



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



alicesoup

# Island Adventures

## **San Juan, 7 Days**

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**nileGUIDE**

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# Guide Description






**AUTHOR NOTE:** Using San Juan as a base, it's still possible to pack in some exciting day excursions to take advantage of the island's nature and adventure offerings. The guest house we stayed at is located in a breathtaking corner of Old San Juan, and most importantly has a furnished kitchen. Saving on meals allowed us to splurge on activities and nightlife. This was a high energy trip day and night.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife






## Day 1 - San Juan

**DAY NOTE:** Our room at Caleta is decent, mostly worth the street outside. We're happy to have a kitchen though. We kind of mullied around the city, watched the sunset at El Morro.

	<b>Caleta (La)</b> Small studios for rent.
	<b>Fort San Felipe del Morro</b> No trip to Old San Juan is complete without a trek to see this fort.
	<b>Cafe Berlin</b> Casual cafe, bakery & deli

## Day 2 - San Juan






**DAY NOTE:** There's a ferry and pick up from Old San Juan to the distillery across the bay. The tour's ok, but it was a fun afternoon trip, and the mojitos were great. We hit the town at night, checking out some of the afterhours places on Fortaleza St.

	<b>Bacardí Rum Distillery</b> Home of the famous rum
	<b>Fratelli's</b> Parties on weekend nights
	<b>Nuyorican Cafe</b> Go Bohemia!
	<b>Blend</b> Stylish and immense
	<b>Caleta (La)</b> Small studios for rent.

## Day 3 - San Juan





**DAY NOTE:** Awesome! Kitesurfing takes a lot of work, much more than you can do in a day, but we were proud of ourselves. We had lunch delivered to the beach from Pinkys, can't beat

that! At night we headed to the plazita, which was packed--great people watching.

	<b>Kitesurfer</b> Take kitesurfing lessons from world pros
	<b>Pinkys</b> Simple and delicious food by the beach
	<b>La Placita</b> The night scene is intense Thursday and Fridays, but dead the rest of the week.
	<b>Rubi's in "la plazita"</b> Funky and upscale bar
	<b>Caleta (La)</b> Small studios for rent.

## Day 4 - San Juan

**DAY NOTE:** We stopped at the Museo de Arte, and then headed to Pinones by bus. This was a little confusing, as you have to change buses in Isla Verde, and make sure the bus you're taking is headed to Pinones. Pinones was fantastic. We rented bikes and biked through the mangrove trail and along the stunning coast. There's tons of cheap, great food, drinks, and music along the main drag. We took a cab back to Old San Juan, \$20.

	<b>Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico</b> A must see for local art
	<b>Piñones</b> A local favorite
	<b>Soleil Beach Club</b> Libations & music at local hangout
	<b>Caleta (La)</b> Small studios for rent.

## Day 5 - San Juan

**DAY NOTE:** We rented a car from Charlie's in Condado and headed out to the east of the island. There are tours to El Yunque and the bioluminescent bay, but they are expensive, and don't

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

do the two trips together. We certainly didn't see the sense in getting on a bus to the rainforest, coming back to San Juan, and getting on a bus back to the same area for the bioluminescent bay. A car was the way to go. Can't believe we managed to get it all done! We left later than planned, but still managed the hike up to El Yunque, which was under two hours there and back. Once up there, we couldn't see much unfortunately, as the afternoon clouds had already rolled in. Leaving the rainforest, we stopped at the kioskos along Luquillo Beach to eat some more fried stuff. It's a little confusing getting to the kayak tour, make sure to get good directions from the tour group. We arrived earlier than the 8:30 take off time, but there's a few restaurants around. The kayaking tour was easily one of the coolest things I've ever done in my life. Must see!!!!!! Needless to say, the drive back to San Juan (about 45 minutes) was a little exhausting, but we managed.



## Bosque Nacional del Caribe - El Yunque

Rainy forest camping



## Las Tortugas Adventures

Expert guides lead unforgettable kayak tours around some must-see island spots



## Caleta (La)

Small studios for rent.

## Day 6 - San Juan

**DAY NOTE:** It's been such a busy week! We decided to just take it easy today. Since we had to take the car back to Condado, we wore our suits and then headed to the beach and hung out for the day. There's a great health food restaurant on Ashford Avenue called Pure and Natural. After a few days of all the fried food, we were happy to have salad and juice.



## Dragonfly

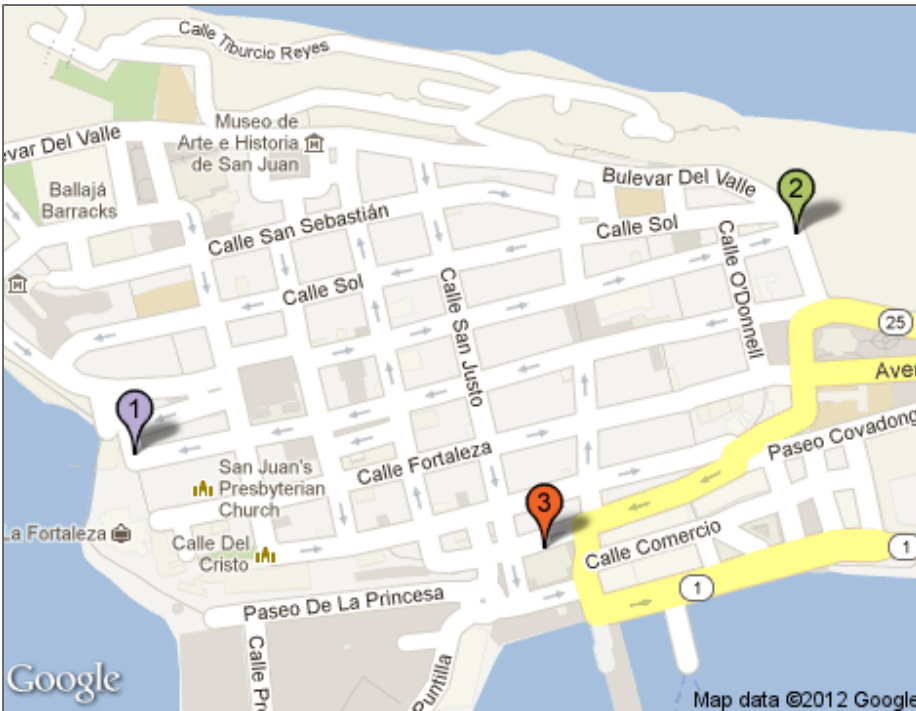
Nachos and egg rolls



## Caleta (La)

Small studios for rent.

# Day 1 - San Juan



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Our room at Caleta is decent, mostly worth the street outside. We're happy to have a kitchen though. We kind of mulled around the city, watched the sunset at El Morro.

### contact:

tel: +1 787 725 5347  
fax: +1 787 977 5642  
<http://www.thecaleta.com/>

### location:

151 Calle Clara Lair  
Old San Juan 00902

## 1 Caleta (La)

**DESCRIPTION:** Great apartments in the heart of beautiful and historic Old San Juan. The company offers many options depending on your budget and needs. Travelers will find that staying longer in Old San Juan will bring the experience of a vacation into more detail where you can actually become part of the city's lively action. Just contact Michael Giessler for information. © NileGuide



by Melissa Alvarado Sierra

### contact:

tel: +1787 729 6960  
fax: +1 787 289 7972  
<http://www.nps.gov/saju>

### location:

501 Norzagaray  
San Juan 00901

## 2 Fort San Felipe del Morro

**DESCRIPTION:** Construction of El Fuerte San Felipe del Morro or just El Morro, was started in 1540 to protect the coast from invading enemies. The fort is the main attraction of Old San Juan and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The 16th century citadel is monumental in size and breathtaking to look at. The grounds that surround it make it an even more majestic place. Enjoy the area like locals do; by flying kites, eating piraguas (shaved flavored ice) or just laying on the grass, feeling the wind that comes from the Atlantic sea.



Photo courtesy of Tomas Fano

**contact:**  
tel: 787 722 5205

**location:**  
407 Calle San Francisco  
San Juan 00902

**hours:**  
11a-11p M-F, 9a-11p Sa,  
10a-11p Su

### **Cafe Berlin**

**DESCRIPTION:** This cafe has a pleasant casual feel in its outdoor seating overlooking the Plaza Colón. For vegetarians, there are creative salads and for those with a sweet tooth, the desserts include a wide selection of pastries. Juices and Puerto Rican coffees make this stop a great respite from a day of touring. For those who want to surf the net, the cafe provides a high speed wi-fi. © wcities.com

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# Day 2 - San Juan



## QUICK NOTE

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**contact:**  
<http://www.casabacardi.org/>

**location:**  
Route 165, Km. 2.6  
Cataño PR 00962

**hours:**  
8:30a-5:30p M-Sa, 10a-5p Su

## 1 Bacardí Rum Distillery

**DESCRIPTION:** The world famous rum distillery is a quick jaunt from Old San Juan. The facilities are the largest in the world. Visitors can take a guided tour and witness the entire distillation process, from fermentation to bottling. There is a family museum and gift shop on premises. Of course, the best reason to take the tour may be the free Bacardí rum drinks offered at the end. © NileGuide

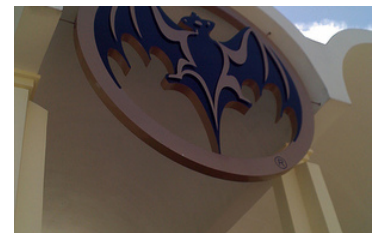


Photo courtesy of jeffandmandyq

**contact:**  
tel: 787 726265  
<http://www.ristorantefratelli.com/>

**location:**  
310 Fortaleza St.  
San Juan PR 00901

**hours:**  
T-Su 6p-close

## 2 Fratelli's

**DESCRIPTION:** A sophisticated fine Italian eatery in the evening hours, Fratelli's keeps its doors open late for cocktails most evenings, and goes all-out lounge on Fridays and Saturdays with great DJ music.



Fratelli's

**contact:**

tel: Z65787 366 5074 / 787 977 1276

fax: 787 724 5142

<http://www.nuyoricancafepr.com/>

**location:**

Calle San Francisco Number 312  
San Juan 00901

**3 Nuyorican Cafe**

**DESCRIPTION:** One of the hottest spots in old San Juan, the Nuyorican Café is a great place to hang out. It is home to the new and up coming artists. The music scene here is worth a mention. You will find that this café sells records of the artists who perform live on a daily basis! They also host their own jazz festival of late. The atmosphere of this cafe is specifically Bohemian - wood-paneled chamber and great Latino music. All kinds of people visit the place for a taste of Puerto Rican culture, in all its glory and authenticity. Try out the grub here which is very delicious and easy on your pocket too. For a great, fun night out with your buddies, this is the place to go! © wcities.com



Nuyorican Cafe

**contact:**

tel: 787 977 7777

**location:**

309 Fortaleza St.  
San Juan PR 00901

**4 Blend**

**DESCRIPTION:** Located on hopping Fortaleza St., this posh late night lounge serves excellent cocktails in to a sleek but raucous crowd.

**contact:**

tel: +1 787 725 5347

fax: +1 787 977 5642

<http://www.thecaleta.com/>

**location:**

151 Calle Clara Lair  
Old San Juan 00902

**5 Caleta (La)**

**DESCRIPTION:** Great apartments in the heart of beautiful and historic Old San Juan. The company offers many options depending on your budget and needs. Travelers will find that staying longer in Old San Juan will bring the experience of a vacation into more detail where you can actually become part of the city's lively action. Just contact Michael Giessler for information. © NileGuide



by Melissa Alvarado Sierra

# Day 3 - San Juan



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Awesome! Kitesurfing takes a lot of work, much more than you can do in a day, but we were proud of ourselves. We had lunch delivered to the beach from Pinkys, can't beat that! At night we headed to the plazita, which was packed--great people watching.

### contact:

tel: 17872210635  
<http://www.kitesurfpr.com>

### location:

2434 Loiza St.#2, San Juan  
PR 00913  
San Juan PR 00913

## 1 Kitesurfer

**DESCRIPTION:** The north coast of Puerto Rico is a premier destination for this dynamic new sport. This school offers lessons and packages for beginner, intermediate, and advanced kitesurfers, including a women's workshop with top-ranked world pro Julie Simsar



Photo courtesy of the biella

### contact:

tel: 1 787 727 3347

### location:

51 Maria Moczo, Ocean Park,  
Santurce, between Calle  
Loiza and Calle McLeary on  
the way to the gated entrance  
of Ocean Park.  
San Juan PR 00901

## 2 Pinkys

**DESCRIPTION:** Breakfast, lunch, and early dinner, this restaurant specializes in gourmet wraps and sandwiches, salads, and fruit shakes. Casual and fun, the energetic owner, Alex Garcia, is always around. Grab food to go on the way to the beach, or have it delivered right to your lounge chair.

### hours:

7am-8:30pm Mon-Sat, 7-6:30  
Sundays

**contact:**  
tel: +1 787 723 8022

### 3 La Placita

**location:**  
Parada 18, between Ponce de Leon and Baldorioty de Castro  
San Juan PR 00907

**DESCRIPTION:** Tucked into a residential neighborhood between Ponce de Leon Ave. and Baldorioty de Castro, day or night this is a great place for local food and flavor. The market is open M-S from 7 am to 6pm; pick up some local fruit and sip on fresh coconut water. On Thursday and Friday nights, locals pack the streets and bars in droves, and there are frequent concerts by local artists. © NileGuide

**hours:**  
Market 7a-6p M-Sat

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**contact:**  
tel: 787 289 8080

### 4 Rubi's in "la plazita"

**location:**  
213 Canals St.  
Santurce PR 00940

**DESCRIPTION:** The Plaza del Mercado in Santurce is a San Juan institution on Thursday and Friday nights. This trendier but still cozy and wildly fun bar packs them in after 10 or 11 when the plazita crowd starts to dwindle. Serves up sandwiches and gourmet pinchos too.

**hours:**  
Th-F 7p-3a

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**contact:**  
tel: +1 787 725 5347  
fax: +1 787 977 5642  
<http://www.thecaleta.com/>

### 5 Caleta (La)

**location:**  
151 Calle Clara Lair  
Old San Juan 00902

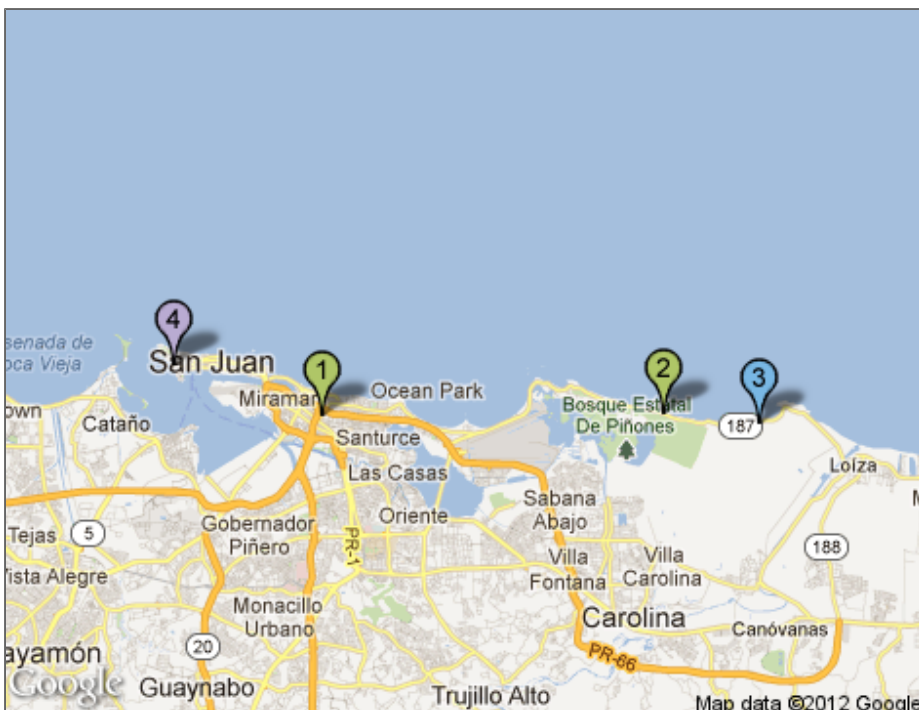
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by Melissa Alvarado Sierra

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# Day 4 - San Juan



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** We stopped at the Museo de Arte, and then headed to Pinones by bus. This was a little confusing, as you have to change buses in Isla Verde, and make sure the bus you're taking is headed to Pinones. Pinones was fantastic. We rented bikes and biked through the mangrove trail and along the stunning coast. There's tons of cheap, great food, drinks, and music along the main drag. We took a cab back to Old San Juan, \$20.

**contact:**  
tel: 17879776277  
<http://www.mapr.org>

**location:**  
299 De Diego Avenue  
San Juan PR 00940

**hours:**  
10a-5p T-Sun, Wed to 8p,  
Sun to 6p

## 1 Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico

**DESCRIPTION:** The spacious neoclassic building holds an impressive collection of Puerto Rican and contemporary Latin American art. Recent temporary showcases have included naïf and baroque exhibits and works by Basquiat. The Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico also boasts a beautiful outdoor sculpture garden and an interactive kids' room. Wilo Bennet, one of Puerto Rico's top chefs, serves contemporary Latin cuisine at the upscale restaurant on the premises. The Fine Arts Center, located around the corner from the museum, is a good bet for music and theatre in the early evening after the museum. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico

**contact:**

<http://www.puertorico.com/reserves/piñones-reserve/>

**location:**

Rt. 187, about 10 minutes outside of Isla Verde and the LMM airport. Follow the signs headed out from Isla Verde Piñones PR

**2 Piñones**

**DESCRIPTION:** Piñones is both a unique enclave of Puerto Rican culture and an impressive nature reserve. At night, locals flock to beachside bars and kiosks for irresistible fried delicacies, cheap drinks, and vibrant salsa and merengue beats. By day, bike or hike along the beach trail that leads to a mangrove estuary and pine forest. Wear mosquito repellent and stay hydrated with fresh coconut water. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Vaidy Krishnan

**contact:**

tel: 787 253 1033  
fax: 1 787 791 2299  
<http://www.soleilbeachclub.com/>

**location:**

Carratera 187 Km 4.6  
Loiza 00772

**hours:**

9a-midnight

**3 Soleil Beach Club**

**DESCRIPTION:** Just a short drive away from the Isla Verde tourist area, Soleil has it all — exciting ambience, delicious cuisine and lively music. The minute you walk into this casual shed (facing the Paseo Piñones Recreational Trail) you become part of the vivacious young crowd gathered inside. Either stopping by for a refreshing drink or sitting down for some delicious criollo treats, you're guaranteed a great time. © wcities.com



Soleil Beach Club

**contact:**

tel: +1 787 725 5347  
fax: +1 787 977 5642  
<http://www.thecaleta.com/>

**location:**

151 Calle Clara Lair  
Old San Juan 00902

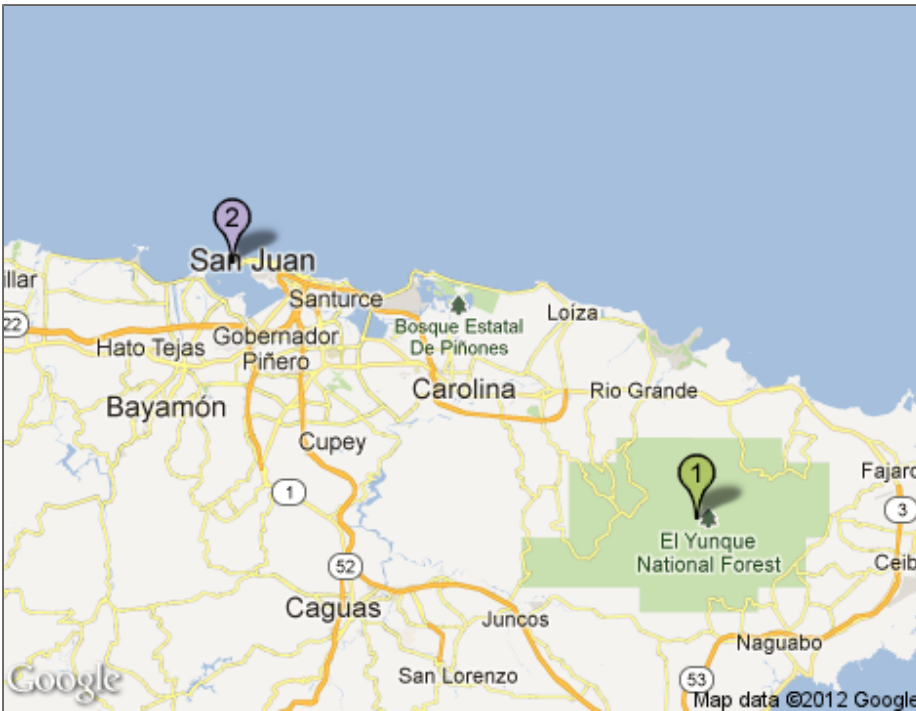
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by Melissa Alvarado Sierra

# Day 5 - San Juan



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** We rented a car from Charlie's in Condado and headed out to the east of the island. There are tours to El Yunque and the bioluminescent bay, but they are expensive, and don't do the two trips together. We certainly didn't see the sense in getting on a bus to the rainforest, coming back to San Juan, and getting on a bus back to the same area for the bioluminescent bay. A car was the way to go. Can't believe we managed to get it all done! We left later than planned, but still managed the hike up to El Yunque, which was under two hours there and back. Once up there, we couldn't see much unfortunately, as the afternoon clouds had already rolled in. Leaving the rainforest, we stopped at the kioskos along Luquillo Beach to eat some more fried stuff. It's a little confusing getting to the kayak tour, make sure to get good directions from the tour group. We arrived earlier than the 8:30 take off time, but there's a few restaurants around. The kayaking tour was easily one of the coolest things I've ever done in my life. Must see!!!!!! Needless to say, the drive back to San Juan (about 45 minutes) was a little exhausting, but we managed.

### contact:

tel: +1 787 888 1810

fax: +1 787 888 5685

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/caribbean/index.shtml>

### location:

Route 191 Km 4.2 (visitor's center)

Río Grande 00721

### hours:

Daily 7:30a-6p

## 1 Bosque Nacional del Caribe - El Yunque

**DESCRIPTION:** El Yunque is the only tropical rainforest in the greater U.S. It is only a 45-minute drive from Old San Juan, and a stone's throw away from Luquillo Beach and the island's mammoth resorts, the Westin Rio Mar and El Conquistador. Numerous tour groups offer transportation and guided tours, but most trails are paved, well maintained, and easily self-guided. The popular trails vary in degree of strenuousness, and take 45 minutes to 2 hours to cover. Visitors can swim at La Mina Falls, the most picturesque trail, or ascend into the clouds on the El Yunque trail. The more adventurous can obtain trail maps and camping permits from park services. © NileGuide

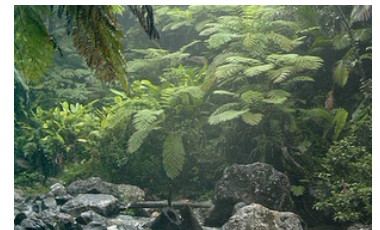


Photo courtesy of crossfirecw

**contact:**

tel: 17878090252  
+17876378356  
<http://www.kayak-pr.com>

**location:**

P.O. Box 1637, Canovanas  
PR, 00729-1637  
Canovanas PR 00729

**hours:**

Bio Bay tours are M-Sat 6:30p  
and 9p, by appointment for  
other locations

## Las Tortugas Adventures

**DESCRIPTION:** Las Tortugas Adventures offers guided kayak tours of the Rio Grande River and the bioluminescent bay in Fajardo. The Rio Grande tour, just outside of Loiza, takes kayakers through a mangrove estuary and docks for lunch at a private beach. The biobay kayak tour in Fajardo is not to be missed! Kayakers can opt to leave at sundown or 8pm. The tour moves through a mangrove estuary and into the phosphorescent bay, where guides provide educational talks on the unique ecosystem. It's like kayaking through the stars. Charter tours to Monkey Island can also be arranged. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Las Tortugas Adventures.

**contact:**

tel: +1 787 725 5347  
fax: +1 787 977 5642  
<http://www.thecaleta.com/>

**location:**

151 Calle Clara Lair  
Old San Juan 00902

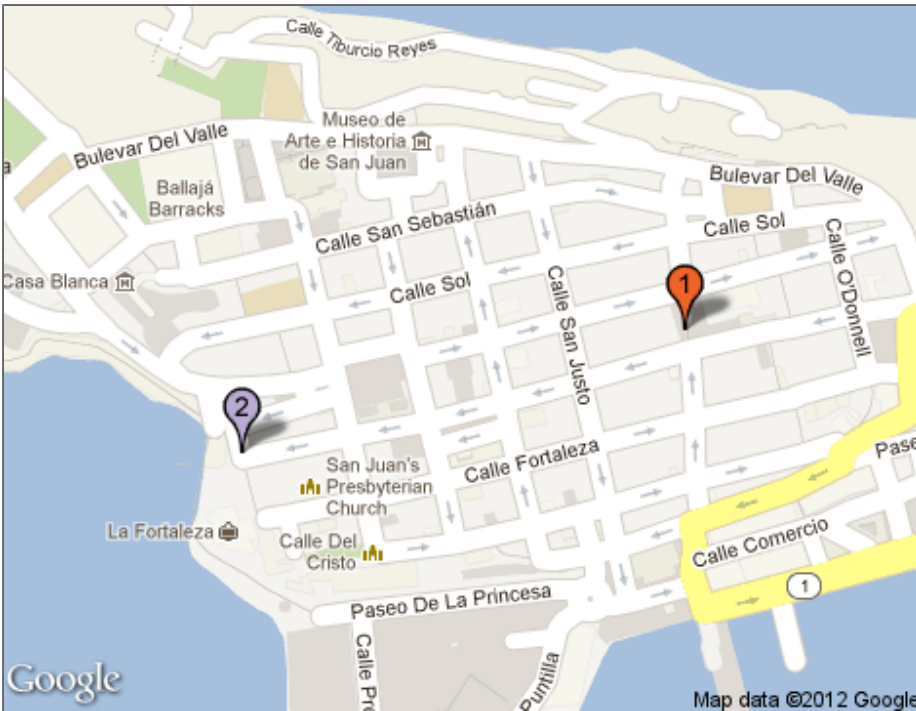
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by Melissa Alvarado Sierra

# Day 6 - San Juan



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** It's been such a busy week! We decided to just take it easy today. Since we had to take the car back to Condado, we wore our suits and then headed to the beach and hung out for the day. There's a great health food restaurant on Ashford Avenue called Pure and Natural. After a few days of all the fried food, we were happy to have salad and juice.

**contact:**  
tel: 1 787 977 3886  
<http://www.oofrestaurants.com/>

## 1 Dragonfly

**DESCRIPTION:** Dragonfly is one of the latest entries in Old San Juan. Owned by Emilio Figueroa and Gigi Zafero. This is the same couple that opened the Parrot Club, just across the street. The décor is contemporary with seating at the bar or cabaret tables. There is also a noodle bar that accommodates ten or more, and a menu offering eclectic Chinese-Latin fusion cuisine. Try the delicious peking duck nachos or the quesadilla spring rolls. There is full bar service available and a wine list. © wcities.com

**location:**  
364 Calle Fortaleza  
San Juan 00901

**hours:**  
Tu-W 6p-11p, Tu-Sa 6p-  
midnight

**contact:**  
tel: +1 787 725 5347  
fax: +1 787 977 5642  
<http://www.thecaleta.com/>

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**location:**  
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Old San Juan 00902



by Melissa Alvarado Sierra



# San Juan Snapshot

## Local Info

Many believe San Juan is a small Spanish colonial town with but a few bustling avenues. However this impression does not aptly describe the breath and depth of this fine old-world city. Modern-day San Juan encompasses a vast metropolis that covers seven unique and distinct districts. This makes for an eclectic combination of sights and sounds that is essential to the wonder and joy of visiting San Juan.

## Old San Juan/Puerta de Tierra

San Juan is a traditional, colonial city that is bordered by walls. As the seat of the island's bicameral government, it houses La Fortaleza, home of the Governor and El Capitolio, the seat of the House of Representatives. The Senate, on the other hand, is located in nearby Puerta de Tierra. However, both districts can be found on the islet of San Juan and are connected to the mainland via several bridges. Old San Juan itself consists of narrow streets encompassing over four hundred years of history and tradition. Dine in one of the great establishments on Fortaleza Street, party in San Sebastián until dawn, or simply stroll along the charming avenues and thoroughfares. Similar to Europe, a famous tradition in Old San Juan is to people-watch, and there is no better place to indulge in this activity than from one of the several plazas that are located throughout the city. This town has something for all ages, young and old. A must-see is the impressive Spanish fort El Morro located

on the north side of the islet. Puerta de Tierra houses hotels such as the famous Caribe Hilton. While a lot of Old San Juan has been in a state of disrepair, the current renovations are making this once decrepit community an acceptable tourist destination.

## Condado

El Condado, as the locals say, is the island's most glamorous district, featuring boutiques, a variety of restaurants, and some of the finest hotels on the island. Contrary to popular belief, many nationals do reside here in the exquisite turn-of-the-century mansions. You'll notice the populace on any given day to be a good balance between tourists and locals. If you are an avid jogger, you'll love the expanse of open area. This district spans from the Condado Plaza Hotel & Casino in the west to the Ocean Park area in the east.

## Isla Verde

Isla Verde is home to high-rise apartment buildings, huge clubs and luxurious hotels. This area is actually part of the municipality of Carolina, connected to San Juan via several highways and streets. It spans from the Punta Las Marías area (adjacent to Ocean Park) to the land just beyond the International Airport. Isla Verde hosts world-class hotels that include the Ritz-Carlton and El San Juan. Its nightlife is exciting, and the enormous balneario, or public beach, is where locals and guests come to sunbathe and get their fill of people-watching.

## Hato Rey

Hato Rey is several miles from Old San Juan but is easily accessible. It is the island's central commercial district, where the local wheelers and dealers conduct their business. Thus, its restaurant scene caters to more business people than anywhere else on the island. Roosevelt, the district's residential area, can be found just off Highway 52. It is one of the most famous venues for nightlife in San Juan, and the Plaza Las Américas, the Caribbean's largest mall, is also located here.

## Santurce/Miramar

Both the Santurce and Miramar districts are located just off Condado and Old San Juan, but north of Hato Rey. Santurce was originally an upper-class neighborhood and entertainment. Today, there are office buildings and abandoned structures with a small but very good marketplace (Plaza del Mercado). A major campaign is under way by City Hall to restore the sector's vitality.

## Río Piedras

This district is known as University City because it houses the University of Puerto Rico. Visiting Río Piedras is enlightening for those who want to explore the real Puerto Rico first-hand. The district has a traditional Plaza del Mercado and a very hometown atmosphere.

©