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ACCOMMODATIONS

Puerto Rico's proximity to the United States has its upsides and its downsides. On the one hand the standard of accommodations is generally better than it is elsewhere in the Caribbean (although rarely as consistent as the US). On the other hand, prices are generally higher.

For package tourists there are plenty of high quality resorts, although few of them are all-inclusive (you must pay extra for food, drink and other activities). Prices for these establishments can vary depending on the season, ongoing offers and who you book through. Elsewhere there's a good system of *paradores* or midrange accommodations scattered across the island, often in historical buildings or old coffee haciendas. Vacation rentals are a more

economical option for long-term guests or big groups. There are no youth hostels in Puerto Rico, and very few dorm-style accommodations, even near local universities. Motels in the traditional American sense are also thin on the ground. All this means that, aside from camping, there's a huge dearth of budget options.

Lodging rates in Puerto Rico vary, sometimes by more than 30%, from season to season and even from day to day, as hotels adjust rates according to the perceived demand. In general, rates are highest from December 15 through the end of May. They are also high from mid-June to August, when many island families take their vacations. Rates are lowest from September 1 to December 14. Because prices change so frequently, the rates listed in this book are often given as ranges. The prices given in this book do not include room taxes, which are 15% at hotels with casinos, and 9% elsewhere.

Camping

PUBLIC CAMPGROUNDS

These are on public lands such as national forests and commonwealth *reservas forestales* (forest reserves). To camp in one of the reserves, contact the **Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales** (DRNA; Department of Natural Resources; Map p87; ☎ 787-999-2200; www.drna.gobierno.pr in Spanish; Rte 8838 Km 6.3, Sector El Cinco, Río Piedras) at least 15 days in advance for reservations and a permit. Commonwealth-run forest-reserve campgrounds are likely to have showers and RV hookups available; national forest campgrounds tend to be less developed.

If you want to camp on the beach but don't want to risk running afoul of the law, call the

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out lonelyplanet.com/hotels. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

Compañía de Parques Nacionales (CPN; National Park Company; ☎ 787-622-5200, ext 355 or 369; www.parquesnacionalespr.com in Spanish; Apartado Postal No 3207, San Juan, 00904), which allows camping at six public beaches: Cerro Gordo, La Monserrate, Seven Seas, Punta Guilarte (near Arroyo), Vieques and Culebra.

The grounds are big and grassy, and get packed during holidays. They've got picnic tables, showers and toilets. Not all CPN sites have 24-hour guards.

Never camp alone at a site without a guard, and be extra careful at Cerro Gordo and La Monserrate. You don't need a reservation to camp at these places, but in high season if you don't call ahead you'll likely be out of luck if you just pull up. To make a reservation, you must pay with Visa, MasterCard or Discover Card.

Summer is high camping season on the island; during the other seasons, camping areas at the balnearios and *reservas forestales* are often closed (although sometimes you can just set up camp for free and no one will bother you).

Getting in touch with the DRNA or CPN isn't always easy; your best bet is to call early and often – someone will eventually pick up the phone.

There is no fee or reservation necessary to camp in El Yunque, but you must get a permit at the Catalina Work Center (p132) in the forest.

PRIVATE CAMPGROUNDS

These are on private property and are usually close to or in a town. Most are designed with RVs in mind; few accept tents. Facilities can include hot showers, coin-operated laundry, a swimming pool, full RV hookups, a games area, a playground and a convenience store.

PRACTICALITIES

Electricity Puerto Rico has the 110V AC system used in America.

Newspapers & magazines *San Juan Star* (www.thesanjuanstar.com) is a bilingual daily newspaper. *Puerto Rico Breeze* is a biweekly newspaper on gay nightlife in San Juan. *Que Pasa!* is a bimonthly magazine put out by the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC).

TV American TV is broadcast across the island. Radio is mostly in Spanish; the English-language radio station is WOSO San Juan, at 1030AM.

Video systems Puerto Rico uses VHS for videos.

Weights & measures Puerto Rico follows the American imperial system with two exceptions: all distances you see on road signs are in kilometers and gas is pumped in liters. See the Quick Reference page (inside front cover) for a metric conversion chart.

Guesthouses

Places calling themselves 'guesthouses' can differ vastly from one to another. While some guesthouses may have as few as two rooms for travelers, others may boast 25. While one guesthouse may look like a roadside motel, another may be a beach house with a pool, bar and restaurant.

The cheapest establishments, with rooms around \$75, may have clean but unexciting rooms with a shared bathroom. Pricier places have rooms with private bathrooms, balconies, sun decks and public dining rooms with extensive menus and table service (at extra cost). They may be in a modern structure, quaint country home or urban beach house. Rooms at most guesthouses fall in the \$75 to \$180 price range, but some cost more than \$200.

Hotels

Puerto Rico has plenty of top end resort hotels and a growing number of boutique options. Major chains represented include Marriott, Hilton and Sheraton. There are also a couple of unique world-class hotels, namely the Horned Dorset Primavera (near Rincón; p232) and El Convento in Viejo San Juan (p109). Ecohotels are another growing area, particularly around El Yunque and on the island of Vieques. Ocean Park has some rather deluxe beachside B&Bs and in recent years Rincón and Boquerón have gone more upmarket.

There are only a few accommodations on the island with rooms for less than \$75, and almost all of these are found in small towns or unsavory neighborhoods of the cities. Rooms are usually small, and beds may be soft or saggy, but the sheets should be clean. A minimal level of cleanliness is generally maintained, but expect scuffed walls, old furniture and strange noises from your shower.

Resorts are ubiquitous in Condado and Isla Verde. Further east, you'll find the megaresorts, self-contained fantasy worlds of 500 to 2500 acres with championship golf courses, restaurants, spas, tennis courts and a complete array of water sports: the El Conquistador Resort & Golden Door Spa (near Fajardo; p146); the Río Mar Beach Resort & Country Club (near Luquillo; p140) and the Palmas del Mar Resort (near Humacao; p148) are the three fanciest piles.

Because of changing marketing strategies and seasons, the prices in this guide can be only an approximate guideline at best, though you'll be lucky to find a quality hotel for under \$150.

Be prepared to add the 9% room tax, and probably a 10% service charge as well, to quoted rates. Children are often allowed to stay free with their parents, but rules for this vary. If traveling with a family, call and inquire.

Remember advertised hotel prices are not set in stone. If you simply ask about any specials that might apply, you can often save quite a bit of money. Nowadays booking online can also net you a special deal.

Paradores & Inns

Years ago, the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC) adopted the Spanish idea of creating a network of government-endorsed country inns for islanders and travelers looking for retreats in alluring natural settings.

Today, the PRTC endorses about 20 paradores (inns) scattered across the island and they are a mixed bag. How you view them depends on your expectations. If you're used to upmarket resorts you might find paradores a bit old-fashioned and pokey. If you're keen to get away from it all, you'll probably enjoy the experience.

The good thing about paradores is that they are invariably located in attractive areas (often in historic coffee haciendas) and are frequented primarily by Puerto Ricans. As a result, you'll be able to get out and discover the 'real' Puerto Rico here, as opposed to being cocooned in some manufactured, Americanized resort.

The trade-off comes in the form of iffy water pressure, basic furnishings and sometimes overdue renovations. On the upside, service is usually friendly and there's nearly always a swimming pool. If you've

traveled in Spain, you'll find Puerto Rican paradores are rarely comparable to their more luxurious Iberian equivalents.

Prices for rooms in both the endorsed and nominal paradores are comparable to the cost of rooms in guesthouses, ie between \$75 and \$150.

For reservations, a complete list and pictures of the government-endorsed paradores, contact **Paradores Puertorriqueños** (☎ 800-866-7827; www.gotopuertorico.com). You can also check with **Puerto Rico Small Inns** (☎ 787-725-2901; http://prhtasm.allhotels.com).

Motels

Unfortunately there's no real network of cheap motels in Puerto Rico à la the United States. Such motels that do exist are strictly of the 'rooms-by-the-hour' variety. Not for the average tourist.

Vacation Centers

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico maintains clusters of rental cottages around the island in Arroyo, Boquerón, Añasco, Humacao and Maricao. These *centros vacacionales* are popular with island families on weekends, holidays and summer vacations. Most of the accommodations are two-bedroom condos in attractive new duplex structures. These units are available to 'bona fide family groups' only, so don't show up with three college-age couples.

There is a minimum stay of two nights and a maximum stay of seven. Short-term rates run about \$85 a night for a unit that sleeps six, but you may get a special weekly rate from September 1 to May 31 (when island kids are in school).

Bring your own sheets, or be prepared to rent them for \$15 to \$20 per set. Kitchen gear is not included in the price.

Reserve up to 120 days in advance through the Oficina de Reservas en la Compañía de Parques Nacionales (p273).

ACTIVITIES

Puerto Rico offers innumerable outdoor activities for travelers with ants in their pants. Some will surprise (ice-skating), some may disappoint (hiking – at least for the hardcore backcountry adventurers) while others will exceed even the highest expectations (surfing into the sunset in Rincón). The

Outdoors chapter (p71) will fill you in on the details. Meanwhile, here's a brief run-down on what to expect.

- Some of the best surf breaks in the Caribbean
- Excellent diving spots and crystal clear water
- Two of the brightest bioluminescent bays on the planet
- Safe snorkeling, often accessible directly from the shore
- Well-equipped public beaches
- Playa Flamenco, regularly touted as one of best beaches in the Caribbean
- The only tropical rainforest hikes in the US national park system
- Excellent bird-watching possibilities
- Deep-sea fishing
- Golf courses to rival anything in the US and Europe
- The largest marina in the Caribbean

BUSINESS HOURS

Businesses are open 8am to 5pm, but there are certainly no hard-and-fast rules. Shops are usually open 9am or 10am to 5pm or 6pm (often until 9pm in shopping malls and on Friday evening), except on Sunday, when hours are 11am to 5pm (often later in malls).

Post offices are open 8am to 4pm or 5:30pm weekdays, and some are open 8am to 1pm Saturday.

Banks are usually open 8am to 5pm on weekdays (in some areas such as Ponce, they close at 2:30pm), and 9:45am to noon on Saturday.

CHILDREN Practicalities

There are a few places in Puerto Rico that don't take children under age 16, but generally that kind of attitude goes against the family-loving grain.

Children often get discounted rates at larger hotels, and providing an extra cot is rarely a problem.

In smaller facilities like guesthouses, children are welcomed but cots and cribs are less likely to be at hand.

Two of Puerto Rico's megaresorts offer full-day, camp-style programs for children aged three to 15. These are: El Conquistador Resort & Golden Door Spa (near Fajardo

on the east coast; p146) and the Palmas del Mar Resort (near Humacao on the east coast; p148).

Unless you know someone reliable on the island or you are staying at a big hotel, you'll have difficulty finding a baby-sitter. There are no reliable agencies that provide this service, but many hotels have day-care programs, activity programs for older kids, and trusted staff happy to make some extra money baby-sitting at night.

Motorists should note that Puerto Rican law requires children younger than four to be restrained in an approved child's seat while traveling in an automobile.

Specify this if you're booking a taxi. Alternatively, bring your own seat. Many car rentals also rent child seats. Enquire when you're booking.

If you see a diaper-changing station more than twice during your visit to Puerto Rico, consider yourself lucky. Puerto Rican parents get creative and change diapers on whatever flat surface is at hand.

Diapers and formula are available in the many drug stores in the populated areas, but travel with supplies in the Central Mountains and in more remote areas like Culebra and Vieques.

Breast-feeding in public is not frowned upon, but generally women should do it as discreetly as possible.

Sights & Activities

Big hits with kids are the Museo del Niño (p93) and the Casa de Ramón Power y Giralt (p92).

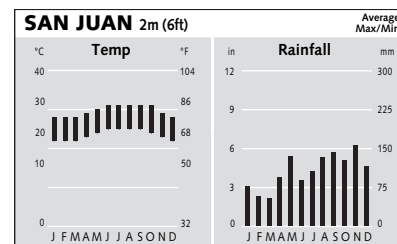
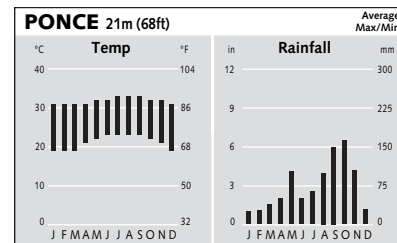
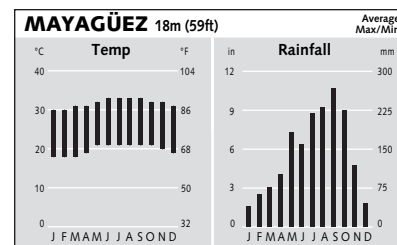
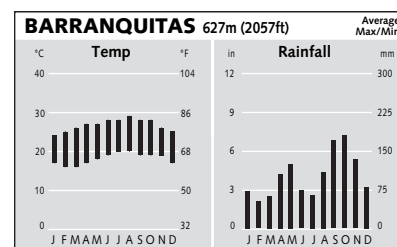
The Río Camuy caves (p245) and Observatorio de Arecibo (p245) are popular, and the Luis A Ferré Parque de Ciencias (p129) is a perennial favorite.

Blackbeard Sports (p175) on Vieques rents bicycles with rear child-seats (and helmets) and can organize guided trips for all the family.

For information on enjoying travel with young ones, read Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children*.

CLIMATE CHARTS

Temperatures in Puerto Rico are very consistent. At their coolest, daily temperatures seldom go below 73°F, and at their hottest rarely rise above 86°F. For a complete breakdown of the seasonal variations, see p20.



CUSTOMS

US Customs allows each person over the age of 21 to bring 1L of liquor and 200 cigarettes duty free into Puerto Rico or the USA. US citizens are allowed to import, duty free, \$400 worth of gifts from abroad, while non-US citizens are allowed to bring in \$100 worth. US law permits you to bring in or take out as much as \$10,000 in US or foreign currency, traveler's checks or letters of credit without

formality. Larger amounts of any or all of the earlier – there are no limits – must be declared to customs.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Personal Security & Theft

There are more than a few desperate people on the island, although most violent crimes are related to drugs and gang turf wars. Muggings occur on many public beaches after dark, so avoid them at night; leaving personal articles out on the beaches anywhere is inviting theft. Unfortunately, this includes the isolated beaches on Vieques.

However, even though street crime is a serious issue in urban areas, visitors need not be obsessed with security. A few commonsense reminders should help keep you secure.

Always lock cars and put valuables out of sight, whether you're leaving the car for a few minutes or longer, and whether you are in a town or in the remote backcountry. Rent a car with a lockable trunk. If your car is bumped from behind in a remote area, it's best to keep going to a well-lit area or service station. Never allow yourself to get into a conflict with another driver on Puerto Rican roads: road rage is common here, and more than a few antagonized drivers have been known to retaliate with gunfire.

Be aware of your surroundings and who may be watching you. Avoid walking on dimly lit streets at night, particularly when alone. Walk purposefully. Avoid unnecessary displays of money or jewelry. Divide money and credit cards to avoid losing everything and also aim to use ATMs in well-trafficked areas.

In hotels, don't ever leave valuables lying around your room. Use safety-deposit boxes or at least place valuables in a locked bag. Don't open your door to strangers – check the peephole or call the front desk if unexpected guests try to enter.

Carjacking does occur in Puerto Rican cities though it is rare that a tourist is targeted. To minimize the risk, avoid driving alone late at night in rough neighborhoods; take a taxi instead.

Recreational Hazards

In wilderness areas the consequences of an accident can be very serious, so don't ever head into the forest without leaving someone – either the ranger on duty, someone back at your hotel or your friends who chose to stay at the

beach – your planned itinerary. Minor cuts and scrapes can get infected easily in this climate, so it's a good idea to hike with disinfectant.

WILDLIFE

Wild horses roam parts of Vieques, and although they look gentle and placid while grazing on the tropical underbrush, they can kick, bite and trample. Even small animals are capable of inflicting serious injury or even fatal wounds on unsuspecting tourists. Some also carry rabies. Keep your distance from all wild animals, and that goes double for any mongooses you see in El Yunque. The monkeys and iguanas on some of the cays off the south coast can be downright fierce.

PESTS

Mosquitoes are ubiquitous – and they do not restrict their activities to the hours around sunset. In fact, one type of daylight mosquito carries dengue fever (p296), although the risk of contracting it is extremely low.

Hookworm – which can be contacted by simply walking barefoot through infected sand or dirt – once plagued the island. And while public health initiatives have reduced the prevalence of the disease, the possibility of catching it still exists. Frequent bathing and the use of footwear is the very best prevention.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Senior Cards

Though the age when discounts begin varies with the attraction, travelers 55 years and older can expect to receive cut rates and benefits. Be sure to inquire about such rates at hotels, museums and restaurants. All you need to get the senior discount offered at many local attractions is a valid ID showing you are 55 or older.

Visitors to national parks – including the forts in Old San Juan – and to campgrounds can cut their costs greatly by using the Golden Age Passport, a card that allows US citizens aged 62 and over (and those traveling in the same car) free admission nationwide and a 50% reduction on camping fees. You can apply in person for the card at any national park or regional office of the US Forest Service or National Park Service.

Student & Youth Cards

If you're a student, an international student ID card or school or university ID card can get

you discounts for theater/museum tickets and public transportation. There are no hostels, so discounts don't apply here.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Embassies & Consulates in Puerto Rico

Most nations' principal diplomatic representation is in Washington DC. To find out the telephone number of your embassy or consulate in DC, call ☎ 202-555-1212.

In addition, some nations with 'interests' in Puerto Rico maintain consulates and honorary consulates on the island. The foreign consulates in Puerto Rico are in San Juan or the surrounding suburbs:

Austria (☎ 787-766-0799; Plaza Las Américas, Río Piedras)

Canada (☎ 787-790-2210; 107 Calle Cereipo Alturas, Guaynabo)

Netherlands (☎ 787-759-9400; Mercantil Plaza, Hato Rey)

UK (☎ 787-727-1065; 1509 Calle Lopez Landron, Santurce)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Every Puerto Rican town honors its patron saint annually. These *fiestas patronales* occur throughout the year and generally begin on a Friday 10 days before the saint's day. The fiestas usually take place in the town's central plaza and have the carnival atmosphere typical of such celebrations throughout Latin America. The fiestas climax with a parade on the Sunday nearest the saint's day in which parishioners of various churches carry large wooden effigies of the saint through the streets. Frequently, the music, dance and rituals associated with the parade blend African and some Taíno traditions with Roman Catholic protocol. For a complete and up-to-date list of these *fiesta patronales*, contact the PRTC (p284).

The **Festival Casals** (www.festcasalspr.gobierno.pr), the premier musical event in Puerto Rico and probably all of the Caribbean, is held annually in San Juan. Founded by the great cellist Pablo Casals, who retired to Puerto Rico, the festival is now more than 40 years old and draws world-class conductors and musicians for two weeks of concerts celebrating orchestral music. Concert tickets can cost \$20 to \$40, but students, seniors and disabled persons can get a 50% discount. Dates vary.

Following is a list of other island events that have cultural as well as entertainment

value. The telephone numbers listed will connect travelers with event organizers or local tourist offices.

January

Festival San Sebastián (☎ 787-724-0910) Sponsored by the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, this three-day shindig of parades, food, dancing and music is one of the island's hippest street carnivals and draws in crowds from around the Caribbean and beyond.

February

Coffee Harvest Festival, Maricao (☎ 787-838-2290) Held midmonth, this is like a *fiesta patronal*, but with demonstrations of traditional coffeemaking and local crafting. The rugged mountain setting of the town is sublime, and the fresh air fills with the scents of roasting beans.

Carnaval, Ponce (☎ 787-841-8044) During the six days preceding the beginning of Lent, Catholics and folks who love to party come to Ponce to celebrate and give themselves up to food, alcohol and romance before Lent begins. During Lent, they deny themselves the pleasures of the body until after Easter. While this event is not up to the standards of Rio de Janeiro's Carnaval or New Orleans' Mardi Gras, it is a hopping good time in the tradition of put-on-a-mask (or just pretend), wear funny clothes (cross-dressing is always cool) and party 'til you drop. This is one of the great places to see parades of *vejigantes*, the traditional horned maskers.

March

Cinco Días con Nuestro Tierra, Mayagüez (☎ 787-265-3855) Held in the second week of March, this is one of the island's agricultural-industrial fairs, featuring local produce.

April

José de Diego Day Celebrates the birthday of patriot José de Diego (born April 16, 1867). It's a national holiday, celebrated with particular enthusiasm in Aguadilla, where he was born.

May

Fiesta Nacional de la Danza, Ponce (☎ 787-224-1844) This event, held in mid-May, features a week of music and dance concerts that celebrate the stately music of string quartets and the 19th-century ballroom dance that was the hallmark of island sophistication in the days when elegance and manners were more important.

June

Fiesta de San Juan Bautista, San Juan (☎ 787-735-3871, 787-721-2400) Here you have the *ne plus ultra*, the *fiesta patronal* of the island capital. On June 24 you will find the narrow streets of Old San Juan filled with a crush of party animals. At midnight, legions of people

walk backward into the sea (or sometimes fountains) three times to demonstrate their loyalty to the saint of Christian baptism and gain his blessing for the coming year. **Festival de Flores, Aibonito** At the end of June you can see acres of roses, carnations, lilies, begonias etc come to life in the fresh air of this attractive mountain town.

July

Fiesta de Santiago, Loíza Aldea (☎ 787-876-3570) Loíza is the place to come if you want to see one way that Puerto Ricans of African descent keep their ties to Africa alive. This is a fiesta worthy of Bahía in Brazil: parades, fabulous drum ensembles, masks and costumes revive saints, such as Santiago, who, according to the traditions of Santería, are incarnations of West African gods. Held at the end of the month.

November

Jayuya Indian Festival, Jayuya (☎ 787-828-0900) Although all pure-blooded Taíno have been gone for about 400 years, this festival, held midmonth, does a decent job of reviving the games, costumes, food and music of the original islanders. As with almost all Puerto Rican fiestas, there is a beauty pageant, this time with young women in Indian dress.

December

Hatillo Mask Festival, Hatillo (☎ 787-898-3835) Held on December 28, this is the island's third major festival of maskers. This one features masked devils prowling the streets as incarnations of the agents of King Herod, who sent his soldiers into the streets of Judea to find and kill the Christ Child. Kids think it is great fun to run and hide from the maskers.

FOOD

For detailed descriptions of island eating patterns, see Food & Drink (p56). Prices run the gamut in Puerto Rico and in certain sections of town compete with those you'd see in Tokyo, New York and London. The least expensive meals are found in fast-food restaurants, *friquitines* (roadside kiosks) and the bodegas that serve snacks.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Puerto Rico is probably the most gay-friendly island in the Caribbean. San Juan has a well-developed gay scene, especially in the Condado district, for Puerto Ricans and visitors. Other cities, such as Mayagüez and Ponce, have gay clubs and gay-friendly accommodations as well. Vieques and Culebra have become popular destinations for an international mix of gay and lesbian expatriates

and travelers. In the cities and in major resort areas, it is easier for gay men and women to live their lives with a certain amount of openness. As you travel into the middle of the island, it is more difficult to be out, as people are not used to seeing same-sex couples holding hands or displaying affection publicly. It might be wiser to keep your canoodling to a minimum when mixing with the crowds.

On the island, pick up a copy of the **Puerto Rico Breeze** (☎ 787-724-3411), a bilingual tabloid of events and listings for accommodations, restaurants, clubs etc, for gay men and lesbians.

Also, check with the staff at the gay venue **Atlantic Beach Hotel** (☎ 787-721-6900), in Condado, for information on current events in the lesbian and gay community.

Another good resource is the **Gay Yellow Pages** (☎ 212-674-0120; PO Box 533, Village Station, NY 10014-0533), which has a national edition and regional editions. Also check out these definitive gay sources: www.go-breeze.com and www.planetout.com.

HOLIDAYS

US public holidays are celebrated along with local holidays in Puerto Rico. Banks, schools and government offices (including post offices) are closed, and transportation, museums and other services are on a Sunday schedule. Holidays falling on a weekend are usually observed the following Monday. Nearly all museums in Puerto Rico close on Mondays. Some also remain closed on Tuesdays.

New Year's Day January 1

Three Kings Day (Feast of the Epiphany) January 6

Eugenio María de Hostos' Birthday January 10 – honors the island educator, writer and patriot

Martin Luther King Jr Day Third Monday in January

Presidents' Day Third Monday in February

Emancipation Day March 22 – island slaves were freed on this date in 1873

Palm Sunday Sunday before Easter

Good Friday Friday before Easter

Easter A Sunday in late March/April

José de Diego Day April 18

Memorial Day Last Monday in May

Independence Day/Fourth of July July 4

Luis Muñoz Rivera's Birthday July 18 – honors the island patriot and political leader

Constitution Day July 25

José Celso Barbosa's Birthday July 27

Labor Day First Monday in September

Columbus Day Second Monday in October

Veterans' Day November 11

Thanksgiving Fourth Thursday in November

Christmas Day December 25

INSURANCE

No matter how you're traveling, make sure you purchase travel insurance. This should cover you not only for medical expenses and luggage theft or loss, but also for cancellations or delays in your travel arrangements. You should be covered for the worst possible case, such as an accident that requires hospital treatment and a flight home. Coverage depends on your insurance and type of ticket, so ask both your insurer and your ticket-issuing agency to explain the finer points. **STA Travel** (☎ 800-777-0112) offers travel insurance options at reasonable prices.

Travel insurance also covers lost tickets. Make sure you have a separate record of all your ticket details – or better still, a photocopy of the tickets. Also make a copy of your policy in case the original is lost.

INTERNET ACCESS

Finding a good internet café outside of San Juan can be incredibly frustrating. If you can't find anything open (cybercafés tend to open and shut within weeks), most public libraries have computers with internet access. Free wi-fi access is increasingly available in the better hotels, although whether it is working is another matter. Popular resort towns such as Rincón, Ponce and Fajardo tend to have more options.

LEGAL MATTERS

If you are stopped by the police for any reason, bear in mind that there is no system of paying fines on the spot. Attempting to pay the fine to the officer is frowned upon at best and may compound your troubles by resulting in a charge of bribery. For traffic violations, the police officer will explain your options to you.

If you are arrested for more serious offenses, you are allowed to remain silent. There is no legal reason to speak to a police officer if you don't wish, but never walk away from an officer until given permission. All persons who are arrested are legally allowed (and given) the right to make one phone call. If you don't have a lawyer or family member to help you, call your embassy. The police will give you the number upon request.

Puerto Rico follows US laws in all criminal and most legislative matters. In the event that you are arrested, you have the same rights as you would have on US soil.

Drinking Laws

The drinking age is 18 on the island – three years younger than in the US! Legally you need identification with your photograph on it to prove your age. In Puerto Rico, minors are not permitted in bars and pubs, even to order nonalcoholic beverages. Ostensibly, this prohibition means that most dance clubs are also off-limits to minors, but door guards seem to make liberal exceptions for pretty young women.

Old San Juan has enacted a stiff law to stop the drinking in the streets. If you get caught, you will be fined \$500. The establishment that served you the drink will be charged \$1000. Furthermore, you could incur stiff fines, jail time and penalties if caught driving under the influence of alcohol. During fiestas, holidays and special events, roadblocks are sometimes set up to deter drunk drivers. The legal blood alcohol limit for drivers is 0.08%.

Nevertheless, alcohol is much more a part of the social scene on the island than it is in many parts of the US and Europe. Puerto Rico has few 'blue laws' prohibiting the times and places where alcohol can be consumed. This means that drinking (even underage drinking) is rampant during fiestas – as it is every Thursday to Sunday in San Juan and beach resort towns when islanders are in party mode. Drinking on the beach is legal.

MAPS

Navigating Puerto Rico can be a challenge because of missing road signs and changes in street names. Furthermore, none of the major maps totally agree. Rand McNally publishes a foldout road map that includes detailed city maps of Aguadilla, Arecibo, Caguas, Mayagüez, Ponce and San Juan, as well as the islands of Culebra and Vieques. The map is available at bookstores and newsstands around the island for about \$3.

A similar map produced by **Metro Data** (www.metropr.com), the mapmakers of Puerto Rico, is the most up-to-date product. If you want something even more detailed – right down to housing plots – pick up Metro Data's *Guía Urbana* for San Juan and Ponce (\$15), stocked in most San Juan bookstores.

The US Geological Survey (USGS), an agency of the US Department of the Interior, publishes very detailed topographic maps of Puerto Rico, at various scales up to 1:250,000. Maps at 1:62,500, or approximately 1in = 1 mile, are ideal for backcountry hiking and backpacking. Some bookstores and outdoor equipment specialists on the island carry a selection of topographic maps.

MONEY

Puerto Rico uses US currency. The US *dolar* or *peso* (dollar) is divided into 100 cents (¢). Coins come in denominations of 1¢, called the *centavo* or *chavito* (penny); 5¢, called the *villon* or *ficha* (nickel); 10¢ (dime); 25¢, called the *peseta* (quarter); and the seldom-seen 50¢ (half-dollar) coin. Quarters are the most commonly used coins in vending machines and parking meters, so it's handy to have a stash of them. Notes, commonly called bills, come in \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 denominations – \$2 bills are rare but perfectly legal. There is also a \$1 coin that the government has tried unsuccessfully to bring into mass circulation; you may get them as change from ticket and stamp machines. Be aware that they look similar to quarters.

ATMs

Called ATHs in Puerto Rico for *a todas horas* (at all hours), ATMs are a convenient way of obtaining cash from a bank account back home. Even many small-town banks in the middle of nowhere have ATMs. They are common in most shopping areas and are often available 24 hours a day.

There are various ATM networks, and most banks in Puerto Rico are affiliated with several. Exchange, Accel, Plus and Cirrus are the predominant networks. For a nominal service charge, you can withdraw cash from an ATM using a credit card or a charge card. Some American banks take advantage of Puerto Rico's commonwealth status to charge a hefty \$7 dollar fee on each 'international' withdrawal you make.

Remember that ATMs in remote locations and on Vieques and Culebra run out of money sometimes on weekends.

Credit Cards

Major credit cards are accepted at hotels, restaurants, gas stations, shops and car rental agencies throughout Puerto Rico. In fact,

you'll find it hard to perform certain transactions, such as renting a car or purchasing tickets to performances, without one.

Even if you loathe credit cards and prefer to rely on traveler's checks and ATMs, it's a good idea to carry one for emergencies. If you're planning to rely primarily upon credit cards, it would be wise to have a Visa or MasterCard in your deck, since other cards aren't as widely accepted.

If you should lose your credit cards or they are stolen, contact the company immediately. Contact your bank if you lose your ATM card.

Following are toll-free numbers for the main credit-card companies:

American Express (☎ 800-528-4800)

Diners Club (☎ 800-234-6377)

Discover (☎ 800-347-2683)

MasterCard (☎ 800-826-2181)

Visa (☎ 800-336-8472)

Moneychangers

Most banks on the island will exchange cash or traveler's checks in major foreign currencies, though banks in outlying areas don't do so very often, and it may take them some time. It is probably less of a hassle to exchange foreign currency in San Juan.

Banco Popular (☎ 787-791-0326; 🕒 8am-4pm) has a currency-exchange office in Terminal C at the Luis Muñoz Marín (LMM) airport. You can also exchange currency at just about any Banco Popular office in the capital San Juan (p87).

Though carrying cash is more risky, it's still a good idea to travel with some for the convenience. Make sure you carry small bills though, as outside of banks, few places can break \$50s or \$100s – even \$20s are sometimes too much. Cash is useful to help pay all those tips, and some smaller, more remote places may not accept credit cards or traveler's checks.

Carry copies of your traveler's check numbers and credit card numbers separately.

Tipping

On the island, tipping is in order in restaurants and better hotels. Taxi drivers, hairdressers and baggage carriers expect tips, and waiters and bartenders rely on tips for their livelihoods. Tip 15% unless the service is terrible (in which case a complaint to the manager is warranted), or about 20% if the

service is great. Never tip in fast-food, take-out or buffet-style restaurants where you serve yourself. Baggage carriers in airports and hotels get \$2 for the first bag and \$1 for each additional bag. In hotels with daily housekeeping staff, leave a few dollars in the room when you check out – ask at the desk regarding the appropriate amount per day. In budget hotels, tips are not expected, but are always appreciated.

Taxes

There is no national sales tax (such as VAT) in the US or Puerto Rico, but almost everything you pay for on the island is taxed. You also won't see a sales tax or a restaurant tax, but there is a 9% accommodation tax in most guesthouses and motels, and if you stay in a hotel with a casino, expect the amount to jump to 15%. Unless otherwise stated, the prices given in this book don't include local taxes. There's also a 5% tax on jewelry sold on the island.

POST

You'll find a **US post office** (☎ 800-275-8777; www.usps.gov) in almost every Puerto Rican town, providing familiar postal services such as parcel shipping and international express mail. Private shippers such as **United Parcel Service** (UPS; ☎ 800-742-5877) and **Federal Express** (FedEx; ☎ 800-463-3339) ship much of Puerto Rico's load of parcels and important time-sensitive documents to both domestic and foreign destinations.

If you have the correct postage, you can drop your mail into any blue mailbox. However, to send a package that's 16oz or heavier, you must take it to a post office. If you need to buy stamps or weigh your mail, go to the nearest post office. Larger towns have branch post offices and post-office centers in some supermarkets and drugstores. Addresses for main local post offices are given in this book.

You can have mail sent to you, addressed as 'c/o General Delivery,' at any post office that has its own zip (postal) code. Mail is usually held for 10 days before it's returned to the sender; you might request that your correspondents write 'hold for arrival' on letters. Alternatively, have mail sent to the local representative of American Express or Thomas Cook, which provide mail service for their customers.

SHOPPING

Shoppers will find a lot of tempting, pretty things in the shops of Old San Juan, Condado and Ponce, but few bargains. Puerto Rico is not a duty-free port. The only economic advantage to shopping in Puerto Rico is that there is no sales tax.

Travelers looking for souvenirs are usually drawn to the island's folk arts. *Santos* are probably the most popular purchase, but these carved religious figures can cost well over \$100. *Mundillo*, the intricately woven island-made lace, is also a popular purchase, as are woven hammocks like the ones Columbus admired when he first stopped at Borinquen. You can also pick up *vejigantes*, masks typical of those worn in the fiestas at Ponce and Loiza. Island-made macramé and ceramic items are also widely available in the shops catering to tourists.

Since Puerto Rico is the leading producer of rum in the world, you would be right to expect that many travelers find this beverage the one thing they must buy on the island. You will not only find a dizzying variety of rum in Puerto Rico (see p57), but you'll also discover that it is significantly cheaper here than in the US. Most bottles cost between \$6 and \$15, depending on size and quality. And there is no limit to how much you can take out of Puerto Rico when you leave, but bear in mind the limits imposed by the country you are next entering.

The second-most popular consumable among island travelers is the rich, mountain-grown coffee. Both *Adjuntas* and *Rioja* are popular premium products with fancy labels and packaging, but islanders say that Puerto Rican coffee is of such high quality that you cannot go wrong buying the local supermarket brands.

Bargaining is not appreciated or widely practiced in Puerto Rico. There's nothing wrong with asking if there's a discount available at a guesthouse or hotel – especially when there are empty rooms – but full-on haggling over prices in stores is likely to get you nothing but an expression of contempt from the shopkeeper.

SOLO TRAVELERS

There's no stigma attracted to traveling alone in Puerto Rico – in fact it's a great way to make friends – but you do need to take precautions simply because you're missing the

safety of numbers. Watch out for someone who accidentally bumps you and then apologizes profusely, engaging you in conversation. When you turn around, your bags may be gone. Likewise, pickpockets will work in tandem to rid you of your wallet. If you are going solo, travel light and keep track of your belongings. Avoid traveling at night, and don't hitch – ever.

TELEPHONE

All phone numbers within Puerto Rico consist of a three-digit area code (787) followed by a seven-digit local number. If you are calling locally, just dial the seven-digit number. To call the island from the US, dial ☎ 1 + 787 + the seven-digit number. Call the island from any other overseas destination the same way, after dialing the appropriate code for an international line in your country.

For directory assistance on the island, dial ☎ 411. For US directory assistance outside Puerto Rico, dial ☎ 1 + the three-digit area code of the place you want to call + 555-1212. For example, to obtain directory assistance for a toll-free number, dial ☎ 1-800-555-1212 or 1-888-555-1212. If you need Puerto Rican directory assistance while you're outside the country, dial ☎ 1-787-555-1212.

The 800, 866 and 888 area codes are designated for toll-free numbers within Puerto Rico, the US and sometimes Canada as well. These calls are free (unless you are dialing locally, in which case the toll-free number is not available).

To make a direct international call from Puerto Rico, dial ☎ 011 + the country code + the area code + phone number. You may need to wait as long as 45 seconds for the ringing to start. International rates vary depending on the time of day and the destination. Call the operator (☎ 0) for rates. The first minute is always more expensive than extra minutes. To make a reverse-charge (collect) call, call the operator (☎ 0) and let them know you wish to make a collect call.

Hotels hike up the price of local calls by almost 200%, and long-distance rates are raised between 100% and 200%. Many hotels (especially the more expensive ones) add a service charge of between 50¢ and \$1 for each local call made from a room phone, and they also add hefty surcharges for long-distance calls. Public pay phones, which can be found

in most lobbies, are always cheaper. You can pump in quarters, use a phone debit card or make collect calls at pay phones. Phonecards are available and sold at kiosks, in bodegas and around town. Cell phones are popular and operate just about everywhere. Puerto Rico is on the US system, so all the US networks are present.

TIME

Puerto Rico is on Atlantic Standard Time. Clocks in this time zone read an hour later than the Eastern Standard Time zone, which encompasses such US cities as New York, Boston, Washington DC and Miami. During Daylight Saving Time in those cities – from 1am on the first Sunday in April until 2am on the last Sunday of October – the time is the same in Puerto Rico. There is no Daylight Saving Time observed on the island.

When making appointments, most Puerto Ricans generally follow the American style of using a 12-hour clock and adding am or pm to connote morning or afternoon. Occasionally you'll hear the 24-hour clock used, mostly when people are speaking Spanish.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Local Tourist Offices

The **Puerto Rico Tourism Company** (PRTC; www.gotopuertorico.com) is the commonwealth's official tourist bureau and a very good source for thorough brochures on island accommodations, sports, shopping, dining and festivals. The PRTC also sponsors a variety of folk and fine-arts shows around the island. From abroad, you can call any of the PRTC offices worldwide and request a tourist information packet. On the island, call the offices or stop by for up-to-date information and calendars of current events. PRTC has offices in Aguadilla (p253), Boquerón (p213), Ponce (p187), San Juan (p87) and Vieques (p169).

Tourist Offices Abroad

All of the following countries have Puerto Rico Tourism Company offices:

Argentina (☎ 1-314-4525; 882 Calle Santa Fe, piso 9, 1059 Buenos Aires)

Canada (☎ 416-368-2680; 41-43 Colbourne St, Suite 301, Toronto, ON M5E 1E3)

France (☎ 01 44 77 88 00; Express Conseil, 5 bis Rue du Louvre, 75001 Paris)

Germany (☎ 49-69-350047; Eifelstrasse 14-A, 60529 Frankfurt)

Mexico (☎ 525-553-2730; Vicente Saúrez 64-A, Colonia Condesa, 06140 Mexico City, DF)

Spain (☎ 3491-431-2128; Calle Serrano No 1-20 Izquierda, 28001 Madrid)

USA Los Angeles (☎ 213-874-5991, 800-874-1230; 3575 W Cahuenga Blvd, Suite 405, Los Angeles, CA 90068); Florida (☎ 305-445-9112; 901 Ponce de León Blvd, Suite 101, Coral Gables, FL 33134); New York City (☎ 212-599-6262; 666 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10103)

Venezuela (☎ 58-2-761-7929; Centro Profesional del Este, piso 6, Suite 265, Calle Villaflo, Caracas 1050)

TOURS

While nothing can compete with the adventure of planning and executing a wilderness trip on your own, these tour operators can take a lot of the worry out of the adventure and give you a chance to interact with fellow adventure travelers:

Acampa (Map pp86-7; ☎ 787-706-0695; www.campapr.com; 1211 Av Jesús T Piñero, San Juan) If you want to go to Isla Mona, Reserva Forestal Toro Negro, El Yunque, Río Camuy or any other adventure spot on the island, Acampa has all the latest gadgets to give you a spectacular trip.

Aquatica Dive & Bike Adventures (☎ 787-890-6071; www.aquatica.cjb.net) Bicycle tours in Aguadilla, Cabo Rojo and Quebradillas, with the option of taking a swim en route.

Aventuras Puerto Rico (☎ 787-380-8481; www.aventuraspuertorico.com) Kayaking, custom tours, horseback rides and snorkeling around Ponce, Arecibo, Camuy and Isabela.

Aventuras Tierra Adentro (Map p102; ☎ 787-766-0470; www.aventuraspr.com; 268-A Av Jesús T Piñero, San Juan) Camping, caving, rock-climbing, river-touring, with a speciality in canyon adventures.

Copladet Nature & Adventure Tours (☎ 787-765-8595; www.copladet.com) Birding, caving, hiking, horseback riding, kayaking; trips to Isla Caja de Muertos.

Eco Xursion Aquatica (☎ 787-888-2887; ecoxursion@libertypr.net) Nature-conscious educational tours and outdoor activities including kayaking, biking, hiking around Fajardo, Luquillo, Ceiba and more.

Encanto Ecotours (☎ 787-272-0005) Mangroves, manatees, turtle nesting; trips to Culebra, Vieques and Isla Mona – this tour group does just about everything on every part of the island.

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Travel to and around Puerto Rico is becoming easier for people with disabilities. Public buildings (including hotels, restaurants, theaters and museums) are now required by law to be wheelchair-accessible and to have appropriate rest-room facilities. Public transportation services (buses, trains and taxis) must

be made accessible to all, including those in wheelchairs, and telephone companies are required to provide relay operators for the hearing impaired.

Many banks now provide ATM instructions in Braille. Curb ramps are common, and some of the busier roadway intersections have audible crossing signals. Playa Luquillo has a beach especially for the mobility-impaired (p138), and ferries to the Spanish Virgin Islands (p147) are disabled-accessible.

Larger private and chain hotels have suites for disabled guests. Major car-rental agencies offer hand-controlled models at no extra charge. All major airlines and intercity buses allow guide dogs to accompany passengers.

A good website to find access information is www.access-able.com. A number of organizations and tour providers specialize in the needs of disabled travelers:

Mobility International USA (☎ 541-343-1284; www.miusa.org; PO Box 10767, Eugene, OR 97440) Advises disabled travelers on mobility issues. It primarily runs an educational exchange program.

Wheelchair Getaways Rent-A-Car (☎ 787-726-4023, 800-868-8028) Provides livery service as well as tours of Puerto Rico.

VISAS

You only need a visa to enter Puerto Rico if you need a visa to enter the US, since the commonwealth follows the United States' immigration laws. As a commonwealth, Puerto Rico subscribes to all the laws that apply to traveling and border crossing in the United States. US citizens can enter the commonwealth with proper proof of citizenship, such as a driver's license with photo ID, a passport or a birth certificate. Visitors from other countries must have a valid, scannable passport. Countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program – the EU, Australia, New Zealand and much of Latin America – don't need visas to get into Puerto Rico. The **US State Department** (www.state.gov) has current information about visas, immigration etc. See p286 for passport information.

VOLUNTEERING

As a relatively rich country in close geographic and economic proximity to the United States, Puerto Rico offers limited opportunities for volunteering. Your best bet to find work on a worthwhile ecological project is on the island of Culebra where the US Fish and Wildlife Refuge

run a volunteer turtle watch (p158) on Playa Brava during nesting season. You can also access this project through CORALations, a non-profit organization that is involved in coral reef protection in and around the island.

The US-based **Earthwatch Institute** (☎ 1-978-461-0081) runs one-to-two-week research missions to the Bosque Estatal de Carite (p258), where participants learn forest management skills and aid in the rejuvenation of the tropical rainforest. Volunteers stay in tents in the Casas de la Selva complex inside the park and spend their time planting seedlings, studying trees and monitoring local frog populations. Some of the trips are family friendly.

WOMEN TRAVELERS

Puerto Rico's status as a US commonwealth means that women enjoy a position in society not dissimilar to the United States or any other western-style democracy. The fact that the island has elected many influential women to high political office, including the late San Juan mayor Felisa Rincón de Gautier and ex-Puerto Rico governor Sila María Calderón, has proved that powerful females are no cultural pushovers and have garnered new-found respect among formerly misogynistic males.

Puerto Rican women crisscross the island all the time by themselves, so you won't be the only solo woman on the ferry or public bus, but as a foreigner you will attract a bit more attention. Most of it will be simple curiosity, but a few may assume you'd much rather be with a man if you could, so hey – they'll be friendly and give you the option. If you don't want the company, most men will respect a firm but polite 'no thank you.'

Bookstores, found in the Yellow Pages under *Librerías*, are good places to find out about gatherings, readings and meetings. University campuses are also good sites to network, and their social centers often have bulletin boards where you can find or place travel and short-term housing notices.

One international organization with an affiliate office in Puerto Rico is **Profamilia** (Planned Parenthood; ☎ 787-765-7373; 117 Padre Las Casas, El Vedado, San Juan). The staff here can refer you to clinics and offer advice on medical issues. Another good source of information on health and safety issues for women is the government office **Comisión Para Los Asuntos de Mujer** (Commission for Women's Affairs; ☎ 787-722-2977; 151 Calle San Francisco, Old San Juan).

Transportation

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Even if you are continuing immediately to another city, the first airport that you land in is where you must carry out immigration and customs formalities. The customs process can be quick and painless or it can involve a more prolonged exchange between you and officials.

A certain number of passengers are set aside to be searched randomly on just about every flight. You may be tapped, and it may be for no reason other than that your number came up.

Customs officials are mostly focused on excluding those who are likely to work illegally or overstay their welcome in Puerto Rico, so visitors will be asked about their

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

plans and perhaps about whether they have sufficient funds for their stay.

It's a good idea to be able to list an itinerary that will account for the period for which you ask to be admitted, and to be able to show you have \$300 to \$400 for every week of your intended stay. These days, a couple of major credit cards will go a long way toward establishing 'sufficient funds.'

Remember that the list of items that can't be brought on to airplanes now includes many implements used by divers, campers and hikers. Check the **US State Department** (www.state.gov) for an updated list, and make sure you check those bags.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

Passports

Unless you are an American or Canadian citizen, you need a scannable passport to enter Puerto Rico. No passport is automatically denied, but in the high-scrutiny world of airports, you can expect to garner some extra attention or questioning from officials if you have stamps showing recent travel to countries known for drug trafficking.

If you are asked to step aside, the best thing to do is stay calm and answer the questions as best you can.

Carry a photocopy of your passport separately from your passport. Copy the pages with your photo and personal details, passport number and US visa. In the event of loss, call your local consulate or embassy. You can find your consulate's telephone number by dialing information on the island (☎ 411). To reach your embassy, call directory assistance for Washington DC (☎ 202-555-1212). See also Visas (p285).

AIR

Airfares to Caribbean destinations such as Puerto Rico vary tremendously depending on the season you travel, the day of the week you fly, the length of your stay and the flexibility the ticket allows for flight changes and refunds. Still, nothing determines fares more than demand, and when things are slow,

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow jetsetters to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: lonelyplanet.com.

regardless of the season, airlines will lower their fares to fill empty seats.

Airports & Airlines

San Juan's recently modernized Aeropuerto Internacional de Luis Muñoz Marín – commonly shortened to LMM – lies just 2 miles beyond the eastern border of the city in the beachfront suburb of Isla Verde. Chances are that you will be arriving and departing from the airport in San Juan, but Aguadilla's Aeropuerto Rafael Hernández, at the former Ramey Base on the island's northwest tip, has some scheduled international flights from the US (mainly New York). Ponce and Mayagüez each have a small airport for domestic flights. San Juan's original airport at Isla Grande, on the Bahía de San Juan in the Miramar district, services private aircraft and the bulk of the commuter flights to the Puerto Rican islands of Culebra and Vieques; see p290.

Puerto Rico is the most accessible island in the Caribbean. San Juan is served by a number of North American carriers that fly between Puerto Rico and a score of mainland US cities; Miami has the most frequent flights. British Airways has services from London, Iberia flies from Madrid and Lufthansa's subsidiary Condor provides travelers with a link from Frankfurt.

Tickets

The easiest and cheapest way to book tickets is through the website of any major carrier. Many offer discounted fares online that aren't available over the phone or through a travel agency. For North Americans, the 'no-frills' carriers that don't offer any meal service or other amenities but get you to your destination expeditiously are usually the best deals. Most of these tickets are non-refundable but can be held and used again if something keeps you from flying on the appointed day. Other websites known to offer discounted fares:

www.bestfares.com/home.asp
www.cheaptickets.com
www.expedia.com
www.travelocity.com

If you have any particular needs – traveling with children, taking a guide dog, kosher or vegan meal requests – it's always better to book directly with the company over the phone or through a travel agent.

At holiday times travelers to Puerto Rico will probably find it difficult to get the flights and fares they want unless they plan – and purchase their tickets – well in advance. Holiday times include Christmas, New Year's Eve, Easter, Memorial Day, Labor Day and Thanksgiving.

Asia

Most Asian countries offer fairly competitive airfare deals, with Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong the best places to shop around for discount tickets. Hong Kong's travel market can be unpredictable, but some excellent bargains are available if you are lucky. **STA Travel** (www.statravel.com) is a good and reliable place to start.

Australia

Two well-known agents for cheap fares are **STA Travel** ([1300 360 960](http://1300360960); www.statravel.com.au), which has offices in major cities and on many university campuses, and **Flight Centre** ([13 16 00](http://131600); www.flightcentre.com.au), which has dozens of offices throughout Australia.

Qantas flies to Los Angeles from Sydney, Melbourne (via Sydney or Auckland) and Cairns. United flies to San Francisco from Sydney and Auckland (via Sydney), and also flies to Los Angeles. Connector flights are available to San Juan.

Canada

Canadian discount air-ticket sellers are also known as consolidators, and their airfares tend to be about 10% higher than those sold in the USA.

Travel CUTS ([800-667-2887](http://8006672887); www.travelcuts.com) is Canada's national student travel agency and has offices in all major cities.

Caribbean & Latin America

Many flights to San Juan from Central and South America are routed through Miami, Houston or New York. A few countries' international flag carriers, such as Lacs and Mexicana, fly directly to San Juan from Latin American cities.

Puerto Rico's link to Antigua, Barbados, Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad is American Airlines and BWIA. ALM Antillean Airlines also has flights to/from Puerto Rico connecting to Aruba, Bonaire, Colombia, Panama, Venezuela and St Maarten.

Cape Air, Air St Thomas, Vieques Air Link, Air Sunshine and others also fly this route.

Continental Europe

Though London is the travel-discount capital of Europe, there are several other cities where you will find a range of good deals. Generally, there is not much variation in airfare prices from the main European

cities. The major airlines and travel agents usually have a number of deals on offer, so shop around.

STA Travel (www.statravel.com) has offices throughout the region. **Nouvelles Frontières** (www.nouvelles-frontieres.com) also has offices throughout the world.

France has a network of student travel agencies that can supply discount tickets to travelers of all ages. **OTU Voyages** ([0820 817 817](http://0820817817); www.otu.fr) and **Voyageurs du Monde** ([01 42 86 16 40](http://0142861640); www.vdm.com) have branches throughout the country and offer some of the best services and deals.

Recommended agencies in Germany include **STA Travel** ([01805 456 422](http://01805456422); www.statravel.de), which has branches in major cities across the country.

In Spain, recommended agencies include **Barcelo Viajes** ([902 116 226](http://902116226); www.barcelo-viajes.es), with offices in major cities.

Lufthansa's subsidiary line Condor flies from Frankfurt to San Juan. Iberia has direct flights from Madrid to San Juan and connecting flights through the Dominican Republic.

New Zealand

STA Travel ([0800 874 773](http://0800874773); www.statravel.co.nz) is a good source of information, and **Flight Centre** ([0800 243 544](http://0800243544); www.flightcentre.co.nz) also has a lot of options. New Zealanders might also want to look at www.roundtheworldflights.com, which has lists of carriers from all over the place who fly to Puerto Rico via Wellington.

UK

Discount air travel is big business in London. Advertisements for travel agencies appear in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers and in *Time Out*.

For students or travelers under 26 years, a popular travel agency in the UK is **STA Travel** ([0870 160 0599](http://08701600599); www.statravel.co.uk), which has branches across the country. STA sells tickets to all travelers, but caters especially to young people and students.

British Airways offers daily connecting flights to San Juan through Miami. Several other airlines feed Miami and Fort Lauderdale from the UK, including American Airlines, Delta Air Lines and Virgin Atlantic. American Airlines offers a connecting service to San Juan.

For information about flights from Aberdeen, Scotland, directly to San Juan, check out **Kasbah Travel** (www.kasbah.com).

The **Globetrotters Club** (www.globetrotters.co.uk; BCM Roving, London WC1N 3XX) publishes a newsletter called *Globe* that covers obscure destinations, and can help you find traveling companions. Check the free magazines widely available in London – start by looking outside the main railway stations.

USA

The most popular routes to Puerto Rico from the US are via New York and Miami, but direct flights from about a dozen other cities in the continental US also serve the island. Some carriers now offer continued service through San Juan to Ponce and Aguadilla, or they fly directly into Aguadilla's airport. Almost all major carriers fly to Puerto Rico; Jet Blue is currently the most popular and economical option.

STA Travel ([800-781-4040](http://8007814040); www.statravel.com) has offices in all major cities.

In addition to the scores of online ticket vendors, a few 'old-school' discount ticket agencies sell reduced-rate tickets to the Caribbean by telephone and by placing small advertisements in newspapers like the *New York Times*. Sometimes these vendors can come up with fares well below internet fares. Try **Pan Express Travel** ([212-719-9292](http://2127199292); www.panexpresstravel.com; 25 W 39th St, New York, NY 10018).

SEA Cruise Ship

San Juan is the second-largest port for cruise ships in the Western Hemisphere (after Miami). More than 24 vessels call San Juan their home port or departure port, and every year new cruise ships either originate sailings in San Juan or make San Juan a port of call. More than one million cruise-ship passengers pass through San Juan per year. Their ships dock at the piers along Calle La Marina near the Customs House and the Sheraton Old San Juan Hotel & Casino, just a short walk from the cobblestone streets of Old San Juan.

Per diem prices vary according to the standard of the ship, but you will be lucky to pay less than \$1700 for a seven-day cruise out of San Juan. However, this price will probably include your airfare and transfers to the ship, as well as all your meals and entertainment.

The **Cruise Line International Association** (CLIA; [212-921-0066](http://2129210066); www.cruising.org; 500 Fifth Ave, No 1407, New York, NY 10110) provides information on cruising and individual lines. Or you can contact the cruise lines directly:

Carnival Cruise Lines ([800-327-9501](http://8003279501))
Celebrity Cruise Lines ([800-437-3111](http://8004373111))
Club Med Cruises ([212-997-2100](http://2129972100))
First European Cruises ([888-893-8767](http://8888938767))
Holland American Line ([800-628-4855](http://8006284855))
Mediterranean Shipping Cruises ([800-628-4855](http://8006284855))
Norwegian Cruise Line ([800-327-7030](http://8003277030))
Princess Cruises ([800-421-0522](http://8004210522))
Radisson Seven Seas ([800-285-1835](http://8002851835))
Royal Caribbean Cruise Line ([800-327-6700](http://8003276700))

Ferry

TO/FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

For a true seafaring adventure, consider the ocean-going ferry between Mayagüez, on Puerto Rico's west coast, and Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic. Currently the massive rainbow-colored ship sails three or four days a week in each direction. See p224.

TO/FROM THE US VIRGIN ISLANDS

Transportation Services Virgin Islands ([340-776-6282](http://3407766282)) runs an irregular ferry service between Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, with ferries leaving Fajardo twice a month; see p147.

Yacht

Crewing aboard a yacht destined for the West Indies from North America or Europe is a popular way of getting to Puerto Rico.

Marinas are located at most major resorts and at principal ports around the Puerto Rican coast.

Upon reaching the island, however, you *must* clear immigration and customs unless you are coming directly from a US port or the US Virgin Islands. There are now numerous online clearinghouses for those seeking yacht-crew positions (both experienced and inexperienced mariners).

These services usually charge a registration fee between \$25 and \$40. Two operations known for their professionalism are the **Yacht Crew Register** ([604-990-9901](http://6049909901); www.yachtcrewregister.com) and **Yacht Crew Inc** ([954-788-3832](http://9547883832); www.yacht-crew.com).

GETTING AROUND

AIR

Because Puerto Rico is such a small island, its domestic air transportation system is understandably basic. Suffice to say there are daily flights between San Juan, Ponce, Aguadilla and Mayagüez. The bulk of Puerto Rico's domestic air traffic links San Juan to the off-shore islands of Culebra and Vieques.

Domestic Airports & Airlines

From its Isla Verde location on the eastern edge of San Juan, LMM (p123) handles a fair amount of the island's scheduled domestic air traffic.

Isla Grande (SJG) airport in San Juan's Miramar district, on the Bahía de San Juan, is the center for private aviation as well as Puerto Rico's air-taxi operations. To get to Culebra and Vieques from this convenient downtown airport, you can fly on **Vieques Air Link** (San Juan–Vieques flights ☎ 787-741-8331, San Juan–Culebra flights ☎ 787-722-3736; www.vieques-island.com/val). Fares to Vieques are \$50/95 one way/round-trip; fares to Culebra are about \$55/95. **Air Flamenco** (☎ 787-724-1818; www.airflamenco.net) also flies these routes at similar fares. Other airports include the following: **Culebra Airport** (CPX; ☎ 787-742-0022; Culebra) **Eugenio María de Hostos Airport** (MAZ; ☎ 787-833-0148; Mayagüez) **Fajardo Airport** (FAJ; ☎ 787-860-3110; Fajardo) **Mercedita Airport** (PSE; ☎ 787-842-6292; Ponce) **Rafael Hernández Airport** (BQN; ☎ 787-891-2286; Aguadilla) **Vieques Airport** (VQS; ☎ 787-741-0515; Vieques)

BICYCLE

While bicycling hasn't traditionally been a popular means of getting around the island, things are changing. Most resorts have at least one bicycle-rental outlet, and independent bicycle supply shops can be found in a few select places. For serious long-distance bicycling, you'll need to bring your own bike or buy one in Puerto Rico. Some of the best routes are highlighted in the Itineraries chapter (p28). For further cycling tips see the Outdoors chapter (p79).

The hazards of cycling in Puerto Rico include nightmare traffic, dangerous drivers and a general lack of awareness about

cyclist's needs. Puerto Rico is a country where the car is king and most natives simply aren't used to seeing touring bikes on the road. Bear this in mind before venturing out on two wheels and stick to quiet back roads and the smaller towns. Never cycle after dark. For further advice (and empathy) contact the Puerto Rican Cycling Federation (p79).

BOAT Charter Yacht

All of the island's major resorts have marinas where you can charter yachts or powerboats, either with a crew or a 'bareboat.' Crewed boats come with a skipper and crew, and you don't need any prior sailing experience. With bareboat charters, you rent the boat and be your own skipper.

Charter companies include the following: **Caribbean School of Aquatics** (☎ 787-728-6606; Condado) **Castillo Watersports** (☎ 787-791-6195; Isla Verde) **Driftwood Charters** (☎ 787-255-0690; Puerto Real) **Erin Go Bragh** (☎ 787-860-4401; Fajardo) **Traveler** (☎ 787-863-2821; Fajardo)

Ferry

The **Puerto Rican Port Authority** (☎ 787-863-0705, car reservations ☎ 800-981-2005) has large, high-speed ferries that run from Fajardo to Culebra and Vieques. While timetables can be changeable and getting on is a bit of a scrum, the boats are generally quick and reliable. See p165 and p180 for schedule and fare details. For reservations, contact the Puerto Rican Port Authority or call the island offices on **Vieques** (☎ 787-741-4761) and **Culebra** (☎ 787-742-3161); reservation office hours are 8am to 11am and 1pm to 3pm weekdays. If you have reservations, plan to pick up your tickets at the ferry terminal a half-hour before the scheduled sailing. If you haven't, the ticket office opens an hour before departure.

Note: reservations go quickly for boats bound for the islands on Friday evening to Saturday morning, and returning to Fajardo on Sunday afternoon to Monday morning, so plan ahead.

BUS

See p292 for information on traveling by bus within San Juan. For intertown travel by público, see p293.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Despite the occasional hazards of operating a car in Puerto Rico, driving is currently the most convenient way to get around the countryside, see small towns, cross sprawling suburbs and explore wide, open spaces. This is particularly relevant to roads such as the Ruta Panorámica where public transport is scant and cycling deemed too dangerous.

On the other side of the coin, it's easy to list the circumstances in which you *won't* want a car. In San Juan, for example, the hassles of traffic, parking and navigating the maze of thoroughfares make using a car in the city a challenge, to say the least. Elsewhere, a liberal scattering of wrecked abandoned vehicles that litter numerous roadsides across the country provide ample testimony to the evils of driving in Puerto Rico. While islanders certainly share a North American love of motor cars, their driving skills inhabit a whole different ballpark (think Mexico City or Guatemala rather than LA).

Puerto Rico's best roads are its Expressway toll roads; these include numbers 22 (San Juan–Arecibo), 66 (San Juan–Canóvanas), 52 (San Juan–Ponce) and 53 (Fajardo–Yabucoa). You must pay a fee on these roads at a booth at one of various entry-exit checkpoints. Prices for 2-axle vehicles range from 50¢ to \$1.50. It is wise to have the right money available.

The next best roads are the main highways such as Hwys 2 and 3 (which effectively ring the island), Hwy 10 (Arecibo–Ponce) and Hwy 30 (Caguas–Humacao). These roads have two to three lanes in either direction but are infested with traffic lights and are often jammed packed with cars – especially during rush hour. With their ubiquitous shopping malls and unsightly concrete satellite towns, they're hardly the best advert for the island's scenic attractions.

Lesser roads are far more charming, but considerably narrower (often only 1½ lanes wide). Crisscrossing the island's precipitous inland terrain, they are also invariably slow and winding. Bank on an average speed of 25mph in the mountains.

In Puerto Rico – rather bizarrely – speed limits are posted in mph and road distances in kilometers.

Driver's License

Any valid driver's license can be used to rent and operate a car or scooter in Puerto Rico. If

you stay longer than 90 days, residency laws say you have to get a Puerto Rican license.

Fuel & Spare Parts

Esso, Shell, Texaco and other major oil companies maintain gas stations across the island. In rural areas, stations usually close on Sunday. Almost everywhere on the island, gas stations generally stay open until about 7pm. At the time of research, the price was about 90¢ a liter for economy gas, which is remarkably inexpensive by international standards. You can use credit cards for fuel purchases in all but rural areas. Don't let your tank go dry, though, because the next station could be a long way up the road.

Garages aren't as readily available, so you should always take a spare tire and a jack with you, and carry some water in case the engine overheats.

Rental

All of the major international car-rental companies operate, along with dozens of smaller, local firms. The trusted names such as Avis and Hertz are usually the safest bet. Most companies require that you have a major credit card, that you be at least 25 years old and that you have a valid driver's license (your home license will do). Some companies (Budget, for example), may rent to drivers between the ages of 21 and 24 for an additional charge. Larger companies will accept debit cards, but expect them to put at least a \$500 hold on your funds until the car is safely returned.

Car-rental agencies are listed in the local Yellow Pages and in the Puerto Rico Tourism Company's (PRTC) publication, *Qué Pasa*. You will find plenty of rental companies at the LMM airport, in major cities and in resort towns ringing the island's coast. Agencies in San Juan include the following:

AAA (☎ 787-791-1465)
Alamo (☎ 787-753-2265, 800-327-9633)
Avis (☎ 800-874-3556)
Budget (☎ 787-791-0600, 800-468-5822)
Charlie Car Rental (☎ 787-728-2418)
Dollar Rent-A-Car (☎ 787-591-5500)
Hertz (☎ 787-791-0840, 800-654-3131)
L&M (☎ 787-725-8307, 800-666-0807)
National (☎ 787-791-1805, 800-568-3019)
Target (☎ 787-728-1447, 800-934-6457)
Thrifty (☎ 787-253-2525, 800-367-2277)
Wheelchair Getaways Rent-A-Car (☎ 787-883-0131, 800-868-8028)

Insurance

Liability insurance is required in Puerto Rico, as in most US states. Insurance against damage to the car, called Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) or Loss Damage Waiver (LDW), is usually optional, but will often require you to pay for the first \$100 or \$500. Some credit-card companies cover car rentals, so extra coverage may not be needed. Always take some insurance – accidents happen far too easily. Note also that most rental agencies don't cover accidents that happen on Culebra or Vieques. You aren't supposed to take cars there because there's no way to get a tow-truck to you in an emergency. Nobody at the ferry will stop you from bringing a rental to the island, but any accidents, nicks or dings will be paid for with your money.

Road Conditions & Hazards

Puerto Rico has the best roads in the Caribbean – and the worst traffic jams!

What you need to watch out for are island animals – dogs, chickens, horses, pigs – that wander across the roads, particularly in the mountains, and on Culebra and Vieques.

Road Rules

You must be at least 16 years old to drive a car in Puerto Rico. Going more than 10 miles an hour over the speed limit will eventually result in a speeding ticket. In rural areas, where speed limits aren't always posted, use common sense and watch for school zones, where 15mph (strictly enforced during school hours) is the norm. Most highway signs employ international symbols, but one common source of confusion is that distances on island

roads are measured in kilometers, while speed limits are posted in miles per hour.

Driving rules here are basically the same as they are in the US. Traffic proceeds along the right side of the road and moves counterclockwise around traffic circles; seat belts and motorcycle helmets must be worn; and children younger than four must travel in child safety seats.

Carjacking, though rare, is not unheard of in Puerto Rico so stopping for anyone who waves you down or approaches your vehicle carries significant risk. Letting a stranger into your car is – sadly – like playing Russian roulette. Many island drivers notoriously ignore stoplights and stop signs late at night – supposedly for fear of making themselves targets for carjackers.

HITCHING

Hitching is not recommended in Puerto Rico.

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

Bus

Puerto Rico does not presently have an islandwide bus service. San Juan, however is a different matter and buses are cheap, abundant and well-run. The system is administered via the **Autoridad Metropolitana de Autobuses** (AMA; Metropolitan Bus Authority; ☎ 787-767-7979; www.dtop.gov.pr/ama/default.htm, in Spanish) and **Metrobus** (☎ 787-763-4141). AMA buses charge 50¢ to any destination on their routes; Metrobuses usually charge 75¢. See p123 for specifics on routes and schedules. Visitors can identify bus stops by an obelisk marker that reads 'Parada' or 'Parada

de Guaguas' (Bus Stop). Bus system maps are everywhere.

See opposite for information on públicos.

Metro

The Tren Urbano is the brand new public transportation system that shuttles people around San Juan. The only one of its kind in the Caribbean, it runs 12 miles from Sagrado Corazon in Santurce to Bayamón, stopping at 16 stations along the way. Ultramodern and efficient, the Tren opened in 2005 after years of delays.

Although it still avoids the areas of main tourist interest, plans are afoot to extend it in the future. Tickets are a standard \$1.50 one-way. See also p124

Públicos

Públicos are essentially intertown minibuses that run prescribed routes during daylight hours. Some públicos make relatively long hauls between places such as San Juan and Ponce or Mayagüez, but most make much shorter trips, providing a link between communities. Públicos usually make their pickups and drop-offs at a van stand on or near a town's central plaza, so you will pay extra if

you want the driver to take you to a destination that is off the route. The catch is that travel takes a long time, as the driver stops frequently to let people on and off.

For schedules and fares, inquire at the público stands in town plazas or at San Juan's LMM airport. You can also look under *Lineas de Carros* in the Yellow Pages telephone directory. **Choferes Unidos de Ponce** (☎ 787-764-0540) makes the San Juan-Ponce run; **Lineas Sultanas** (☎ 787-765-9377) will get you from San Juan to Mayagüez.

As públicos stop almost everywhere they are also useful for getting around the smaller spread-out municipalities such as Fajardo and Mayagüez. Once again, you'll need to be patient. For more information on públicos see p141.

Taxi

Taxis are available in most of the midsized to large cities on the island, and in theory they all use meters. Getting the driver to turn it on can be quite a challenge, however, so either establish what you are willing to pay up front or threaten to get out if the driver won't hit the button. San Juan is the exception to this haggling hassle: its 'tourist taxis' have fixed rates for all their trips. See p124.

LOW-IMPACT TRANSPORTATION

- Puerto Rico is a small island and in-country flying is largely superfluous – unless you're the president or in a major hurry. Rather than catching a plane to the outlying islands of Culebra and Vieques, get the scenic 1- to 1½-hour ferry from Fajardo instead.
- San Juan has a great public transportation system that is both far-reaching and cheap, making car hire in the capital largely unnecessary.
- Hire a bike where feasible and discover Puerto Rico's quieter corners on two wheels.
- Resist renting a car on the tiny island of Culebra (there are far too many of them already). Instead, use públicos, a bicycle and your own two feet.
- Aim to take at least one journey on a público and find out what these colorful street-theaters-on-wheels are all about.
- Experience the space age modernity of San Juan's new Tren Urbano.

Health

Dr David Goldberg

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Prevention is the key to staying healthy while traveling. Travelers who receive the recommended vaccines and follow common-sense precautions usually come away with nothing more than a little diarrhea.

BEFORE YOU GO

Bring medications in their original containers, clearly labeled. A signed, dated letter from your physician describing all medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

INSURANCE

If your health insurance does not cover you for medical expenses abroad, consider supplemental insurance. US travelers can find a list of medical evacuation and travel insurance companies on the **US State Department website** (www.travel.state.gov). Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, visit a physician four to eight weeks

before departure. Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of Vaccination (otherwise known as the yellow booklet), which will list all the vaccinations you've received. This is mandatory for countries that require proof of yellow fever vaccination upon entry, but it's a good idea to carry it wherever you travel.

No vaccines are required for Puerto Rico, but a number are recommended; see p297.

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the internet:

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) A great place to start.

MD Travel Health (www.mdtravelhealth.com) Another website of general interest which provides complete travel health recommendations for every country, updated daily, at no cost.

World Health Organization (www.who.int/ith) Available online at no cost as well as in book form – *International Travel and Health* – which is revised annually.

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel health website before departure, if one is available:

United States www.cdc.gov/travel

Canada www.hc-sc.gc.ca

United Kingdom www.dh.gov.uk

FURTHER READING

If you're traveling with children, you might want to read Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* before you leave. The *ABC of Healthy Travel*, by E Walker et al, is another valuable resource.

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

Blood clots may form in the legs (deep vein thrombosis; DVT) during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they could cause life-threatening complications.

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

- Antibiotics
- Antidiarrheal drugs (eg loperamide)
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or aspirin
- Anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- Antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- Antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions
- Steroid cream or cortisone (for poison ivy and other allergic rashes)
- Bandages, gauze, gauze rolls
- Adhesive or paper tape
- Scissors, safety pins, tweezers
- Thermometer
- Pocket knife
- Insect repellent for the skin
- Permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents, and bed nets
- Sun block
- Oral rehydration salts
- Iodine tablets (for water purification)
- Syringes and sterile needles

The chief symptom of deep vein thrombosis is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and make breathing difficult. Travelers with any of these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

To prevent the development of deep vein thrombosis on long flights you should walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol.

JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is common when crossing more than five time zones, and can result in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag try drinking plenty of fluids (nonalcoholic) and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. Their main side effect is drowsiness. An herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

IN PUERTO RICO

From a medical standpoint, Puerto Rico is generally safe and its close relationship with the US means standards are generally higher than elsewhere in the Caribbean. The most common travel-related diseases, such as dysentery and hepatitis, are acquired by consumption of contaminated food and water. Mosquito-borne illnesses are not a significant concern in most of the islands, except during outbreaks of dengue fever.

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

For emergencies in Puerto Rico, call ☎ 911. Excellent medical facilities are available in Puerto Rico. A number of hospitals have emergency rooms, including:

Ashford Presbyterian Memorial Community Hospital (Map pp98-9; ☎ 787-721-2160; 1451 Av Ashford, Condado, San Juan)

General Hospital Dr Ramón Emeterio Betances (off Map p221; ☎ 787-735-8001; Rte 2 Km 157, Mayagüez)

Hospital Manuel Comunitario Dr Pila (Map p186; ☎ 787-848-5600; Av Las Américas east of Av Hostos, Ponce)

Hospital Damas (☎ 787-840-8686; 2213 Ponce By Pass, Ponce)

Hospital Dr Dominguez (☎ 787-852-0505; 300 Font Martello, Humacao)

University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine (Map p102; ☎ 787-758-7910; UPR School of Medicine, A-878 Main Building, Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan) For more complicated medical problems, make an appointment here. The Faculty Practice Plan at the university offers a broad array of specialists and sophisticated diagnostic facilities.

Many doctors and hospitals expect payment in cash, regardless of whether you have travel health insurance. If you develop a life-threatening medical problem, you'll probably want to be evacuated to a country with state-of-the-art medical care. This could cost tens of thousands of dollars, so be sure you have insurance to cover this before you depart.

Pharmacies (*farmacias*) in Puerto Rico are generally well-stocked with medications up to North American standards. All pharmacists are fully trained and professionally licensed.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Dengue Fever

Dengue fever is a viral infection found throughout the Caribbean. In Puerto Rico, the incidence usually peaks between September and November. Major outbreaks occurred in 1994 and 1998. Dengue is transmitted by *Aedes* mosquitoes, which tend to bite during the daytime and are usually found close to human habitations, often indoors. They breed primarily in artificial water containers such as jars, barrels, cans, cisterns, metal drums, plastic containers and discarded tires. As a result, dengue is especially common in densely populated, urban environments.

Dengue usually causes flulike symptoms, including fever, muscle aches, joint pains, headaches, nausea and vomiting, often followed by a rash. The body aches may be quite uncomfortable, but most cases resolve uneventfully in a few days. Severe cases usually occur in children under age 15 who are experiencing their second dengue infection.

There is no treatment for dengue fever except to take analgesics such as acetaminophen/paracetamol (Tylenol) and drink plenty of fluids. Severe cases may require hospitalization for intravenous fluids and supportive care. There is no vaccine. The cornerstone of prevention is insect protection measures – see Mosquito Bites (p299).

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is the second most common travel-related infection (after travelers' diarrhea). It occurs throughout the Caribbean, particularly in the northern islands. Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver that is usually acquired by ingestion, though it may also be acquired by direct contact with infected persons. It occurs throughout the world, but the incidence is higher in developing nations. Symptoms may include fever, malaise, jaundice, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. Most cases resolve without complications, though hepatitis A occasionally causes liver damage. There is no treatment.

The vaccine for hepatitis A is extremely safe and highly effective. If you get a booster six to twelve months later, it lasts for at least 10

years. It's a good idea to get it before you go to Puerto Rico or any other developing area. Because the safety of the hepatitis A vaccine has not been established for pregnant women or children under the age of two, they should instead be given a gammaglobulin injection.

Hepatitis B

Like hepatitis A, hepatitis B is a liver infection that occurs worldwide but is more common in developing nations. Unlike hepatitis A, the disease is usually acquired by sexual contact or by exposure to infected blood, generally through blood transfusions or contaminated needles. The vaccine is recommended only for long-term travelers (on the road more than six months) who expect to live in rural areas or have close physical contact with the local population. Additionally, the vaccine is recommended for anyone who anticipates sexual contact with the local inhabitants or a possible need for medical, dental or other treatments while abroad, especially if a need for transfusions or injections is expected.

The hepatitis B vaccine is safe and highly effective. However, a total of three injections are necessary to establish full immunity. Several countries added the hepatitis B vaccine to the list of routine childhood immunizations in the 1980s, so many young adults are already protected.

Malaria

In the Caribbean, malaria occurs only in Haiti and certain parts of the Dominican Republic. Malaria pills aren't necessary for Puerto Rico.

Rabies

Rabies is a viral infection of the brain and spinal cord that is almost always fatal. The rabies virus is carried in the saliva of infected animals and is typically transmitted through an animal bite, though contamination of any break in the skin with infected saliva may result in rabies. Rabies occurs in several of the Caribbean islands, including Puerto Rico.

Rabies vaccine is safe, but a full series requires three injections and is quite expensive. Those at high risk for rabies, such as animal handlers and spelunkers (cave explorers), should certainly get the vaccine. In addition, those at lower risk for animal bites should

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Vaccine	Recommended for	Dosage	Side Effects
hepatitis A	all travelers	one dose before trip; booster six to 12 months later	soreness at injection site; headaches; body aches
typhoid	extended stays in rural areas	four capsules by mouth, one taken every other day	abdominal pain; nausea; rash
hepatitis B	long-term travelers in close contact with the local population	three doses over six-month period	soreness at injection site; low-grade fever
rabies	travelers who may have contact with animals and may not have access to medical care	three doses over three- to four-week period	soreness at injection site; headaches; body aches. Expensive.
tetanus-diphtheria	all travelers who haven't had booster within 10 years	one dose lasts 10 years	soreness at injection site
measles	travelers born after 1956 who've had only one measles vaccination	one dose	fever; rash; joint pains; allergic reactions
chickenpox	travelers who've never had chickenpox	two doses, one month apart	fever; mild case of chickenpox

consider asking for the vaccine if they might be traveling to remote areas and might not have access to appropriate medical care if needed. The treatment for a possibly rabid bite consists of a rabies vaccine with rabies immunoglobulin. It's effective, but must be given promptly. Most travelers don't need a rabies vaccine.

All animal bites and scratches must be promptly and thoroughly cleansed with large amounts of soap and water, and local health authorities need to be contacted to determine whether or not further treatment is necessary (see Animal Bites, p299).

Other Infections

An outbreak of **viral meningitis** caused by echovirus 30 occurred between June and September 2004, resulting in more than 400 cases, chiefly in children. The outbreak began in the southern coastal town of Arroyo, then spread to the eastern coastal town of Cieba and the mountain town of Aibonito. Echoviruses are spread by direct contact with the respiratory secretions or feces of an infected person. To protect yourself from viral meningitis, you should pay careful attention at all times to hand-washing and personal hygiene, especially after using the toilet, before eating, and after changing diapers (nappies). The chief symptoms of meningitis are fever, severe headache, stiff neck, sensitivity to bright light, drowsiness or confusion, and nausea and vomiting. Anyone who develops

these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention. Viral meningitis, unlike bacterial meningitis, does not in general lead to serious complications.

An outbreak of **acute hemorrhagic conjunctivitis** (pink-eye), a viral infection characterized by the sudden onset of painful, swollen, red eyes with bleeding and tearing, occurred between August and October 2003. Almost half a million people were involved, chiefly school-aged children and those living in crowded urban areas. A previous outbreak was reported in 1997. In most cases, the illness resolves uneventfully, but may cause significant discomfort and temporary incapacity. You can protect yourself from acute hemorrhagic conjunctivitis by frequent hand-washing and by not sharing towels or bedding.

Schistosomiasis is a parasitic infection acquired by swimming, wading, bathing or washing in fresh water that contains infected snails. Early symptoms may include fever, loss of appetite, weight loss, abdominal pain, weakness, headaches, joint and muscle pains, diarrhea, nausea and cough, but most infections are asymptomatic at first. Long-term complications may include kidney failure, malabsorption, enlargement of the liver and spleen, engorgement of the esophageal blood vessels, and accumulation of fluid in the abdominal cavity.

To protect yourself from schistosomiasis, you should avoid swimming, wading or rafting in bodies of fresh water, such as lakes,

ponds, streams or rivers. Unless known to be safe, water for bathing or showering should be heated to 150° F for at least five minutes or held in a storage tank for at least three days. Toweling yourself dry after unavoidable or accidental exposure to contaminated water may reduce the likelihood of schistosomiasis, but does not reliably prevent the disease and is no substitute for the precautions above. Swimming in the ocean or a chlorinated swimming pool carries no risk of schistosomiasis.

Typhoid fever is caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated by a species of *Salmonella* known as *Salmonella typhi*. It's reported in most of the Caribbean islands, but is uncommon. Typhoid vaccine is recommended only for those planning an extended stay in rural areas or expecting to consume potentially contaminated food. The vaccine is usually given by mouth, but is also available as an injection. Neither vaccine is approved for use in children under age two. If you get typhoid fever, the drug of choice is usually a quinolone antibiotic such as ciprofloxacin (Cipro) or levofloxacin (Levaquin), which many travelers carry for treatment of travelers' diarrhea.

Fascioliasis is a parasitic infection that is typically acquired by eating contaminated watercress that has been grown in sheep-raising areas. Early symptoms may include fever, nausea, vomiting and painful enlargement of the liver.

HIV/AIDS has been reported from all Caribbean countries. Be sure to use condoms for all sexual encounters.

TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA

To prevent diarrhea, avoid tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (iodine tablets); only eat fresh fruits or vegetables if cooked or peeled; be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurized milk; and be highly selective when eating food from street vendors.

If you develop diarrhea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing lots of salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment but, if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an anti-diarrheal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhea is bloody or persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain you should seek medical attention.

FOLK REMEDIES

Problem	Treatment
Jet lag	Melatonin
Motion sickness	Ginger
Mosquito bite	Eucalyptus oil
Prevention	Soybean oil

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Water

The tap water in Puerto Rico is generally safe to drink. If you have a sensitive stomach or prefer filtered water, most shops stock bottled varieties.

If you're camping or out in the 'wilds,' another option is to disinfect water with iodine pills. Instructions are usually enclosed and should be carefully followed. Alternatively, you can add 2% tincture of iodine to 1L of water (5 drops to clear water, 10 drops to cloudy water) and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cold, longer times may be required.

The taste of iodinated water may be improved by adding vitamin C (ascorbic acid). Iodinated water should not be consumed for more than a few weeks. Pregnant women, those with a history of thyroid disease and those allergic to iodine should not drink iodinated water.

A number of water filters are on the market. Those with smaller pores (reverse osmosis filters) provide the broadest protection, but they are relatively large and are readily plugged by debris. Those with somewhat larger pores (microstrainer filters) are ineffective against viruses, although they remove other organisms. Manufacturers' instructions must be carefully followed.

Sun

To protect yourself from excessive sun exposure, you should stay out of the midday sun, wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed sun hat, and apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher, with both UVA and UVB protection. Sunscreen should be generously applied to all exposed parts of the body approximately 30 minutes before sun exposure and should be reapplied after swimming or vigorous activity.

Travelers should also drink plenty of fluids and avoid strenuous exercise when the temperature is high.

Animal Bites

Do not attempt to pet, handle or feed any animal, with the exception of domestic animals known to be free of any infectious disease. Most animal injuries are directly related to a person's attempt to touch or feed the animal.

Any bite or scratch by a mammal, including bats, should be promptly and thoroughly cleansed with large amounts of soap and water, followed by application of an antiseptic such as iodine or alcohol. The local health authorities should be contacted immediately for possible postexposure rabies treatment, whether or not you've been immunized against rabies. It may also be advisable to start an antibiotic, since wounds caused by animal bites and scratches frequently become infected. One of the newer quinolones, such as levofloxacin (Levaquin), which many travelers carry in case of diarrhea, would be an appropriate choice.

Snakes are a hazard in some of the Caribbean islands. In the event of a venomous snake bite, place the victim at rest, keep the bitten area immobilized, and move the victim immediately to the nearest medical facility. Avoid tourniquets, which are no longer recommended. Spiny sea urchins and coelenterates (coral and jellyfish) are a hazard in some areas.

MOSQUITO BITES

Mosquito-borne illnesses are usually not a concern in Puerto Rico. However, outbreaks of dengue fever have occurred in the recent past, so you should be aware of the means of preventing mosquito bites, if necessary. If dengue or other mosquito-borne illnesses are being reported, you should keep yourself covered (wear long sleeves, long pants, hats and shoes rather than sandals) and apply a good insect repellent to exposed skin and clothing. A bug spray containing DEET does the best job of warding off insects, but try to use it

sparingly as it also is known to kill some of the natural organisms that live in the island's bays and inlets. Do not apply DEET to eyes, mouth, cuts, wounds or irritated skin. Products containing lower concentrations of DEET are as effective, but for shorter periods of time. In general, adults and children over 12 should use preparations containing 25% to 35% DEET, which usually lasts about six hours. Children between two and 12 years of age should use preparations containing no more than 10% DEET, applied sparingly, which will usually last about three hours. Neurologic toxicity has been reported from DEET, especially in children, but appears to be extremely uncommon and generally related to overuse. DEET-containing compounds should not be used on children under age two.

Insect repellents containing certain botanical products, including eucalyptus oil and soybean oil, are effective but last only 1½ to two hours. Products based on citronella are not effective.

For additional protection, you can apply permethrin to clothing, shoes, tents and bed nets. Permethrin treatments are safe and remain effective for at least two weeks, even when items are laundered. Permethrin should not be applied directly to skin.

CHILDREN & PREGNANT WOMEN

In general, it's safe for children and pregnant women to go to Puerto Rico. However, because some of the vaccines listed on p294 are not approved for use in children or during pregnancy, these travelers should be particularly careful not to drink tap water or consume any questionable food or beverages. Also, when traveling with children, make sure they're up-to-date on all routine immunizations. It's sometimes appropriate to give children some of their vaccines a little early before visiting a developing nation. You should discuss this with your pediatrician.

Language

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Many seasoned Spanish speakers find themselves a little off balance when they first hear Spanish in Puerto Rico. In fact, two very different forms of Spanish are spoken on the island. Every Puerto Rican learns to speak Standard Modern Spanish in school, and this is the language you'll hear from hotel and restaurant staff if you address them in Spanish.

However, the Spanish you hear on the streets is Antillian Spanish or, as it's also known, Boricua (the language of Borinquen). For a number of reasons, the rhythm and sound of spoken Boricua takes an ear trained in Castilian, Mexican or South American dialects a little time to get used to.

Most of the original Spanish colonists of Puerto Rico came from Andalucía, Extremadura or the Canary Islands and brought with them the regional tendencies to relax or devoice consonants. This style persists to the extreme on the island's streets. When you hear two well-acquainted Puerto Ricans of any social class speaking together, you will notice their strong tendency to totally drop the pronunciation of final consonants like **s** and **d**, and sometimes articles like *el* or *la*. A standard Spanish sentence such as *vamos a la ciudad* (let's go to the city) becomes 'vamo a ciudá' in Boricua, and *muchas gracias* (thanks very much) becomes 'mucha gracia.'

The sounds of consonants are changed or even dropped in the middle and ends of words. A classic example is the tendency to drop the **d** in past participles, so that the standard Spanish *asopado* (stewed or stew) becomes 'asopao,' the accepted name and spelling for a traditional Puerto Rican stew. When an **r** appears next to another consonant in the middle (and sometimes at the end) of a word, it is often pronounced as an 'l,' thus *farmacia* (pharmacy) becomes 'falma-cia' and *comprar* (buy) becomes 'compral.'

Some Puerto Ricans – especially those from the interior – reverse this, replacing an **r** next to another consonant in the middle or at the end of the word with a spoken 'l.' A word like *dulce* (a sweet or candy) becomes 'durce' and *hotel* changes to 'hoter.'

Several other linguistic variants characterize Boricua: *seseo* is the pronunciation of the soft **c** sound as an 's' rather than the 'th' of Castilian Spanish – *placer* (pleasure) is pronounced 'pla-thair' in Madrid, but 'plaisair' in San Juan. *Yeísmo* is the tendency to pronounce the trilled **ll** of a Spanish word like *amarillo* (yellow) as an English 'y' or even a 'j,' so the word in Boricua sounds like 'amariyo' or even 'amarijo.' When Puerto Ricans come across a word like *carro* (car), they change the trilled **rr** to an 'h' – 'cahro.' The letter **v** is always pronounced like a 'b,' as in most Spanish-speaking countries. Hence, *Venga!* (Come!) sounds like 'benga.'

Travelers hoping to submerge themselves in the island's rich culture need to have some command of basic Spanish vocabulary, as well as some sense of the distinctions between Puerto Rican and other kinds of Spanish. However, even if you speak Spanish well, you can expect Puerto Ricans, proud of their hard-earned English skills, to address you in English. One of the great rewards for many travelers to Puerto Rico is remaining long enough at a destination to hear the locals address them in Spanish.

For a more detailed guide to the language, get a copy of Lonely Planet's compact *Latin American Spanish Phrasebook*.

PRONUNCIATION

Pronunciation of Spanish is not difficult. Many Spanish sounds are similar to their English counterparts, and the relationship between pronunciation and spelling is clear and consistent. Unless otherwise indicated, the English examples used below take standard American pronunciation.

Vowels & Diphthongs

a	as in 'father'
e	as in 'met'
i	as the 'i' in 'police'
o	as in British English 'hot'
u	as the 'u' in 'rude'
ai	as in 'aisle'
au	as the 'ow' in 'how'
ei	as in 'vein'
ia	as the 'ya' in 'yard'
ie	as the 'ye' in 'yes'
oi	as in 'coin'
ua	as the 'wa' in 'wash'
ue	as the 'we' in 'well'

Consonants

Spanish consonants are generally the same as in English, with the exception of those listed below.

The consonants **ch**, **ll** and **ñ** are generally considered distinct letters, but in dictionaries **ch** and **ll** are now often listed alphabetically under **c** and **l** respectively. The letter **ñ** still has a separate entry after **n** in alphabetical listings.

b	similar to English 'b,' but softer; referred to as 'b larga'
c	as in 'celery' before e and i ; elsewhere as the 'k' in 'king'
ch	as in 'choose'
d	as in 'dog'; between vowels and after l or n , it's closer to the 'th' in 'this'
g	as the 'ch' in the Scottish <i>loch</i> before e and i ('kh' in our pronunciation guides); elsewhere, as in 'go'
h	invariably silent
j	as the 'ch' in the Scottish <i>loch</i> ('kh' in our pronunciation guides)
ll	as the 'y' in 'yellow'
ñ	as the 'ni' in 'onion'
r	as in 'run,' but strongly rolled
rr	very strongly rolled
v	similar to English 'b,' but softer; referred to as 'b corta'

x	usually pronounced as j above; as in 'taxi' in other instances
z	as the 's' in 'sun'

Word Stress

In general, words ending in vowels or the letters **n** or **s** are stressed on the second-last syllable, while those with other endings have stress on the last syllable. Thus *vaca* (cow) and *caballos* (horses) are both stressed on the next-to-last syllable, while *ciudad* (city) and *infeliz* (unhappy) are stressed on the last syllable.

Written accents generally indicate words that don't follow the rules above, eg *sótano* (basement), *América* and *porción* (portion).

GENDER & PLURALS

In Spanish, nouns are either masculine or feminine, and there are rules to help determine gender (there are of course some exceptions). Feminine nouns generally end with **-a** or with the groups **-ción**, **-sión** or **-dad**. Other endings typically signify a masculine noun. Endings for adjectives also change to agree with the gender of the noun they modify (masculine/feminine singular **-o/-a**). Where both masculine and feminine forms are included in this language guide, they are separated by a slash, with the masculine form first, eg *perdido/a* (lost).

If a noun or adjective ends in a vowel, the plural is formed by adding **s** to the end. If it ends in a consonant, the plural is formed by adding **es** to the end.

ACCOMMODATIONS

I'm looking for ...

Estoy buscando ... e-stoy boos-kan-do ...

Where is ...?

<i>¿Dónde hay ...?</i>	<i>don-de ai ...</i>	
a hotel	<i>un hotel</i>	oon o-tel
a boarding house	<i>una pensión</i>	oo-na pen-syon
a youth hostel	<i>un albergue juvenil</i>	oon al-ber-ge khoo-ve-neeel

Are there any rooms available?

¿Hay habitaciones libres? ay a-bee-ta-syon-es lee-bres

I'd like a ...	<i>Quisiera una habitación ...</i>	kee-sye-ra oo-na a-bee-ta-syon ...
room.	<i>doble</i>	dó-ble
double	<i>individual</i>	een-dee-bee-dwal
single	<i>con dos camas</i>	kon dos ka-mas
twin		

MAKING A RESERVATION

(for phone or written requests)

To ...	A ...
From ...	De ...
Date	Fecha

I'd like to book ... *Quisiera reservar ...*
(see the list under 'Accommodations' for bed and room options)

in the name of ... *en nombre de ...*
for the nights of ... *para las noches del ...*
credit card ... *tarjeta de crédito ...*
number *número*
expiry date *fecha de vencimiento*

Please confirm ... *Puede confirmar ...*
availability *la disponibilidad*
price *el precio*

How much is it per ...?	<i>¿Cuánto cuesta por ...?</i>	<i>kwan-to kwes-ta por ...</i>
night	<i>noche</i>	<i>no-che</i>
person	<i>persona</i>	<i>per-so-na</i>
week	<i>semana</i>	<i>se-ma-na</i>

private/shared bathroom	<i>baño privado/compartido</i>	<i>ba-nyo pree-va-do/kom-par-tee-do</i>
full board	<i>penión completa</i>	<i>pen-syon kom-ple-ta</i>
too expensive	<i>demasiado caro</i>	<i>de-ma-sya-do ka-ro</i>
cheaper	<i>más económico</i>	<i>mas e-ko-no-mee-ko</i>
discount	<i>descuento</i>	<i>des-kwen-to</i>

Does it include breakfast?*¿Incluye el desayuno?* *een-kloo-ye el de-sa-yoo-no***May I see the room?***¿Puedo ver la habitación?* *pwe-do ver la a-bee-ta-syon***I don't like it.***No me gusta.* *no me goos-ta***It's fine. I'll take it.***OK. La alquilo.* *o-kay la al-kee-lo***I'm leaving now.***Me voy ahora.* *me voy a-o-ra***CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS**

Hello.	<i>Hola.</i>	<i>o-la</i>
Good morning.	<i>Buenos días.</i>	<i>bwe-nos dee-as</i>
Good afternoon.	<i>Buenas tardes.</i>	<i>bwe-nas tar-des</i>
Good evening/night.	<i>Buenas noches.</i>	<i>bwe-nas no-ches</i>

Bye/See you soon.	<i>Hasta luego.</i>	<i>as-ta lwe-go</i>
Yes.	<i>Sí.</i>	<i>see</i>
No.	<i>No.</i>	<i>no</i>
Please.	<i>Por favor.</i>	<i>por fa-vor</i>
Thank you.	<i>Gracias.</i>	<i>gra-syas</i>
Many thanks.	<i>Muchas gracias.</i>	<i>moo-chas gra-syas</i>
You're welcome.	<i>De nada.</i>	<i>de na-da</i>
Pardon me.	<i>Perdón.</i>	<i>per-don</i>
Excuse me.	<i>Permiso.</i>	<i>per-mee-so</i>
Forgive me.	<i>Disculpe.</i>	<i>dees-kool-pe</i>

How are things?*¿Qué tal?* *ke tal***What's your name?***¿Cómo se llama? (pol)* *ko-mo se ya-ma*
¿Cómo te llamas? (inf) *ko-mo te ya-mas***My name is ...***Me llamo ...* *me ya-mo ...***It's a pleasure to meet you.***Mucho gusto.* *moo-cho goos-to***The pleasure is mine.***El gusto es mío.* *el goos-to es mee-o***Where are you from?***¿De dónde es? (pol)* *de don-de es*
¿De dónde eres? (inf) *de don-de er-es***I'm from ...***Soy de ...* *soy de ...***Where are you staying?***¿Dónde está alojado/a? (pol)* *don-de es-ta a-lo-kha-do/a*
¿Dónde estás alojado/a? (inf) *don-de es-tas a-lo-kha-do/a***May I take a photo?***¿Puedo sacar una foto?* *pwe-do sa-ka-er oo-na fo-to***DIRECTIONS****How do I get to ...?***¿Cómo puedo llegar a ...?* *ko-mo pwe-do ye-gar a ...***Is it far?***¿Está lejos?* *es-ta le-khos***SIGNS**

Entrada	Entrance
Salida	Exit
Información	Information
Abierto	Open
Cerrado	Closed
Prohibido	Prohibited
Comisaría	Police Station
Servicios/Baños	Toilets
Hombres/Varones	Men
Mujeres/Damas	Women

Go straight ahead.*Siga derecho.* *see-ga de-re-cho***Turn left.***Voltee a la izquierda.* *vol-te-e a la ees-kyer-da***Turn right.***Voltee a la derecha.* *vol-te-e a la de-re-cha***Can you show me (on the map)?***¿Me lo podría indicar (en el mapa)?* *me lo po-dree-a een-dee-ka-er (en el ma-pa)*

north	<i>norte</i>	<i>nor-te</i>
south	<i>sur</i>	<i>soor</i>
east	<i>este</i>	<i>es-te</i>
west	<i>oeste</i>	<i>o-es-te</i>

here	<i>aquí</i>	<i>a-kee</i>
there	<i>allí</i>	<i>a-ye</i>
avenue	<i>avenida</i>	<i>a-ve-nee-da</i>
block	<i>cuadra</i>	<i>kwa-dra</i>
street	<i>calle</i>	<i>ka-ye</i>

EMERGENCIAS

Help!	<i>¡Socorro!</i>	<i>so-ko-ro</i>
Fire!	<i>¡Incendio!</i>	<i>een-sen-dyo</i>
I've been robbed.	<i>Me robaron.</i>	<i>me ro-ba-ron</i>
Go away!	<i>¡Déjeme!</i>	<i>de-khe-me</i>
Get lost!	<i>¡Váyase!</i>	<i>va-ya-se</i>

Call ...! *¡Llame a ...!* *ya-me a*

an ambulance	<i>una ambulancia</i>	<i>oo-na am-boo-lan-sya</i>
a doctor	<i>un médico</i>	<i>oon me-dee-ko</i>
the police	<i>la policía</i>	<i>la po-lee-see-a</i>

It's an emergency.*Es una emergencia.* *es oo-na e-mer-khen-sya***Could you help me, please?***¿Me puede ayudar, por favor?* *me pwe-de a-yoo-dar por fa-vor***I'm lost.***Estoy perdido/a. (m/f)* *es-toy per-dee-do/a***Where are the toilets?***¿Dónde están los baños?* *don-de es-tan los ba-nyos***HEALTH****I'm sick.***Estoy enfermo/a.* *es-toy en-fer-mo/a***I need a doctor.***Necesito un médico.* *ne-se-see-to oon me-dee-ko***Where's the hospital?***¿Dónde está el hospital?* *don-de es-ta el os-pee-tal***I'm pregnant.***Estoy embarazada.* *es-toy em-ba-ra-sa-da***I've been vaccinated.***Estoy vacunado/a.* *es-toy va-koo-na-do/a*

I'm allergic to ...	<i>Soy alérgico/a a ...</i>	<i>soy a-ler-khee-ko/a a ...</i>
antibiotics	<i>los antibióticos</i>	<i>los an-tee-byo-tee-kos</i>
nuts	<i>las fruta secas</i>	<i>las froo-tas se-kas</i>
penicillin	<i>la penicilina</i>	<i>la pe-nee-see-lee-na</i>
I'm ...	<i>Soy ...</i>	<i>soy ...</i>
asthmatic	<i>asmático/a</i>	<i>as-ma-tee-ko/a</i>
diabetic	<i>diabético/a</i>	<i>dee-ya-be-tee-ko/a</i>
epileptic	<i>epiléptico/a</i>	<i>e-pee-lep-tee-ko/a</i>

I have ...	<i>Tengo ...</i>	<i>ten-go ...</i>
a cough	<i>tos</i>	<i>tos</i>
diarrhea	<i>diarrea</i>	<i>dya-re-a</i>
a headache	<i>un dolor de cabeza</i>	<i>oon do-lor de ka-be-sa</i>
nausea	<i>náusea</i>	<i>now-se-a</i>

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES**Do you speak (English)?***¿Habla/Hablas (inglés)?* *a-bla/a-blas (een-gles) (pol/inf)***Does anyone here speak English?***¿Hay alguien que hable inglés?* *ai al-gyen ke a-ble een-gles***I (don't) understand.***(No) Entiendo.* *(no) en-tyen-do***How do you say ...?***¿Cómo se dice ...?* *ko-mo se dee-se ...***What does ... mean?***¿Qué quiere decir ...?* *ke kye-re de-seer ...*

Could you please ...?	<i>¿Puede ..., por favor?</i>	<i>pwe-de ... por fa-vor</i>
repeat that	<i>repetirlo</i>	<i>re-pe-teer-lo</i>
speak more	<i>hablar más</i>	<i>a-blar mas</i>
slowly	<i>despacio</i>	<i>des-pa-syo</i>
write it down	<i>escribirlo</i>	<i>es-kree-beer-lo</i>

NUMBERS

0	<i>cero</i>	<i>ce-ro</i>
1	<i>uno/a</i>	<i>oo-no/a</i>
2	<i>dos</i>	<i>dos</i>
3	<i>tres</i>	<i>tres</i>
4	<i>cuatro</i>	<i>kwa-tro</i>
5	<i>cinco</i>	<i>seen-ko</i>
6	<i>seis</i>	<i>seys</i>
7	<i>siete</i>	<i>syete</i>

8	<i>ocho</i>	<i>o-cho</i>
9	<i>nueve</i>	<i>nwe-ve</i>
10	<i>diez</i>	<i>dyes</i>
11	<i>once</i>	<i>on-se</i>
12	<i>doce</i>	<i>do-se</i>
13	<i>trece</i>	<i>tre-se</i>
14	<i>catorce</i>	<i>ka-tor-se</i>
15	<i>quince</i>	<i>keen-se</i>
16	<i>dieciséis</i>	<i>dye-see-seys</i>
17	<i>diecisiete</i>	<i>dye-see-sye-te</i>
18	<i>dieciocho</i>	<i>dye-see-o-cho</i>
19	<i>diecinueve</i>	<i>dye-see-nwe-ve</i>
20	<i>veinte</i>	<i>vayn-te</i>
21	<i>veintiuno</i>	<i>vayn-tee-oo-no</i>
30	<i>treinta</i>	<i>trayn-ta</i>
31	<i>treinta y uno</i>	<i>trayn-tai oo-no</i>
40	<i>cuarenta</i>	<i>kwa-ren-ta</i>
50	<i>cincuenta</i>	<i>seen-kwen-ta</i>
60	<i>sesenta</i>	<i>se-sen-ta</i>
70	<i>setenta</i>	<i>se-ten-ta</i>
80	<i>ochenta</i>	<i>o-chen-ta</i>
90	<i>noventa</i>	<i>no-ven-ta</i>
100	<i>cien</i>	<i>syen</i>
101	<i>ciento uno</i>	<i>syen-to oo-no</i>
200	<i>doscientos</i>	<i>do-syen-tos</i>
1000	<i>mil</i>	<i>meel</i>

SHOPPING & SERVICES

I'd like to buy ...

Quisiera comprar ... kee-sye-ra kom-prar ...

I'm just looking.

Sólo estoy mirando. so-lo es-toy mee-ran-do

May I look at it?

¿Puedo mirarlo? pwe-do mee-rar-lo

How much is it?

¿Cuánto cuesta? kwan-to kwes-ta

That's too expensive for me.

Es demasiado caro para mí. es de-ma-sya-do ka-ro pa-ra mee

Could you lower the price?

¿Podría bajar un poco el precio? po-dree-a ba-khar oon po-ko el pre-syo

I don't like it.

No me gusta. no me goos-ta

I'll take it.

Lo llevo. lo ye-vo

Do you accept ...? ¿Aceptan ...? a-sep-tan ...

credit cards *tarjetas de crédito* tar-khe-tas de kre-dee-to

traveler's checks *cheques de viajero* che-kes de vya-khe-ro

less *menos* me-nos
more *más* mas
large *grande* gran-de
small *pequeño* pe-ke-nyo

I'm looking for (the) ... *Estoy buscando ...* es-toy boos-kan-do

ATM *el cajero* el ka-khe-ro
automático ow-to-ma-tee-ko

bank *el banco* el ban-ko
bookstore *la librería* la lee-bre-ree-a
embassy *la embajada* la em-ba-kha-da
exchange office *la casa de cambio* la ka-sa de kam-byo

general store *la tienda* la tyen-da
laundry *la lavandería* la la-van-de-ree-a
market *el mercado* el mer-ka-do
pharmacy *la farmacia/ la droguería* la far-ma-sya/ la dro-ge-ree-a

post office *los correos* los ko-re-os
supermarket *el supermercado* el soo-per-mer-ka-do

tourist office *la oficina de turismo* la o-fee-see-na de too-rees-mo

What time does it open/close?

¿A qué hora abre/cierra? a ke o-ra a-bre/sye-ra

I want to change some money/traveler's cheques.

Quiero cambiar dinero/cheques de viajero. kye-ro kam-byar dee-ne-ro/ che-kes de vya-khe-ro

What's the exchange rate?

¿Cuál es el tipo de cambio? kwal es el tee-po de kam-byo

I want to call ...

Quiero llamar a ... kye-ro ya-mar a ...

airmail letter *correo aéreo* ko-re-o a-e-re-o
registered mail *carta* kar-ta
stamps *certificado* ser-tee-fee-ka-do
estampillas es-tam-pee-yas

TIME & DATES

What time is it? *¿Qué hora es?* ke o-ra es
It's (one) o'clock. *Es la (una).* es la (oo-na)
It's (seven) o'clock. *Son las (siete).* son las (sye-te)

midnight *medianoche* me-dya-no-che
noon *mediodía* me-dyo-dee-a
half past two *dos y media* dos ee me-dya

now *ahora* a-o-ra
today *hoy* oy
tonight *esta noche* es-ta no-che
tomorrow *mañana* ma-ny-a-na
yesterday *ayer* a-yer

Monday *lunes* loo-nes
Tuesday *martes* mar-tes
Wednesday *miércoles* myer-ko-les
Thursday *jueves* khwe-ves
Friday *viernes* vyer-nes
Saturday *sábado* sa-ba-do
Sunday *domingo* do-meen-go

January *enero* e-ne-ro
February *febrero* fe-bre-ro
March *marzo* mar-so
April *abril* a-bree-l
May *mayo* ma-yo
June *junio* khoo-nyo
July *julio* khoo-lyo
August *agosto* a-gos-to
September *septiembre* sep-tyem-bre
October *octubre* ok-too-bre
November *noviembre* no-vyem-bre
December *diciembre* dee-syem-bre

TRANSPORTATION

Public Transportation

What time does ... leave/arrive? *¿A qué hora ... sale/llega?* a ke o-ra ... sa-le/y-e-ga
the bus *el autobús* el ow-to-boos
the plane *el avión* el a-vyon
the ship *el barco* el bar-ko

airport *el aeropuerto* el a-e-ro-pwer-to
bus station *la estación de autobuses* la es-ta-syon de ow-to-boos-ses

bus stop *la parada de autobuses* la pa-ra-da de ow-to-boos-ses

luggage check room *guardería/ equipaje* gwar-de-ree-a/ e-kee-pa-khe
ticket office *la boletería* la bo-le-te-ree-a

I'd like a ticket to ... *Quiero un boleto a ...* kye-ro oon bo-le-to a ...

What's the fare to ...? *¿Cuánto cuesta hasta ...?* kwan-to kwes-ta a-sta ...

student's (fare) *de estudiante* de es-too-dyan-te
1st class *primera clase* pree-me-ra kla-se
2nd class *segunda clase* see-geon-da kla-se
one-way *ida* ee-da
return *ida y vuelta* ee-da ee vwel-ta
taxi *taxi* tak-see

Private Transportation

pickup (truck) *camioneta* ka-myo-ne-ta
truck *camión* ka-myon
hitchhike *hacer dedo* a-ser de-do

ROAD SIGNS

Acceso Entrance
Aparcamiento Parking
Ceda el Paso Give Way
Despacio Slow
Dirección Única One-Way
Mantenga Su Derecha Keep to the Right
No Adelantar/ No Rebasa No Passing
Peaje Toll
Peligro Danger
Prohibido Aparcar/ No Estacionar No Parking
Prohibido el Paso No Entry
Pare Stop
Salida de Autopista Exit Freeway

I'd like to hire a/an ... bicycle *Quisiera alquilar ... una bicicleta* kee-sye-ra al-kee-lar ... oo-na bee-see-kle-ta
car *un auto/ un coche* oon ow-to/ oon ko-che
4WD motorbike *un todo terreno una moto* oon to-do te-re-no oo-na mo-to

Is this the road to ...?

¿Se va a ... por esta carretera? se va a ... por es-ta ka-re-te-ra

Where's a gas/petrol station?

¿Dónde hay una gasolinera? don-de ai oo-na ga-so-lee-ne-ra

Please fill it up.

Lleno, por favor. ye-no por fa-voor

I'd like (20) liters.

Quiero (veinte) litros. kye-ro (vayn-te) lee-tros

diesel *diesel* dee-sel
leaded (regular) *gasolina con plomo* ga-so-lee-na kon plo-mo
gas/petrol unleaded *gasolina gasolina sin plomo* ga-so-lee-na ga-so-lee-na seen plo-mo

(How long) Can I park here?

¿(Por cuánto tiempo) Puedo aparcar aquí? (por kwan-to tyem-po) pwe-do a-par-kar a-kee

Where do I pay?

¿Dónde se paga? don-de se pa-ga

I need a mechanic.

Necesito un mecánico. ne-see-to oon me-ka-nee-ko

The car has broken down in ...

El carro se ha averiado en ... el ka-ro se a-ve-rya-do en ...

The motorbike won't start.

No arranca la moto. no a-ran-ka la mo-to

I have a flat tyre.

Tengo un pinchazo. ten-go oon peen-cha-so

I've run out of gas/petrol.

Me quedé sin gasolina. me ke-de seen ga-so-lee-na

I've had an accident.

Tuve un accidente. too-ve oon ak-see-den-te

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN**I need ...**

Necesito ... ne-se-see-to ...

Do you have ...?

¿Hay ...? ai ...

a car baby seat

un asiento de seguridad para bebés
oon a-syen-to de se-goo-ree-da pa-ra be-bes

a child-minding service

un servicio de cuidado de niños
oon ser-vee-syo de kwee-da-do de nee-nyos

a children's menu

una carta infantil
oo-na kar-ta een-fan-teel

a creche

una guardería
oo-na gwar-de-ree-a

(disposable) diapers/nappies

pañales (de usar y tirar)
pa-nya-les de oo-sar ee tee-rar

an (English-speaking) babysitter

una niñera (de habla inglesa)
oo-na nee-nye-ra (de a-bla een-gle-sa)

infant formula (milk)

leche en polvo para bebés
le-che en pol-vo pa-ra be-bes

a highchair

una trona
oo-na tro-na

a potty

una pelela
oo-na pe-le-la

a stroller

un cochecito
oon ko-che-see-to

Do you mind if I breast-feed here?

¿Le molesta que dé le mo-les-ta ke de
de pecho aquí? de pe-cho a-kee

Are children allowed?

¿Se admiten niños? se ad-mee-ten nee-nyos



Also available from Lonely Planet:
Latin American Spanish Phrasebook

Glossary

See p61 for a list of common food terms.

aldea – village, hamlet

Arcaicos – Archaics; first known inhabitants of Puerto Rico

bahía – bay

balneario – public beach

barrio – neighborhood or city district

bateyes – Taíno ball courts

boca – mouth, entrance

boleros – ballads/love songs

bomba – musical form and dance inspired by African rhythms and characterized by call-and-response dialogues between musicians and interpreted by dancers; often considered as a unit with *plena*, as in *bomba y plena*; see also *plena*

Boricua – Puerto Rican; a person of Puerto Rican descent

Borinquen – traditional Taíno name for the island of Puerto Rico

bosque estatal – state forest

botánica – shop specializing in herbs, icons and associated charms used in the practice of Santería

cacique – Taíno chief (male or female)

callejón – narrow side street; alleyway

capilla – chapel

caretas – traditional masks worn at island festivals; see also *máscaras*, *vejigantes*

Caribs – original colonizers of the Caribbean, for whom the region was named

casa – house

caseríos – government-sponsored, low-income housing projects

cayos – cays; refers to islets

cemíes – small figurines carved from stone, shell, wood or gold, representing deities worshipped by the Taínos

centros vacacionales – literally ‘vacation centers’; form of rental accommodation popular with island families, with facilities ranging from basic wooden cabins on the beach to two-bedroom condos

cerro – hill or mountain

Changó – Yoruba god of fire and war believed to control thunder and lightning; one of several principal deities worshipped in Santería; see also *orishas*

comida criolla – traditional Puerto Rican cuisine

Compañía de Parques Nacionales – CPN; National Park Company

coquí – a species of tiny tree frog found only in Puerto Rico; the island’s mascot

cordillera – a system of mountain ranges

criollo – island-born person of Spanish parentage; in colonial times considered inferior by peninsular Spaniards; see also *mestizo*

culebrenses – residents of Culebra

curandero – healer

danza – form of piano music and stylized figure-dance with origins in Spain, fused with elements of island folk music

Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales – DRNA; Department of Natural Resources & Environment

espiritismo – spiritualism

Estado Libre Asociado – associated free state; the term describes Puerto Rico’s relationship with the USA

fiestas patronales – the annual celebrations staged in Puerto Rican cities and towns to honor each community’s patron saint

fortaleza – fortress

friquitines – roadside kiosks

fuerte – fort

galería – gallery

garitas – turreted sentry towers constructed at intervals along the top of Old San Juan’s fortifications

gringo – term used on the island to describe Americans

hacienda – agricultural estate, plantation

iglesia – church

Igneris – Indian group of the Arawakan linguistic group; early settlers of Puerto Rico

independentistas – advocates for Puerto Rican independence

jíbaro – rural mountain resident, often cast as archetypal Puerto Rican

laguna – lake or lagoon

lechonera – restaurant specializing in roast suckling pig

LMM – abbreviation for San Juan’s Aeropuerto Internacional de Luis Muñoz Marín

malecón – pier, waterfront promenade

máscaras – masks; see also *caretas*, *vejigantes*

mercado – market
Mesónes Gastronómicos – a Puerto Rico Tourism Company-sponsored program involving a collection of restaurants in the island that feature Puerto Rican cuisine

mestizo – person of mixed ancestry (usually Indian and Spanish); see also *criollo*

mogotes – conical peaks

monasterio – monastery

mundillo – traditional form of intricately woven lace, made only in Puerto Rico and Spain

municipios – town and city government units composed of mayors and assemblies

Nuyoricans – Puerto Rican exiles in the US

orishas – Yoruba deities worshipped in Santería, often associated with Catholic saints; see also *Changó*

palacio – palace

parador – country inn

parque – park

pasaje – passage

pava – typical straw hat of the *jíbaro*

playa – beach

plazuela – small plaza

plena – form of traditional Puerto Rican dance and song that unfolds to distinctly African rhythms beat out with maracas, tambourines and other traditional percussion instruments; often associated with *bomba*

pleneros – *plena* singers

ponceños – residents of Ponce

PRTC – Puerto Rico Tourism Company

públicos – shared taxis, usually minivans equipped with bench seats, which pick up passengers along a prescribed route and provide low-cost local transport islandwide

puerta – gate/door

puerto – port

punta – tip, end

reserva forestal – forest reserve
ron – rum

sanjuaneros – residents of San Juan

Santería – Afro-Caribbean religion representing the syncretism of Catholic and African beliefs, based on the worship of Catholic saints and their associated Yoruba deities, or *orishas*
santero – an artist who carves *santos*; one of many names for practitioners of the rites of *Santería*

santos – small carved figurines representing saints, enshrined and worshipped by practitioners of *Santería*

sonda – sound

supermercado – supermarket

sur – south

Taínos – indigenous Puerto Ricans

tapones – traffic jams

tienda – store

turismo – tourism

turista – tourist

universidad – university

urgente – urgent

valle – valley

vegetales – vegetables

vejigantes – traditional masks; see also *caretas*, *máscaras*

ventana – window

vereda – path or trail

vino – wine

Yoruba – West Africans brought to Puerto Rico as slaves

zoológico – zoo

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