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alicesoup

Old San Juan weekend stay

San Juan, 3 Days

Table of contents:

Guide Description	2
Itinerary Overview	3
Daily Itineraries	4
My List	12
San Juan Snapshot	13

Guide Description











AUTHOR NOTE: We packed in history and culture on the first day. The itinerary seems like a lot, but you can take the sites at your own speed. We were a little tired from all of the walking, but were able to take a late nap before headed out to dinner. Things seem to pick up later at night here anyways. Fortaleza street was hopping. There's a lot of bars and restaurants down the end closer to the Cristobal fort, so you can really take your pick. Nuyorican had salsa playing when we walked in, but the band didn't go on until after 11, at which point it got crowded quick. It's a mixed scene, but definitely on the younger side and local. The second day is to recuperate. With two days, you can break up the sightseeing, but we liked the option of a leisurely day at the beach. Escambron is a beautiful beach, the closest one to Old San Juan. It was a five minute cab ride, but you can also take a bus. We stopped at the Don Q house across from the cruise eships on our walk back to the hotel, it's small, but, hey, free rum!

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - San Juan









DAY NOTE: We arrived in the mid-afternoon, so after checking in we headed up the street to the El Morro Fort. We didn't go into the fort, just walked around the huge green park in front of it, then down along the wall to the Rogativa and La Fortaleza, to outside of the city wall. This walk brought us around to the docks. We walked back to the hotel to change for the evening, walking to the other end of the city for a great meal at Aguaviva. Fortaleza street is packed with bars and restaurants, and we heard some salsa at Nuyorican. Our last stop was for a martini at Tantra before heading back to the hotel.

	Hotel El Convento Former 17th century convent
	Plaza del Totem Impressive Pole
	Fort San Felipe del Morro No trip to Old San Juan is complete without a trek to see this fort.
	La Fortaleza A US World Heritage Site
	Puerta de San Juan Gate to the old city
	Paseo de la Princesa Former Spanish prison
	Aguaviva Bathed in blue!
	Nuyorican Cafe Go Bohemia!

Day 2 - San Juan

DAY NOTE: We were a bit exhausted after yesterday, so we took it easy today, spending the morning at the hotel and enjoying the cute roof-top bathing pool. We took some photos of the sites just around our hotel, but ultimately opted for the beach. Escambron was a 3 minute cab ride from the hotel. On the way back, we had the driver leave us near the entrance of the Old City, where we walked down to the Don Q house. There's not much there, but

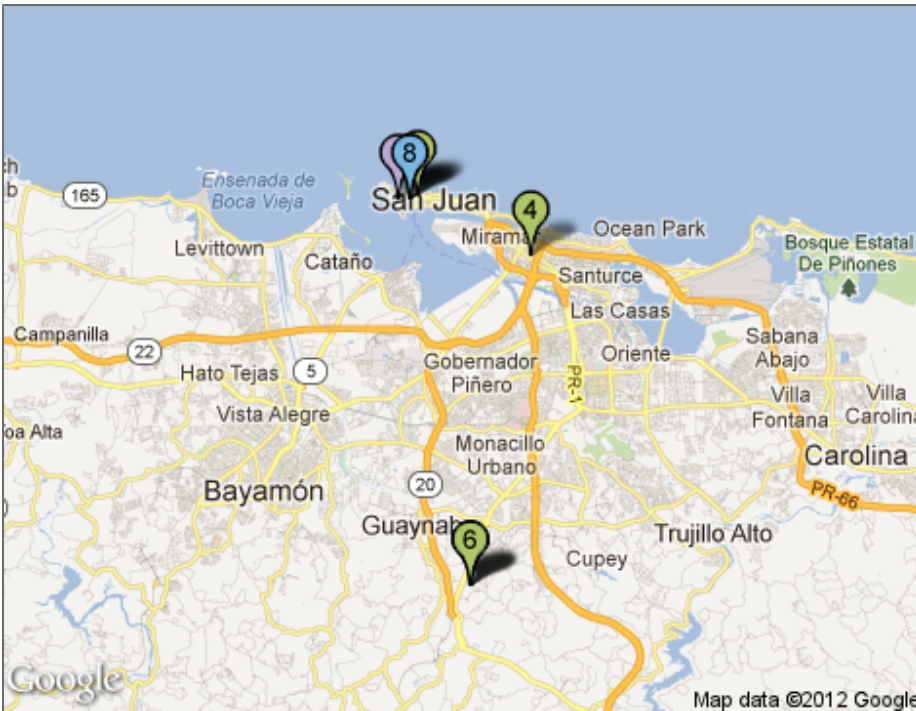
free rum! We opted for a great, cheap, casual dinner at Jibarito, and had drinks in the courtyard at the hotel.

	San Juan Cathedral Grand old spanish architecture looking across the quaintest corner of Old San Juan
	Capilla del Cristo Chapel Charming Chapel
	San Jose Church The second oldest church in the western hemisphere
	Museo Pablo Casals The Life of Casals
	Playa Escambron A beautiful and well-dept locals beach walking distance from Old San Juan and Condado
	Casa Don Q Sample and find out why the locals prefer Don Q to Bacardi
	El Jibarito Classic criollo cuisine
	Hotel El Convento Former 17th century convent

Day 3

DAY NOTE: We headed out in the early morning

Day 1 - San Juan



QUICK NOTE

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contact:

tel: +1 787 723 9020 / +1 800
468 2779 (Toll Free)
fax: +1 787 721 2877
<http://www.elconvento.com/>

location:

100 Cristo St
San Juan -- 00901

1 Hotel El Convento

DESCRIPTION: This once Carmelite Convent was built in 1651. The convent has changed purpose many times, but was finally restored and became a hotel in 1962. The inside is warm though a bit gloomy, but that changes once I reach the open-air courtyard, and it is a marvelous sight. When the hotel opened in the early 60s, celebrities flocked to enjoy the exuberance and mysticism that can be felt here. Today, the hotel is one of the most beautiful places to stay in San Juan. It was modernized with air-conditioned rooms and many other amenities.
© NileGuide



Hotels.com

contact:
tel: +1 787 721 2400

location:
Plaza del Quinto Centenario
San Juan PR

hours:
24 hours daily

2 Plaza del Totem

DESCRIPTION: Within Plaza del Quinto Centenario(Quincentennial Square) you can't miss this 40-foot(12m) totem pole, conceived in 1992 and designed to commemorate Indian culture. Visitors flock to take photos of this imposing and stark centerpiece. The controversial sculpture has drawn some criticism as being too contemporary for the old city. It's displayed in its own sub-plaza; the 'Plaza del Totem' located between Castillo del Morro and the Ballajá Barracks. Plaza del Quinto Centenario is a favorite spot for skateboarders, rollerbladers and for those seeking a lunch break or a stroll. The plaza is also a central meeting place and host area for neighborhood events as well. © wcities.com



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

location:
501 Norzagaray
San Juan 00901

3 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.
© NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Tomas Fano

contact:
tel: +1 787 721 7000 / +1 787 721 2211 / +1 787 721 2358
<http://www.nps.gov/history/worldheritage/fort.htm>

location:
Calle Recinto Oeste
San Juan PR 901

4 La Fortaleza

DESCRIPTION: The system of fortifications in San Juan built by the Spaniards in the early 16th century is the oldest European construction in the United States and one of the oldest in the New World. Their main purpose was to protect the entrance of San Juan Bay, ensure that Puerto Rico remained under the sovereignty of Spain, and protect Spanish commerce in the Caribbean basin. The system that defended San Juan includes three major fortifications. The forts and three miles of city wall (mostly still standing) are fine examples of 18th century military architecture and will forever be linked to the power and glory of the Spanish Empire, and the beginning of European ascendancy in world affairs.



Photo courtesy of Oquendo

contact:

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

5 Puerta de San Juan

DESCRIPTION: This is the most important entry to the old city. It faces the San Juan Bay exit and is accessed via the Paseo de la Princesa. If you are walking from the Caleta Las Monjas San Juan PR, it offers an excellent view of the bay and nearby Isla de Cabras. The Paseo de la Princesa opens up to an impressive view of La Fortaleza, the Governor's mansion. To the north, one can find the colonial-style streets. The Puerta is a wonderful vantage point to view the city. © wcities.com



location:

Near Caleta de las Monjas
San Juan PR

hours:

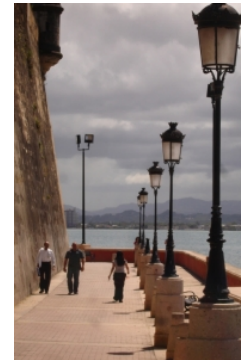
Dawn-dusk

contact:

tel: +1 787 721 2400

6 Paseo de la Princesa

DESCRIPTION: Located in the southern tip of Old San Juan, this stylish promenade hosted a former Spanish prison, which now houses the Puerto Rico Tourism Company. It offers breathtaking views of the San Juan Bay and is bordered by a huge colonial wall. Several cultural activities are held here throughout the year. Walking the full promenade also offers views of Isla de Cabras, a beautiful small island located in the bay. The Paseo is the place for an afternoon 'Piragua', a traditional Puerto Rican sweet concoction made from ice and tropical fruit syrups. © wcities.com



wcities

location:

Paseo de la Princesa
San Juan 00902

hours:

Dawn till Dusk

contact:

tel: 1 787 722 0665
fax: 1 787 724 2535

7 Aguaviva

DESCRIPTION: The latest name in Latino cuisine is here! Besides serving enchanting sea food, Aguaviva's decor is so blue and so uplifting, you may well just float! Try out the Split Oysters, and BBQ'd Camarones Gigantes (jumbo shrimp). Even the mixed seafood enchiladas, or Chorizo Kebabs are worth a dig. All this delicious food and the relaxed ambience are sure to make you lazy, so try and make time for a siesta at home after your meal! © wcities.com



Aguaviva

location:

364 Calle Fortaleza
San Juan 00901

hours:

Lunch: noon-4p M-Su, Dinner:
6p-11p M-W, 6p-midnight Th-Sa,
4p-10p Su

contact:

tel: Z65787 366 5074 / 787
977 1276
fax: 787 724 5142
<http://www.nuyoricancafepr.com/>

8 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



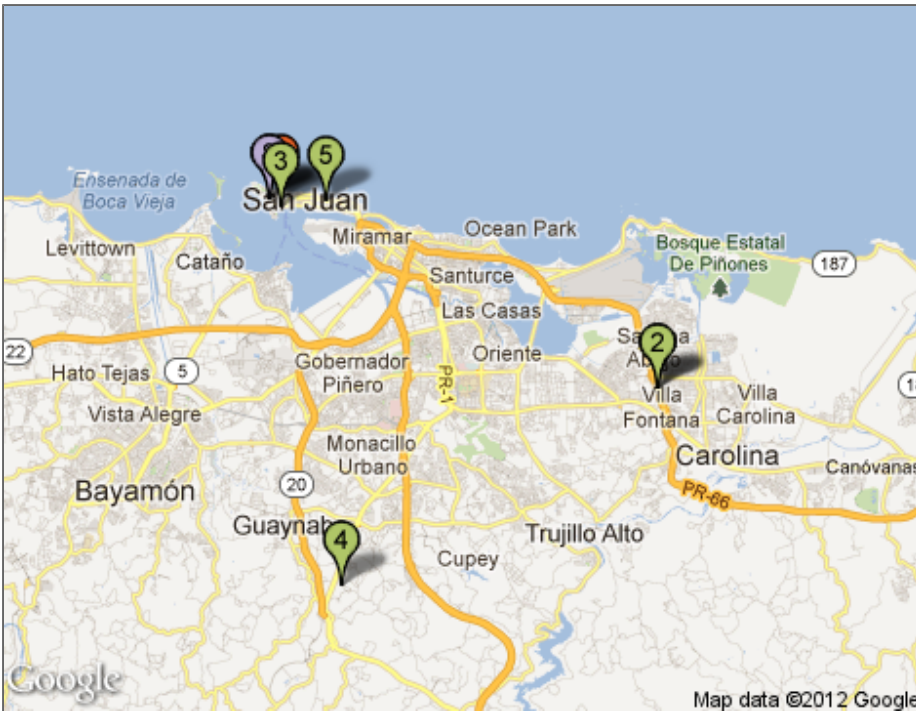
Nuyorican Cafe

location:

Calle San Francisco Number
312
San Juan 00901

great, fun night out with your buddies, this is the place to go! ©
wcities.com

Day 2 - San Juan



QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: We were a bit exhausted after yesterday, so we took it easy today, spending the morning at the hotel and enjoying the cute roof-top bathing pool. We took some photos of the sites just around our hotel, but ultimately opted for the beach. Escambron was a 3 minute cab ride from the hotel. On the way back, we had the driver leave us near the entrance of the Old City, where we walked down to the Don Q house. There's not much there, but free rum! We opted for a great, cheap, casual dinner at Jibarito, and had drinks in the courtyard at the hotel.

contact:

<http://welcome.topuertorico.org/city/sanjuan.shtml>

location:

Calle Cristo, across from the Hotel El Convento and el Museo del Nino
San Juan PR 00901

hours:

8:30-4p daily

1 San Juan Cathedral

DESCRIPTION: For Puerto Rico vacationers who are staying in San Juan, the Botanical Gardens give visitors a taste of the diverse tropical flora and fauna found on the island. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of rockmixer

contact:

tel: +1 787 721 2400 (Tourist Information)

location:

Parque de las Palomas
San Juan 00901

2 Capilla del Cristo Chapel

DESCRIPTION: A legend tells the story of how the Cristo Chapel was created as a thank you to a saint for saving a boy that fell over a citadel precipice. Sadly, recent studies show that the legend is far from real. The boy died and the chapel was made by then secretary Don Tomas Mateo Prats as a way to prevent future accidents. It is beautifully designed with a gold and silver altar inside and right in front of a very high citadel. The chapel is a landmark in Old San Juan and a masterpiece that serves as an anchor of busy Cristo street. © NileGuide



wcities

contact:

<http://www.gotopuertorico.com/puerto-rico-san-jose-church.php>

location:

Calle Cristo, Plaza San Jose,
close to the Plaza del Totem
San Juan PR 00901

3 San Jose Church

DESCRIPTION: Built in 1532 by Dominican friars, the church housed the first governor Juan Ponce de Leon's remains for 300 years.



Photo courtesy of Shayan (USA)

hours:

8a-3p M-W

contact:

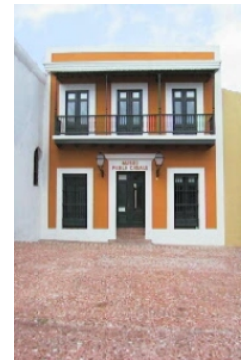
tel: +1 787 723 9185
<http://www.gotopuertorico.com/puerto-rico-museums.php>

location:

101 Calle San Sebastián
San Juan 00901

4 Museo Pablo Casals

DESCRIPTION: Located on Calle de San Sebastián, this small museum is devoted to the life and music of the loved and famous Catalan cellist, Pablo Casals. Although not Puerto Rican by birth, he was loved dearly by the locals here. Casals is known for his lifetime friendship with the late Puerto Rican governor, Luis Muñoz Marín. His life is now remembered in the yearly 'Festival Casals'. Casals' memorabilia, CDs, tapes and videos are available in the gift shop. © wcities.com



wcities

contact:

tel: 17874495672
<http://www.gotopuertorico.com/beaches-puerto-rico.php>

location:

Muñoz Rivera Avenue, Puerta de Tierra
San Juan PR

5 Playa Escambron

DESCRIPTION: Escambrón beach is an exquisitely maintained, pristine public beach in Puerta de Tierra, the small peninsula that leads into Old San Juan. The waters are crystal clear and good for snorkeling. A nice break towards the left end of the beach makes it a favorite local surfing spot. The beach is bordered by the beautiful art deco Caribe Hilton hotel to the right, and the Luis Muñoz Marín Park across the street. On weekends the park often hosts cultural events and artisan fairs. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Jose Kevo

hours:

open daily

contact:

tel: 17879771720
<http://www.gotopuertorico.com/san-juan-puerto-rico.php>

location:

Cruise ship docks, across from Pier 1 on the Old San Juan Waterfront, just a block away from the Casita Information Center.
San Juan PR 00901

6 Casa Don Q

DESCRIPTION: This small museum showcases what Puerto Ricans call "the best rum in the world." Try all the different rums including the famous Grand Añejo. Learn about the company, how it started and what it is today: Puerto Rico's favorite rum. The best part of the tour is the bar offering free samples of the different Don Q rums and their exquisite concoctions. © NileGuide



donq.com

contact:

tel: 1 787 725 8375

location:

280 Calle Sol, Old San Juan
San Juan PR 00901

hours:

Open daily 11am-9pm

7 El Jibarito

DESCRIPTION: A very casual dining room on a quiet residential street on Old San Juan, this is a local's institution for favorites like mofongo, churrasco, and mariscos. Lunch and Dinner daily

contact:

tel: +1 787 723 9020 / +1 800 468 2779 (Toll Free)
fax: +1 787 721 2877
<http://www.elconvento.com/>

location:

100 Cristo St
San Juan -- 00901

8 Hotel El Convento

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© NileGuide



Hotels.com

Day 3

DAY NOTE: We headed out in the early morning

My List

contact:

tel: 1 787 724 4607



Cafeteria Mallorca

location:

300 Calle San Francisco, Old
San Juan
San Juan PR 00901

DESCRIPTION: No trip to Old San Juan would be complete without a stop at this venerable institution for a mallorca and café con leche.

hours:

Open daily 7a-6p

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.

©