

¡Wepa!

Free Things to Do in Puerto Rico

Beaches, old-city walks, plazas, hikes, festivals, and food tips
that cost little or nothing, island-wide.

The best of the island is free

Some of Puerto Rico's most memorable moments don't come with a ticket: a sunset swim at a public beach, a walk on blue cobblestones, a plaza that fills with music on a Saturday night.

This short guide rounds up our favorite free and low-cost things to do, region by region, plus beach and food tips to stretch your budget.

FREE means no entry fee to enjoy it. **LOW COST** means you may pay for parking, a snack, or a small fee somewhere along the way.

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CHECK BEFORE YOU GO

Hours, parking, and access rules change, sometimes with little notice. We only list a fee when we've confirmed it with the official source. When in doubt, check the official page or ask at the entrance.

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Old San Juan on foot

The old walled city is one big open-air museum, and wandering it costs nothing. Wear comfortable shoes; the streets are hilly and the cobblestones are uneven.

1 Paseo de la Princesa FREE

Start on this tree-lined promenade along the bay, with fountains, benches, and weekend craft vendors. [Paseo de la Princesa](#)

2 Puerta de San Juan FREE

Walk through the historic city gate, where ships' passengers once entered the walled city, and look up at the massive stone walls.

3 Paseo del Morro FREE

A paved shoreline trail that hugs the base of the city wall toward El Morro. It can close for repairs, so check the National Park Service's alerts the day you go.

4 The El Morro lawn FREE

The huge grassy esplanade in front of Castillo San Felipe del Morro is free to enjoy. Bring a blanket, watch the kites in the afternoon trade winds, and stay for sunset. [El Morro guide](#)

5 Calle del Cristo & the side streets FREE

Zigzag uphill past pastel facades, wrought-iron balconies, and hidden courtyards. The best photos are usually one street off the main drag.

6 Plaza de Armas & Plaza Colón FREE

Rest on a shaded bench, people-watch, and grab a coffee nearby. Plazas are the living rooms of Puerto Rican towns.

GOING INSIDE THE FORTS

Entering El Morro and Castillo San Cristóbal (San Juan National Historic Site) costs **\$10 per person age 16 and up**; one pass covers both forts for 24 hours, and visitors 15 and under get in free. On the National Park Service's fee-free days, entry is free for US citizens and residents.

CHECK: [NPS.GOV/SAJU](https://www.nps.gov/saju)

→ More in the old city: puertorico.com/old-san-juan · [Things to do in Old San Juan](#)

San Juan beyond the walls

City beaches FREE

Condado, Ocean Park, and Isla Verde are public beaches a short walk from many hotels. Spread a towel, swim when the water is calm, and stay for the sunset. Escambrón, near the entrance to Old San Juan, is a more sheltered spot that's popular with snorkelers on calm days. [Condado](#) · [Isla Verde](#)

Santurce street art & La Placita FREE

Santurce's walls are covered in big, bold murals, and they're best explored on foot in daylight. At night, the area around the Plaza del Mercado, known as La Placita, turns into an open-air party, especially on weekends. Walking around is free; drinks and bites are cheap. [Santurce guide](#)

Piñones by bike or on foot LOW COST

Just east of Isla Verde, a coastal path runs through mangroves and palm groves past a strip of beachfront kiosks. Walk a stretch for free, or rent a bike, then refuel with a fritter or two. [Piñones guide](#)

Sunsets worth planning around FREE

- The El Morro lawn, facing the open Atlantic.
- The Paseo de la Princesa, with the bay turning gold.
- Any west-facing stretch of Condado or Ocean Park beach.

FROM THE MAKERS OF THIS GUIDE

How many days should you spend in San Juan?

Our paid planner, **¡Wepa! The Ultimate Puerto Rico Trip Planner**, answers that with ready-made 3, 7, and 10-day itineraries and a region-by-region guide to where to stay.

[See the planner, from \\$7](#)

→ Everything in the capital: puertorico.com/san-juan

Rainforest & beaches

El Yunque National Forest FREE to drive in

A tropical rainforest that's part of the US National Forest System, about an hour from San Juan. The main road into the forest (PR-191 from the north) has no entrance fee at the time of writing. Pull over at the lookouts, walk the shorter paved trails, and listen for the coquí frogs. The El Portal visitor center has its own hours and fee.

CHECK BEFORE YOU GO: EL YUNQUE

Entry rules, hours, and open trails change. A reservation system has been used in the past and later suspended. The road can close when parking is full or flash floods are likely, and rideshare pick-up and drop-off isn't authorized. Look at the USDA Forest Service "Current Conditions" page the morning of your visit, and go early. [Our El Yunque guide](#)

Luquillo Beach & the kioskos LOW COST

Luquillo's public beach (balneario) has calm, protected water that's great for kids, with facilities and parking (parking may cost a little). Right next door, a long row of beachfront kioskos serves fritters, seafood, and cold drinks: the perfect lunch after El Yunque. [Luquillo guide](#)

Fajardo's shoreline FREE

The island's northeast corner is a boating hub with calm bays and views out to the offshore cays. Swimming and beach time are free; boat trips, snorkel tours, and the Laguna Grande bio bay kayak tours are paid, and worth booking ahead. [Fajardo guide](#) · [Bio bays](#)

Waterfalls & swimming holes FREE

Mountain rivers form charcos (natural pools) all over the interior. Wear water shoes, never jump without checking the depth, and leave at once if the water rises or turns brown: rain upstream can cause a flash flood in minutes. [Waterfall guide](#)

Surf & sunsets

Laid-back surf towns, dramatic cliffs, and the island's best sunsets. A car is a must out here.

Rincón FREE

Watch surfers from the beach or the lighthouse park, then find a spot for sunset; this coast faces west, so the show is nightly. In winter, keep an eye on the water: humpback whales are sometimes spotted offshore. [Rincón guide](#) · [Surfing in Puerto Rico](#)

Aguadilla & Isabela FREE

Crash Boat Beach is famous for its clear water and its old pier, and it's a lively local hangout on weekends. Up the coast in Isabela, the beaches range from surf breaks to rocky coves; when the waves are big, admire them from the sand. [Crash Boat](#) · [Aguadilla](#) · [Isabela](#)

Cabo Rojo Lighthouse & Playa Sucia FREE

At the island's southwest tip, a walk up to the old lighthouse brings you to limestone cliffs above the Caribbean. Below lies Playa Sucia (La Playuela), a gorgeous curve of sand. There's little shade, so bring water and a hat, and go early or near sunset. Nearby, the pink-tinged salt flats are worth a look from the roadside. [Cabo Rojo Lighthouse & Playa Sucia](#)

Boquerón, Buyé & La Parguera LOW COST

The southwest's calm Caribbean bays are great for easy swimming. Boquerón's waterfront is known for its casual seafood stands. In La Parguera, stroll the little waterfront village for free; the bio bay boat trips at night are paid. [Cabo Rojo](#) · [La Parguera](#) · [Where to eat in Lajas](#)

PLANNING A WEST COAST LOOP?

Get the route, the bases, and the beaches by vibe

The full ¡Wepa! planner shows how to fit the west into a 7 or 10-day trip without spending it in the car, plus a beach-by-vibe shortlist for the whole island.

[Get the full planner](#)

Plazas, dry forest & caves

Ponce's Plaza Las Delicias FREE

The south's biggest city has one of the island's grandest plazas, with fountains, a cathedral, and the famous red-and-black striped Parque de Bombas, a historic firehouse that makes a great photo. On the coast, the La Guancha boardwalk is a relaxed place for an evening stroll. [Ponce guide](#) · [Where to eat in Ponce](#)

Guánica's dry forest FREE

A complete change of scenery: cactus, scrub, and rocky coves on Puerto Rico's dry southern coast. The forest is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve with trails down to quiet shoreline. It's hot and exposed, so hike early and carry plenty of water. [Guánica guide](#)

Cueva del Indio, Arecibo LOW COST

Waves crash through sea arches on the rugged north coast, and the rocks hold ancient Taíno petroglyphs. Stay well back from the edges and off wet rock, and check access when you arrive. [Cueva del Indio](#) · [Arecibo](#) · [More caves](#)

The mountain road to Guavate LOW COST

In the mountains of Cayey, open-air lechoneras roast whole pigs, and on weekends there's live music and dancing. The drive and the atmosphere are free; a plate of lechón is a very good value. [Cayey & Guavate](#)

More free hikes

From rainforest paths to coastal walks, the island has trails for every level. Start early to beat the heat, wear real shoes, and tell someone your plan. [Hiking in Puerto Rico](#)

Free beach days, done right

Puerto Rico's beaches are public, and most cost nothing to enjoy. Here's how to do it like a local.

If you want...	Try
Calm water for kids	Luquillo's balneario, Boquerón, Playa Buyé
City convenience	Condado, Ocean Park, Isla Verde, Escambrón
Clear water, lively scene	Crash Boat (Aguadilla)
Wild & dramatic	Playa Sucia below the Cabo Rojo Lighthouse
Bucket list (by ferry)	Flamenco on Culebra

Local tips

- **Balnearios** are public beaches with facilities like restrooms and showers, and often lifeguards in season. Some charge for parking.
- **Go early on weekends and holidays.** Families arrive with coolers and music, and parking fills fast.
- **Bring your own shade, water, and snacks.** Remote beaches may have no vendors at all.
- **Leave nothing in the car,** take your trash home, and never stand on or touch coral.

READ THE SEA, NOT THE PHOTOS

Many beautiful beaches have no lifeguard and strong currents, especially on the north coast in winter. If waves are big or locals aren't swimming, enjoy the view. Caught in a current? Float, stay calm, and swim parallel to shore.

→ Our full beach guide: puertorico.com/beaches · [Snorkeling](#) · [Flamenco Beach](#) · [Culebra beaches](#)

Beaches by vibe, island-wide: the full shortlist, plus how to fit Culebra or Vieques into your trip, is in the ¡Wepa! Trip Planner. [See inside →](#)

Festivals & free fun

Puerto Ricans know how to celebrate, and most street festivals are free to join. Dates move from year to year, so confirm before you plan around one.

Fiestas de la Calle San Sebastián · January

Old San Juan's famous street festival, known as "SanSe," brings music, parades with giant costumed figures, crafts, and food to the old city's streets. It's crowded and joyful.

Ponce Carnaval · before Lent

Ponce's carnival is known for its vejigantes, the colorful horned masks that are one of the island's most recognizable folk-art traditions.

Noche de San Juan · June 23

On the eve of the feast of San Juan Bautista, people head to the beach at night, and many walk backward into the sea at midnight for good luck.

Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza · July

A celebration of Afro-Puerto Rican heritage with processions, bomba music and dancing, and vejigante masks.

Fiestas patronales · all year

Every town honors its patron saint with a fiesta in its main plaza: music, rides, and food stands. If you see a stage going up, ask a local when it starts.

MORE FREE FUN

Live music in town plazas on weekend evenings, Sunday strolls along the waterfronts, and the nightly chorus of coquí frogs, which you can hear for free almost anywhere on the island after dark.

→ Holidays and celebrations through the year: puertorico.com/holidays

¡BUEN PROVECHO!

Eat well for less

Some of the best food on the island is also some of the cheapest. Here's where to find it.

- **Kioskos and roadside stands.** Look for fritters like alcapurrias (green banana dough stuffed with seasoned meat or crab) and bacalaítos (crispy salt-cod fritters), plus cold coconut water. Piñones and Luquillo are the classics.
- **The lunch special.** Many local restaurants offer an almuerzo: a hearty plate of rice, beans, and a main, often at a friendly price.
- **Panaderías.** Neighborhood bakeries do coffee, sandwiches, and a sweet, sugar-dusted mallorca for breakfast.
- **Piraguas.** Shaved ice with tropical syrup from a street cart, the classic way to cool down in a plaza.
- **Pinchos.** Grilled skewers, usually served with a slice of bread, from roadside grills and beach stands.
- **Lechón in Guavate.** Order by the pound or as a plate, and ask for some of the crispy skin.

KIOSKO ETIQUETTE

Carry some cash just in case, order a few things to share, eat them hot, and ask "¿Qué me recomienda?" (What do you recommend?).

→ Our street food guide: puertorico.com/puerto-rican-street-food · [Restaurants island-wide](#) · [Where to eat in San Juan](#)

HUNGRY FOR MORE?

The full food guide is in the planner

The ¡Wepa! planner has a must-try dish list, how to order at a lechonera, where to find the best kioskos, and how to eat like a local in every region.

[Open the planner](#)

Stretch your budget

- ☐ **Travel in the shoulder season.** Late spring often brings smaller crowds and better rates than winter.
- ☐ **Pick one or two bases.** Fewer hotel changes means less driving, less gas, and more beach time.
- ☐ **Picnic on the beach.** Stock up at a supermarket and bring a small cooler.
- ☐ **Mix free days with one big splurge.** Do the beaches and plazas for free, then spend on the thing that's worth it to you, like a bio bay tour.
- ☐ **Book paid tours direct and early.** Bio bay and snorkel trips fill up, especially around the new moon and on weekends.
- ☐ **Plan for tolls and parking.** Highways use an electronic toll system, so ask your car rental company how tolls are billed.
- ☐ **Use the plazas.** Shaded benches, music, and people-watching: free entertainment in every town.

My free-things wish list

→ Browse more ideas: [Free things to do](#) · [All things to do](#) · [The PuertoRico.com directory](#)

READY FOR THE WHOLE TRIP?

Plan it all in one place

¡Wepa!

The Ultimate Puerto Rico Trip Planner

This free guide covers the free stuff. Our 34-page planner, made by the team behind PuertoRico.com and @puertorico, helps you plan everything else, so you spend your trip on the island instead of in traffic.

What's inside

- **Ready-made itineraries:** a 7-day "best of" route, plus 3-day and 10-day versions
- **Where to stay,** region by region, and how to pick one or two bases
- **Beaches by vibe,** from calm family bays to surf and snorkel spots
- **Adventures:** El Yunque, the three bio bays, caves, and waterfalls
- **The food guide:** what to order, the lechón road, and kiosko culture
- **Insider tips** on timing, getting around, money, safety, and useful Spanish phrases
- **Printable planners:** packing list, checklists, and day-by-day planning pages

Get the planner, from \$7

A phone-friendly PDF you can also print.
puertorico.com/trip-planner

¡Nos vemos en la isla!

See you on the island. Follow [@puertorico](#) on Instagram for daily inspiration.