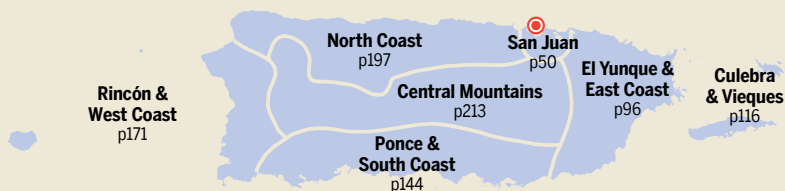




# Puerto Rico



Liza Prado, Luke Waterson

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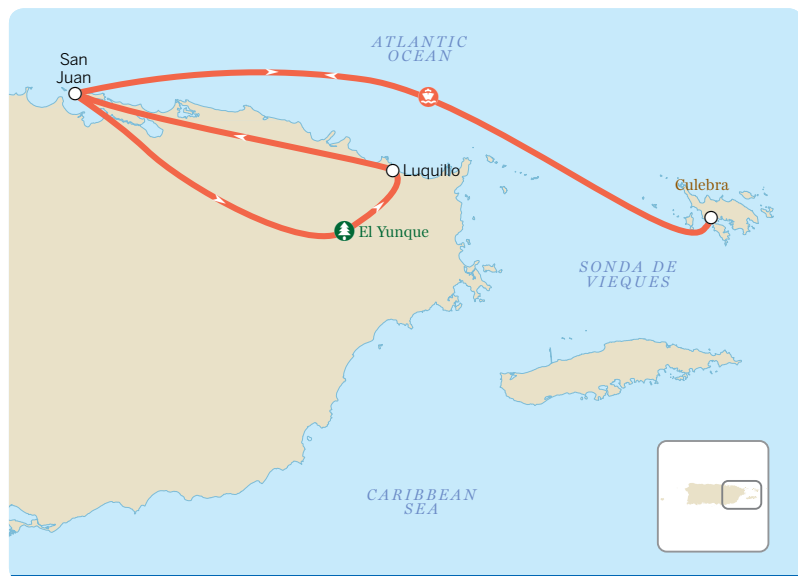
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HOUSE IN GUÁNICA, P163

# Itineraries



3  
DAYS

## San Juan & Around

This 3-day itinerary whisks you into the thick of the action of San Juan, the island's capital. Labyrinthine Old Town gives way to beachy outer neighborhoods and the city is well-located for exploring some of the island's other key draws.

It's easy to get caught up in **San Juan**, one of the Caribbean's most versatile cities. Spend a lazy first day exploring historic Old San Juan, rounding off the sightseeing with the edgy – and tasty – wonders of Santurce in the late afternoon and evening. On day two, make a beeline for one of the urban beaches, such as Playa Isla Grande, and wind up with live music back in Old San Juan at Nuyorican. But there is plenty to see and do just outside the capital that will give you a much broader picture of Puerto Rico's diverse pleasures.

Day three: choice time. Consider joining one of the sailing day trips out to either **Culebra** or **Vieques** where you'll enjoy some sensational snorkeling, or head on a day tour up to the lush rainforest wonders of **El Yunque**. As you drive Hwy 191, you'll climb ever higher into the misty peaks where you can take your pick of waterfalls and nature hikes. Spend the night at a mountain retreat before returning to San Juan via **Luquillo**, with its natural wonders, beaches and scrumptious food stands.

1  
WEEK

## Essential Puerto Rico

This week-long waltz around the island takes you from the capital out along the north coast, then down to the Central Mountains and Puerto Rico's culture-packed second city, Ponce, before spinning you back to San Juan via the tropical rainforest of El Yunque.

Arrive in **San Juan** and get to the beaches, exploring Isla Verde, Condado and Ocean Park. Spend day two weaving through the Unesco treasures of Old San Juan and posing by the ramparts of El Morro. Finish with an evening at Santurce's bars and restaurants.

Go west on day three, stopping first at **Dorado**, where you can play world-class golf or hide out at **Playa Mar Chiquita**, where you can watch waves explode over the coral reefs.

Keep along the coast road to **Arecibo**, a region becoming known for its bombastic monuments. First up, there's the tallest statue in North America, the Birth of the New World Statue. Turn south, winding into the mountains up to **Observatorio de Arecibo**. If you're extraordinarily lucky, this might be the day this mountain-sized icon, the world's largest radio telescope, detects life on another planet. Bunk nearby at the remote **TJ Ranch**.

Next morning, meander south into coffee country around Jayuya and take a tour of the bean-to-cup process at a hacienda here, such as **Hacienda Gripiñas**. Forge your way along the Ruta Panorámica, heading toward Puerto Rico's tallest peak, Cerro de Punta in **Reserva Forestal Toro Negro**. Head to historic **Ponce** to dine and sleep. The next day start slow and enjoy the city's excellent museums, then head east to sample smoky pork at one of the famed roadside *lechonerías* (eateries specializing in suckling pig) in **Guavate**. Continue east to sleep at a beach house in **Yabucoa**. The cool, green interior of **El Yunque** and its magical rainforest starts day six, which finishes on the white sands of **Playa Luquillo**. At night, glide across the glowing waters of the bioluminescent bay at Laguna Grande.

Before returning to San Juan, have a meal from one of the famous *frituitines* (beach kiosks) at Playa Luquillo. Drive back via **Loíza**, where you can buy a *vejigante* (traditional horned mask), then pass the evening wandering the back streets of Old San Juan. Stop for a drink and join locals and other visitors doing just the same.



## Escape to Culebra and Vieques

If you've come to Puerto Rico for dreamy tranquil islands – and everything that they might entail, from sun-worshipping to bioluminescent bay gazing – this itinerary is for you.

After time in the capital of **San Juan**, hightail it out of town for your island break. A trip to the islands of Culebra and 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 affordable and saves you the hassle and expense of getting to the ferries at Fajardo, plus the daredevil approach to Culebra rivals the best thrill ride.

Start in **Culebra**, which doesn't have much in the 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 air and explore beaches, from the renowned Playa Flamenco to the remote and enticing Playa Zoni. Save time for the beautiful snorkeling at Luis Peña Marine Reserve.

After dark, the little harbor at Dewey comes alive with affable expats whose love of karaoke crooning is only rivaled by their thirst for cold cans of Medalla.

Next up is surprising **Vieques**, the larger island just southwest of Culebra. You can take a ferry back to the mainland and another out to Vieques, but flying is vastly quicker and more fun. Once you touch down in **Isabel Segunda**, hang around this atmospheric town for a bit before heading south to **Esperanza**, the perfect place to enjoy the slow pace of the tropics while enjoying some fine places to stay, eat and drink. You may not want to leave. Spend the next few days exploring the wealth of south-coast beaches in the **Vieques National Wildlife Refuge**. You will be hard-pressed to choose your favorite as you marvel at crowd-free coves and bays.

Save one night for the magically glowing waters of the bioluminescent bay, **Bahía Mosquito**, where you can paddle out in a quiet kayak or glide silently in an electric boat.



## The Grand Tour

You won't miss any highlights with this best-of-the-best clockwise circuit from San Juan.

Spend four days in **San Juan** and the 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 dance-floor action at Nuyorican Café, the best live-music club on the island. Head to **El Yunque** for a day of hiking, then spend the night in **Fajardo** and experience the wonder of the bioluminescent bay at Laguna Grande.

The next morning head east aboard the ferry for **Culebra**. 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, get exploring. Make for the mainland and follow quiet roads past the sleepy sugar towns of the south coast toward **Ponce**. Spend a couple of days exploring the colonial buildings and excellent food in the so-called 'Pearl of the South.' Out of the center, you can also visit the impressive indigenous site of Centro Ceremonial Indígena de Tibes or detour up into the Central Mountains to hike and sip the island's famous coffee at dreamy stop-offs along the **Ruta Panorámica**.

Definitely allow one day (preferably with an early start so you can be done by midafternoon when the sun is 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 at **Playa Santa** in Refugio Nacional Cabo Rojo or head straight 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, perhaps with some time spent in nearby **Isabela**. Complete the circuit, breaking up the drive with a stop in the mountains at either the gorgeous waterfalls of **Gozalandia** near San Sebastián or grabbing insights into the stars at **Observatorio de Arecibo**, before arriving back in San Juan for your final evening.

## Off the Beaten Track: Puerto Rico

### BOSQUE ESTATAL DE GUÁNICA

One of the world's most extensive dry forests abuts a superb stretch of forgotten coastline. (p163)

### JAYUYA

This mountain town in a steep-sided valley secretes the island's best coffee haciendas – and, many say, its soul. (p222)

### SAN GERMÁN

The island's second-oldest city (founded 1511) is well preserved and includes one of the oldest surviving churches in the Americas. (p192)



### REFUGIO NACIONAL CABO ROJO

The southernmost extent of Puerto Rico is crowned by its iconic Los Morrillos Lighthouse; nearby is the beautiful beach of Playa Santa. (p191)

### LA PARGUERA

Discover this funky, low-key seaside town with its maze of mangroves wending out to the open ocean, where sublime diving awaits. (p166)

### COAMO

The namesake thermal baths here are linked to Ponce de León's quest for the fountain of youth. (p159)



### BOSQUE ESTATAL DE CARITE

Enjoy beautiful hiking and swim in icy pools that are almost empty for much of the year. On your way, grab lunch from one of the *lechoneras* along the highway near Guavate. (p216)

### HWY 3 SOUTH OF PLAYA HÚCARES

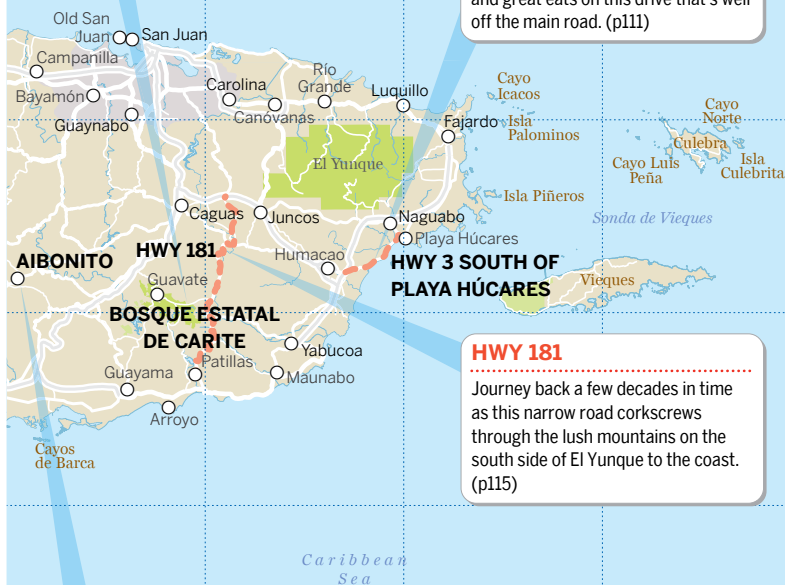
Enjoy low-key beaches, small villages and great eats on this drive that's well off the main road. (p111)

### HWY 181

Journey back a few decades in time as this narrow road corkscrews through the lush mountains on the south side of El Yunque to the coast. (p115)

### AIBONITO

Try to see both coasts of the island from the Mirador La Piedra Degetau before taking in the extraordinary spectacle of Puerto Rico's deepest canyon, the Cañón de San Cristóbal. (p217)



# Map Legend

## Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

## Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkeling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

## Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

## Eating

- Eating

## Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

## Entertainment

- Entertainment

## Shopping

- Shopping

## Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

## Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

## Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

## Transport

- Airport
- BART station
- Border crossing
- Boston T station
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro/Muni station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway/SkyTrain station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

## Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

## Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

## Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

## Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

*Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book*



## 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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, 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



### Liza Prado

**Curator, San Juan, El Yunque & East Coast, Culebra & Vieques** Liza Prado has been a travel writer since 2003, when she made a move from corporate lawyering to travel writing (and never looked back). She's written dozens of guidebooks and articles as well as apps and blogs to destinations throughout the Americas. She takes decent photos, too. Liza is a graduate of Brown University and Stanford Law School. She lives very happily in Denver, Colorado, with her husband and fellow LP

writer, Gary Chandler, and their two kids.



### Luke Waterson

**Central Mountains, Rincón & West Coast, North Coast, Ponce & South Coast**

Raised in the remote Somerset countryside in Southwest England, Luke quickly became addicted to exploring out-of-the-way places. While completing a Creative Writing degree at the University of East Anglia, he shouldered his backpack and vowed to see as much of the world as possible. Fast-forward a few years and he has traveled the Americas from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego and developed an

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