p141)
- ➔ Horta's BBQ (p141)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ El Navegante de Culebra (p124)
- ➔ Villa Flamenco Beach (p124)
- ➔ The Lazy Hostel (p137)
- ➔ Casa de Amistad (p138)
- ➔ Hacienda Tamarindo (p139)
- ➔ Malecón House (p138)

Why Go?

Separated from mainland Puerto Rico by an 13km stretch of choppy blue water, the two bejeweled Caribbean havens of Culebra and Vieques have an irresistible charm thanks to mellow locals, laid-back expats and itinerant sailors.

Disembark for a few days and you'll uncover a wealth of surprises – horses roaming free in Vieques, endangered turtles in Culebra – and people who reclaimed their prized islands from the US Navy in 1975 (Culebra) and 2003 (Vieques) after more than 50 years of military occupation.

But it's the beaches that will have you purring with delight. Between them, the two members of the Spanish Virgin Islands may have the greatest variety of truly superb beaches in the Caribbean. Many are deserted, giving you the chance for boundless frolic. Best of all, these two islands have yet to attract mass tourism, so there's nary a golf course, casino or huge resort.

When to Go

The spring shoulder season (April through June) brings picture-perfect weather and fewer travelers. There aren't many discounts on lodging but you'll have less company on the beach; some days, it may just be you and the birds.

The best viewing of the bioluminescent bay in Vieques is during the new moon; some operators don't go out when it's full. From April through June, wildlife fans can volunteer for a turtle-egg protection project on Culebra.

The famous Caribbean trade winds gently buffet these two islands, but it's still warm and balmy just about every day of the year.



Culebra & Vieques Highlights

1 Vieques National Wildlife Refuge (p129)

Reveling in some of the best beaches in the Caribbean where you can find a patch of sand ideal for you.

2 Dewey (p118) Bar-hopping with sailors between the trio of popular nightspots in Culebra's town.

3 Playa Flamenco (p120) Wandering the long crescent of sand at this paradisaical place, where memories of a

military past dissolve in the beautiful waters.

4 Esperanza (p130) Eating, drinking or just chillaxing on the colorful yet laid-back oceanfront 'strip'.

5 Bahía Mosquito (p131) Seeing aquatic stars on a serene and distinctly surreal evening tour of Vieques' Bioluminescent Bay.

6 Playa Brava (p121) Hiking through brush and low forest and being

rewarded with one of Culebra's picture-perfect beaches.

7 Isla Culebrita (p118) Taking a water taxi to this idyllic island of white-sand beaches, tide pools and untouched reefs.

8 Luis Peña Channel Natural Reserve (p120) Plunging in and snorkeling Culebra's vibrant reefs in this natural reserve, easily accessible from Playa Tamarindo.

History

Some 500 years ago the islands east of Puerto Rico, including Culebra and Vieques, were disputed territory between the Taíno

and the Caribs. Groups from both tribes came and went from the islands according to the season – probably to hunt the turtles nesting here. Vieques had more fertile,