



# El Yunque & East Coast

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## Best Places to Eat

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## Why Go?

The east coast is Puerto Rico shrink-wrapped; a tantalizing taste of almost everything the island has to offer squeezed into an area you can drive across in a couple of hours. Sodden rainforest teems with noisy wildlife and jungle waterfalls at El Yunque National Forest, the Commonwealth's tropical gem. Down at sea level, beach lovers bask on the icing-sugar sand of Playa Luquillo.

Unvarnished Fajardo is the island's uncrowned water-sports capital, where adventurers kayak, dive, snorkel and fish, and yachters park their sailboats. Golfers and those craving a one-stop holiday will find delight in the highest concentration of large, upscale resorts outside San Juan.

Cutting through the region like a thin, green ribbon is the Northeast Ecological Corridor, a slender tract of undeveloped and endangered pristine land featuring one of Puerto Rico's stunning bioluminescent bays at Las Cabezas de San Juan Reserva Natural.

## When to Go

Along the coast your best timing depends on your priorities: peak winter season (December to February), summer and weekends see the most places open (especially locally beloved food kiosks). But other times you'll enjoy a solitude that grows with your distance from San Juan.

Note that hurricane season – June through late November – can bring sodden conditions to El Yunque, with the possibility of trails being closed due to mudslides and flooding.



## El Yunque & East Coast Highlights

**1 El Yunque National Forest** (p98) Hiking on lush rainforest trails with views of the ocean beyond.

**2 Cabezas de San Juan Reserva Natural** (p107) Exploring seven ecosystems with expert guides and naturalists.

**3 Playa Luquillo** (p105) Surfing the local break and swimming at one of the island's best beaches.

**4 El Yunque's Southern Side** (p102) Swimming in

hidden waterfall pools and admiring petroglyphs on El Yunque's quiet southern side.

**5 Highway 3** (p112) Enjoying the low-key beaches, villages and great eats on this two-lane road south of Playa Húcares.

**6 Laguna Grande** (p110) Taking in the glow of Fajardo's glowing bioluminescent bay.

**7 Cayo Santiago** (p112) Kayaking to this tiny island,

home to over a thousand rhesus macaque monkeys.

**8 Reserva Natural Humedal Punta Tuna** (p114) Strolling through dense mangrove forests and along an untouched coastline – and learning a bit too – on interpretive trails.

**9 Highway 181** (p115) Journeying back in time on this verdant corkscrew road dotted with mountain villages and breathtaking vistas.

## History

Much of this region was once covered with lighter variations of the dense foliage now found only in El Yunque, but native Taíno

successfully farmed the fertile land around the low-lying coasts. All that changed when the Spanish arrived en masse around 1700. The tremendous wealth of natural resources