



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



alicesoup

San Juan and Culebra

Puerto Rico, San Juan, 6 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: This trip allowed us enough time to take in San Juan, including Old San Juan, on a modest budget. Getting out to Culebra was definitely worth it, it's completely different from the city. You have to work travel time into a Culebra trip, so just going for the day isn't really feasible. Two nights was perfect.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - San Juan

DAY NOTE: We arrived in the afternoon and headed right to the beach. Pinkys is just a few blocks down away, so we took a break from the sun to eat, and went back to watch the sunset. For dinner we ate at Kasalta's, a Cuban bakery very close by--great Spanish wine, tapas, and desserts!



Numero Uno
Lovely guesthouse



Pinkys
Simple and delicious food by the beach



Ocean Park/Punta Las Marías Beach
Island Fun

Day 2 - San Juan

DAY NOTE: Today we headed into Old San Juan. We walked to Ashford Ave. and caught the bus to Old San Juan (\$.75 but we waited a while). We hit some of the big historic attractions, and had a casual lunch at Bombonera. This was a gallery night, so we spent the evening on San Sebastian checking the artisan crafts and street party. The galleries are open to about 9, and are scattered around--we found them by asking.



Bombonera (La)
Colonial decor



Museo de Nuestra Raíz Africana
Museum of African culture



Fort San Felipe del Morro
No trip to Old San Juan is complete without a trek to see this fort.



Plazuela de la Rogativa
Lovely plaza



Galeria Botello
Local art & sculpture, internationally recognized artists



Catedral de San Juan
A Minor Basílica



Gallery Nights in Old San Juan
Ever popular monthly party



Numero Uno
Lovely guesthouse

Day 3 - Puerto Rico

DAY NOTE: Headed to Culebra. To get to Culebra you can do a few things--plane, or rent a car or take a publico to Fajardo and take the ferry over. The publico is the cheapest option, but we would have spent most of the day in transit. Rental cars here are not outrageous, and good deals can be had. There is a car ferry to the island, but we didn't plan well enough for that, so unfortunately had to rent a car to park it for 2 days. We camped out at Flamenco beach (brought our own tents). It's a beautiful beach, with public restrooms and hardly any other campers! \$20 a night to pitch the tent. There are taxis from the ferry that take you to Flamenco. We rented bikes for \$10 a day to get around. There are a few stores on the island, but the selection is limited, so bring your own provisions.



Culebra
Wildlife refuge and world-class snorkeling

Day 4 - Puerto Rico

DAY NOTE: We spent the day biking and snorkeling. Great snorkeling right behind Flamenco, about a 15 minute hike. You can rent snorkeling gear on the island (we brought our own, but the shopkeepers were very helpful with recommendations of where to go). At night we were exhausted, and splurged on pizza in town. The bike ride back was pitch black and a little hairy....best not to do that.



Culebra
Wildlife refuge and world-class snorkeling

Day 5 - San Juan

DAY NOTE: On the way back to San Juan we stopped at El Yunque and did the waterfall hike, an easy hour and half. At night we explored Condado a bit more, mostly restaurants.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife



Numero Uno
Lovely guesthouse



Parque Laguna del Condado (Condado Lagoon)
Beautiful Lagoon

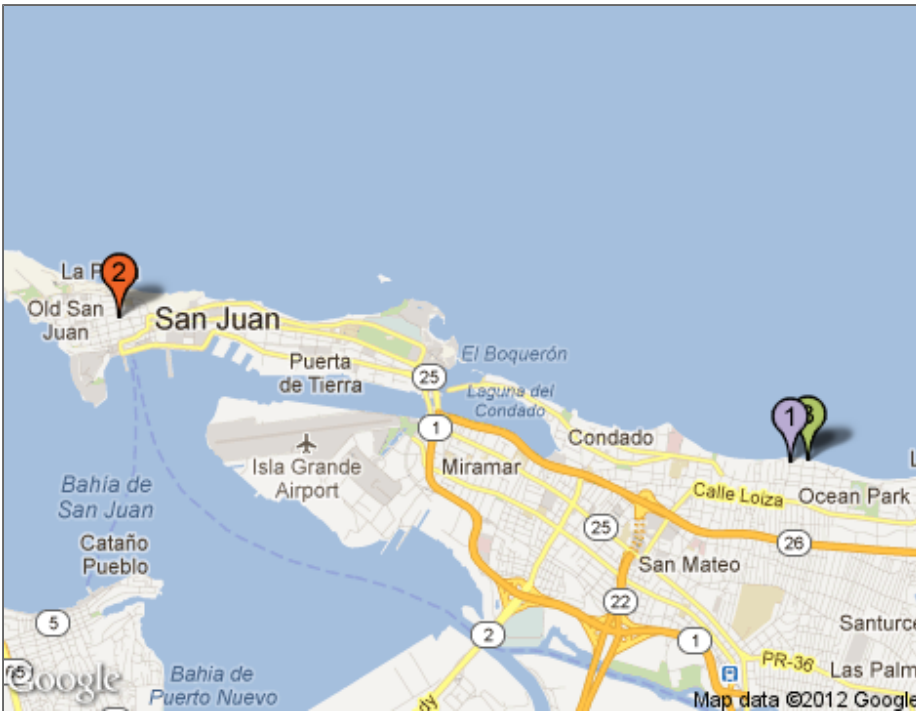


The Greenhouse
Hopping late-night scene

Day 6

DAY NOTE: Flew out.

Day 1 - San Juan



QUICK NOTE

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contact:

tel: +1 787 726 5010

fax: +1 787 727 5482

<http://www.numero1guesthouse.com>

location:

1 Calle Santa Ana
San Juan -- 00911

1 Numero Uno

DESCRIPTION: This cool and well decorated hotel is a great option if not the best in the Ocean Park area. The hotel is kept with extreme passion and resembles a rich families 1950s beach house. There's a swimming pool, plush gardens and beautiful fountains in the property. Rooms are tastefully decorated with rattan furnishings. © NileGuide



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:

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

location:

East of Condado
Isla Verde

hours:

Dawn-dusk daily



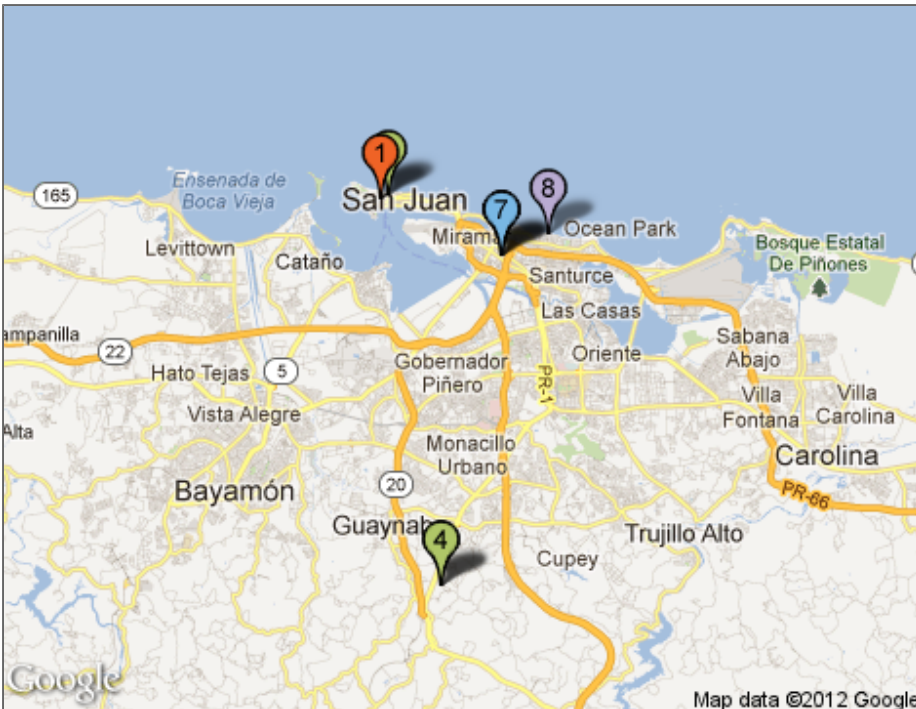
Ocean Park/Punta Las Marías Beach

DESCRIPTION: The white sands at Ocean Park are more expansive, and the water calmer and clearer, than at nearby Condado or Isla Verde. Ocean Park is also strictly residential, so what the beach lacks in businesses it makes up for with people-watching. This is the local's beach. The winds at Ocean Park are world-renowned for kite surfing, so this is the spot for a first lesson, or to just observe. Before hitting the beach, stock up on food, beverages, and supplies at the nearby Kasalta bakery, and the many stores lining nearby Calle Loiza. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of aaronbflickr

Day 2 - San Juan



QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Today we headed into Old San Juan. We walked to Ashford Ave. and caught the bus to Old San Juan (\$.75 but we waited a while). We hit some of the big historic attractions, and had a casual lunch at Bombonera. This was a gallery night, so we spent the evening on San Sebastian checking the artisan crafts and street party. The galleries are open to about 9, and are scattered around--we found them by asking.

contact:
tel: 787 722 0658

location:
Calle San Francisco 259
San Juan 00901

hours:
7:30am-8:00pm

1 Bombonera (La)

DESCRIPTION: A Puerto Rican Sunday morning institution, La Bombonera offers huge mallorcas and other baked items. It's a well-kept secret, as is its ability to prepare excellent meals consistently. La Bombonera attracts huge crowds on weekends. Be sure to try the Puerto Rican coffee. Housed in an historical building, this operation's colonial décor provides for great atmosphere and a chance to mix and mingle with the locals. © wcities.com



wcities

contact:
tel: +1 787 724 4294 / +1 787 724 4184
<http://www.icp.gobierno.pr/my/p/museos/m16.htm>

location:
Casa de los Contrafuertes
San Juan 00901

2 Museo de Nuestra Raíz Africana

DESCRIPTION: African heritage has played a strong role in influencing Puerto Rican culture. This adobe-styled museum chronicles the history of Africans in Puerto Rico from the early days of slavery to modern day. Here you will find African art, literature, sounds, and pictures. Browse through nine exhibition rooms. Admission is free. © wcities.com



wcities

hours:

9:30a-5p Tu-Sa, 11a-5p Su

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:

<http://www.nps.gov/saju/planyourvisit/placestogo.htm>

location:

Caleta Las Monjas
San Juan PR

hours:

24 Hrs

4 Plazuela de la Rogativa

DESCRIPTION: Plazuela de la Rogativa's four statues (sculptured by Lindsay Daen) pay tribute to a San Juan legend. Dating back to 1797, as the story goes, a bishop and his congregation marched through the city singing hymns and carrying torches during a British attack, and as result were able to scare off the potential invaders. La Rogativa (Plaza of Religious Procession) is a great spot to rest your weary feet after a walking tour of the city, and affords an excellent view of the San Juan Bay. © wcities.com



contact:

tel: +1 787 723 9987

fax: +1 787 724 6776

<http://www.botello.com>

location:

00901

5 Galeria Botello

DESCRIPTION: Featuring paintings and sculptures from a variety of local artists, Galeria Botello is a delicate space in the heart of historic Old San Juan. The 350 year-old building that houses the gallery add to an exquisite setting and vibe where locals and tourists go to enjoy an awe-inspiring selection of works.

© NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Galeria Botello.

contact:

tel: +1 787 722 0861
fax: +1 787 722 1881
<http://www.catedralsanjuan.com/>

location:

153 Calle Cristo
San Juan 00901

6 Catedral de San Juan

DESCRIPTION: The Catedral de San Juan is considered a 'Minor Basilica' by the Roman Vatican. It is located on Calle del Cristo, facing the plaza that's right next to the Convento Hotel. The cathedral's construction began in 1521 inspired in Gothic architecture. The vaulted tower, ceilings and its circular staircase are all original elements that can still be seen. The remains of Puerto Rico's first governor, Juan Ponce de León are interred here.

© NileGuide



wcities

contact:

fax: 1 787 721 2400 (tourist information)

location:

San Sebastian street and various gallery locations, Old San Juan 901

7 Gallery Nights in Old San Juan

DESCRIPTION: The first Tuesday of every month is the infamous Noches de Galeria in Old San Juan. Originally intended as a night for leisurely art-gazing and strolling, this is a raucous event that attracts huge crowds of diverse, and primarily young, locals. Heading out early before the crowds descend, you can still take peruse the many art galleries of Old San Juan, which keep their doors open until about 9-10pm, as well as check out artisan crafts along Calle San Sebastian. Then join in the festivities and people watch for as long as you can make it.

hours:

First Tuesday of every month from 6p

contact:

tel: +1 787 726 5010
fax: +1 787 727 5482
<http://www.numero1guesthouse.com>

location:

1 Calle Santa Ana
San Juan -- 00911

8 Numero Uno

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Day 3 - Puerto Rico

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contact:

tel: +1 787 721 2400 (Tourist Office)
<http://www.islaculebra.com/index.htm>

location:

Island-wide
Culebra PR

Culebra

DESCRIPTION: The smaller of the Spanish Virgin Islands, Culebra is perfect for a 2-3 day excursion off the mainland. The landscape is dry and somewhat barren, but Culebra's beaches are the most stunning in Puerto Rico. Snorkeling and scuba are top-notch. Culebra's 2,000 residents are friendly and very laid-back. There are no big hotels or resorts on the island, but a range of small hotels and guesthouses offer something for everyone. Visitors can also pitch a tent on the maintained facilities at spectacular Flamenco beach. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of bvincent

Day 4 - Puerto Rico

DAY NOTE: We spent the day biking and snorkeling. Great snorkeling right behind Flamenco, about a 15 minute hike. You can rent snorkeling gear on the island (we brought our own, but the shopkeepers were very helpful with recommendations of where to go). At night we were exhausted, and splurged on pizza in town. The bike ride back was pitch black and a little hairy....best not to do that.

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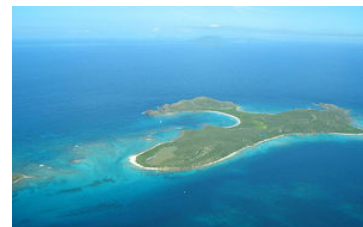
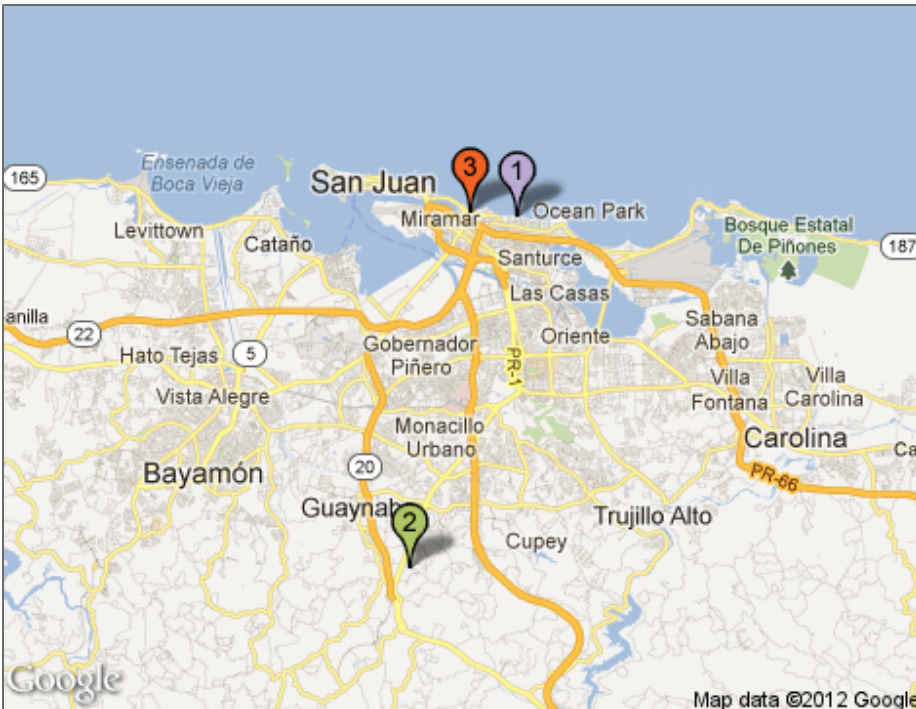


Photo courtesy of bvincent

Day 5 - San Juan



QUICK NOTE

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fax: +1 787 727 5482

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San Juan -- 00911

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contact:

tel: +1 787 763 0613

location:

Dos Hermanos Bridge
San Juan

hours:

24 hours daily

2 Parque Laguna del Condado (Condado Lagoon)

DESCRIPTION: The Laguna del Condado or Condado Lagoon is one of San Juan's most beautiful and familiar landmarks. It stands between three districts: Old San Juan/Puerta de Tierra (Northwest), Miramar (South) and Condado (East). The lagoon is particularly loved by those who practice kayaking and several other watersports. There are also kayak rentals available on the perimeter of the lagoon. If you decide to partake in this sport, note that the rentals are often quite busy on the weekends. Admission is free. © wcities.com

contact:

tel: 1 787 725 4036

location:

Diamond Palace Hotel
San Juan PR

hours:

Open Daily 11a-12p Sun-
Thurs, til 4:30 am Fri and Sat



The Greenhouse

DESCRIPTION: Open for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and late-night reveleries, the menu spans American and Puerto Rican classics. The staff is older and somewhat weary, but always accomadating, the crowd is boisterous late at night, and the desserts are to die for.

Day 6

DAY NOTE: Flew out.

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.

©