



Welcome to  
**PUERTO RICO**

Diving/Snorkeling



Adjuntas	AD/4	Canóvanas	AB/9	Florida	AB/5	La Parguera	AE/2	Naguabo	AC/11	San Lorenzo	AD/9
Aguada	AB/1	Carolina	AB/9	Guánica	AE/3	Lajas	AE/2	Naranjito	AC/7	San Sebastián	AC/2
Aguadilla	AB/1	Cataño	AB/8	Guayama	AE/8	Las Marías	AC/3	Ocean Park	BC/11	Santa Isabel	AE/6
Aguas Buenas	AC/8	Cayey	AD/8	Guayama	AE/4	Las Piedras	AC/2	Orocovis	AC/6	Santurce	BE/9
Aibonito	AD/7	Ceiba	AC/11	Guaynabo	AB/8	Loiza	AD/10	Patillas	AE/9	Toa Alta	AB/7
Añasco	AC/1	Cidra	AC/6	Guarabo	AC/9	Luquillo	AB/10	Peñuelas	AE/4	Toa Baja	AB/7
Arecibo	AB/4	Coamo	AD/8	Hatillo	AB/3	Manatí	AB/11	Ponce	AE/5	Trujillo Alto	AB/9
Arroyo	AE/8	Comerio	AD/7	Hormigueros	AD/1	Maricao	AB/6	Quebradillas	AE/3	Utuado	AC/4
Barceloneta	AB/5	Humacao	AD/10	Humacao	AD/10	Maricao	AD/2	Rincón	AC/1	Vega Alta	AB/7
Barranquitas	AD/7	Condado	AA/2	Isabela	BC/14	Maunabo	AE/10	Rio Grande	AB/10	Vega Baja	AB/6
Bayamón	AB/8	Corozal	BA/7	Isla Verde	AC/5	Mayagüez	AD/1	Sabana Grande	AD/3	Viejo San Juan	CA/1
Boquerón	AE/1	Culebra	AC/13	Jayuya	AC/5	Miramar	BC/6	Salinas	AE/7	Vieques	AD/13
Cabo Rojo	AD/1	Dorado	AB/7	Joyuda	AD/1	Moca	AB/2	San Germán	AD/2	Villaalba	AD/6
Caguas	AC/9	El Combate	AE/1	Juana Díaz	AE/6	Mona	AD/1	San Juan	AB/8	Yabucoa	AE/10
Camuy	AB/3	Fajardo	AC/11	Juncos	AC/9	Morovis	AC/6	San Juan Metro	AB/8	Yauco	AE/3

### QUICK FACTS

#### Information

##### Banking and Currency

Puerto Rico is a Commonwealth of the US and uses the US dollar. Most major US banks have branches here. Banking hours are 8:30-2:30 (though some have extended hours). Credit cards & travelers checks are widely accepted. Automatic teller machines are easy to find.

##### Electricity

A modern electrical grid following US standards: 110 volt AC.

##### Emergencies: Dial 911

##### Events

Puerto Rico has a long history of cultural events built around the Patron Saint Festival in each municipality. In addition, a number of world-class events as well as local celebrations are held throughout the year.

##### Ferry Service

Ferries run between Old San Juan and Cataño, Cataño and Hato Rey, Fajardo and Culebra, Fajardo and Vieques, Vieques and Culebra. Check the area directories for the schedules.

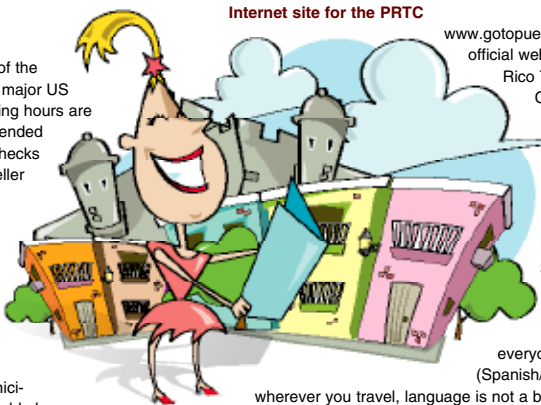
##### Immigration

There are no passports or visas required for US citizens. For citizens of other countries, call your local US Embassy to determine entry requirements.

##### Information Centers & Brochures

800-866-7827

Call toll free for bilingual information and free brochures. Check this planner or the website for the list of the PRTC offices world-wide. Daily 8am-midnight.



#### Internet site for the PRTC

[www.gotopuertorico.com](http://www.gotopuertorico.com) is the official website of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company.

Check for special offers and more information on Puerto Rico.

#### Languages: Spanish & English

Puerto Rico is a Spanish-speaking country. In the major tourist areas most everyone is bilingual (Spanish/English). However, wherever you travel, language is not a barrier.

#### Population

The population of Puerto Rico is 3.5 million with 1.4 million living in the San Juan Metropolitan Area.

#### Puerto Rico Tourism Company

787-721-2400

The Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC) is the official government agency responsible for promoting travel and tourism to Puerto Rico.

#### Special-Needs Travelers

All the hotels have facilities for travelers with special needs. Some operators, such as tour operators, offer unique services for the special-needs traveler (which are part of their description). The Sea Without Barriers area of Luquillo Beach is designed for use by those with special needs and seniors.

#### Taxes and Tipping

A hotel tax is added to your bill. The tax for hotels with casinos: 11%. Paradores: 7%, all other accommodations: 9%. The standard tip is 15%. Sales Tax purchases 7%.

#### Telephone Service (Area 787 & 939)

A modern, reliable US-style telephone service. Numbers with area code 800, 888, 877 or 866 are toll free from Puerto Rico or the US. Most hotel systems are compatible with dial-up modems. Some properties have high-speed Internet connections. Puerto Rico has area codes: 787 and 939. To call outside San Juan Metro from the metro area, dial 1, the area code and then the number.

#### Time of Day

787-728-9595

Atlantic Standard Time (AST): the same as Eastern Standard Time (EST) +1 hour. Daylight savings time is not observed. May to October: AST = EST, November to April: AST = EST+1.

#### Tours and Trolleys

Quite often, you will be able to arrange a free tour of local attractions and sights through the mayor's office or tourism office of the local municipality. This is particularly true of the smaller communities on the Island. You will also find that a number of the municipalities offer a trolley service (either scheduled or by appointment) that will take you by all the local attractions and sights. If you want to get the inside story from locals, this is a good place to start.

#### Weather

787-253-4586

Puerto Rico enjoys an average temperature of 82°F (28°C) from November to May. The average beach temperatures are 80°F in summer and 76°F in the winter. The mountains tend to be 20° colder in the winter. Call this number for current weather report.

#### TRAVEL & SPORTS® MASTERGUIDE™

**Publisher:**  
Travel & Sports, Inc.  
Boulder Colorado USA

**Website:**  
[www.travelandsports.com](http://www.travelandsports.com)

**Editorial Support:**  
Permanent Press, Inc.  
[edit@travelandsports.com](mailto:edit@travelandsports.com)

**Graphic Design:**  
Tommy de Armas -  
aTommy.Co.  
[tommy@greenheads.com](mailto:tommy@greenheads.com)

**Spanish Translation/Review:**  
Coursey Translations

**Spanish Review:**  
Backroom Productions

**English Review:**  
The Write Proof

**Photographic Support:**  
Ocean Imaging  
[oceanimaging.com](http://oceanimaging.com)  
Efra Visuals

**Illustrations:**  
JAB Designs & Illustrations

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# Exploring the Turquoise Kingdom

BY: STAFF JUN-JUL 2006



FRAZIER NIVENS

**P**ut on snorkeling or scuba gear and lower yourself into Puerto Rico's kingdom of the turquoise sea. In this extraordinary underwater realm, day-glow tropical fish, swaying sea fans and rock-like corals flourish in the gentle waters of the Caribbean and the Atlantic. When you find yourself face to face with schools of blue tang or a lone hawksbill turtle, you will not want to return to the world above.

With more than 350 miles of coastline, Puerto Rico is known for its numerous and accessible reefs, multitudes of fish, good-to-excellent underwater visibility and year-round warm waters. Dive shops, snorkeling, sailing and watersports operations are found around the Island, making these attractions available to all ages and abilities.

Several dive operators and shops may be found in San Juan. Most offer NAUI and PADI instruction, and some offer more technical training such as rebreathers. The San Juan area is used primarily for introductory dives, resort courses and snorkeling. All operators here offer sport diving trips to the east coast, so let's go there next.

The eastern coast of Puerto Rico, from Fajardo to Humacao and the offshore nature islands of Vieques and Culebra, has been a favorite snorkeling and diving destination for decades. Shallow waters, soft sand, elaborate patch reefs, dazzling reef fish and numerous cays and islets make this region ideal for the beginning diver.

Among the most popular cays for snorkeling trips off Fajardo are Icacos, Palominos and Palominitos, a sandbar topped by a cropping of palms and sea grapes. Visibility ranges from 20-to-80 feet, with mild to nonexistent currents. Most dives are close to the small cays, with depths of 25 to 80 feet.

Culebra Island is great for snorkeling and shallow dives of 10 to 50 feet, with visibility up to 80 feet. Most dives are close to shore. The sea is calm, currents are mild to none. Culebra is surrounded by two dozen cays; two of them are open to the public during the day, the rest shelter bird colonies. Vieques Island has no local diving operator at the moment,

but some operators listed in Fajardo will take you on a special day trip if requested in advance. Both Vieques and Culebra have protected Federal and Commonwealth marine reserves. Reefs here are extensive, healthy and extremely photogenic, with hawksbill turtles sharing the sea with tiny blue chromis.

Southern Puerto Rico offers two types of underwater adventures. One is directly offshore in waters surrounding rich, mangrove-topped islets that fan out from the coast. For an off-the-beaten-path experience, head east from Salinas and visit the Jobos Bay Estuarine Sanctuary; for more popular outings, head west. Caja de Muertos Island off Ponce has beautiful snorkeling and diving, with nice corals and a visibility ranging between 30 and 80 feet. Currents are mild but change with the weather conditions.

Guánica has its own string of accessible cays, including the immensely popular Gilligan's Island, and La Parguera has dozens of mangrove-topped cays and channels from which to choose. Hosts of colorful young fish and other marine juveniles thrive in these protected waters.

The other type of southwest-coast adventure is found several miles offshore of Guánica and La Parguera. Here the continental shelf drops off, forming La Parguera Wall, which offers some of the most spectacular diving in the Caribbean. The wall comes closest to Puerto Rico at the village of La Parguera, with more than 30 named sites such as Black Wall, Hole in the Wall, Efras Wall and Fallen Rock. Beginning at 55 to 60 feet and dropping vertically to 130 feet or so before plunging thousands of feet to the seafloor, the wall is home to trenches and valleys, immense gardens of staghorn and elkhorn coral, deep-water gorgonians, black coral and purple trumpetfish. There is little current, and thousands of rainbow-colored fish move over the reefs and through the spectacular azure blue waters. This underwater photographer's heaven has a visibility exceeding 100 feet.

The lovely sunset-coast beaches along Porta del Sol (the west coast) have their own patches of coral reef that invite exploration, but the most impressive diving here is found at uninhabited Desecheo Island. This National Wildlife Refuge (under the management of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) is some nine



EFRA FIGUEROA

miles due-west of Rincón. Desecheo is an oceanic islet with more than 24 dive sites scattered around a rocky bottom that slopes to 120 feet. Marine life is pristine and astonishingly abundant, and visibility can reach 100 feet. For beginners to experienced divers, the dives can be great. A trip to Mona (50 miles off the west coast, and not for the fainthearted) requires advanced planning with your dive operator. Mona is a major nature reserve under the management of the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources of Puerto Rico. It is often referred to as the Galapagos of the Caribbean.

Although northwestern Puerto Rico is a surfer's paradise, it also offers memorable snorkeling. The Island's best-known artificial underwater kingdom is found along the pilings of the old dock at Crash Boat Beach in Aguadilla. Crash Boat is a beach diving and snorkeling area. The pilings are covered with sponges in every color imaginable. Waters slope from the beach down to about 30 feet, with visibility to 60 feet, and you find seahorses, colorful bristle worms, feather duster worms, eels and schooling fish.

In nearby Isabela, Bajura Beach faces a breathtaking ring of open underwater caverns offering sanctuary to tropical fish in cathedral-like settings of light and shadow. Do not enter any caves without a local operator or when the sea is not calm. Average depth is 30 feet, with a visibility of 30 to 60 feet.

## Diving/Snorkeling

### SPONSORS

**Caribbean School of Aquatics** 787-728-6606  
Fajardo (AC/11) [www.saildiveparty.com](http://www.saildiveparty.com) Sail, dive, snorkel or fish: 49 passenger Fun Cat sailing catamaran, 30 passenger powerboat Innovation; snorkel, scuba parties or 6 passenger Airborne sailing sloop. Lunch, transportation & equipment provided. Both Villa Marina & San Juan Marina

**Puerto Rico Technical Diving Center** 787-997-3483  
Aguadilla (AB/1) [www.technicaldivingpr.com](http://www.technicaldivingpr.com) Dive travel packages, specialty and technical training SCR and CCR rebreather training and equipment rental/sales. Rt 107 Km 4.0

### OTHERS

**Aquatica Dive & Bike Adventures** 787-890-6071  
Rd 110 Km 10 Gate 5 Ramey, Aguadilla (AB/1)

**Caribe Aquatic Adventures** 787-281-8858  
Diving behind Normandie Hotel, San Juan Metro (AB/8)

**Culebra Divers** 787-742-0803  
At the Ferry Dock, Culebra (AC/13)

**Mona Aquatics** 787-851-2185  
José de Diego Street, next to Club Náutico Boquerón, Cabo Rojo: Boquerón (AE/1)

**Ocean Sports** 787-268-2329  
77 Isla Verde Ave, San Juan Metro (AB/8)

**Parguera Divers** 787-899-4171  
Los Pescadores Ave. Centro Comercial El Muelle, Lajas: La Parguera (AE/2)

**Scuba Dogs** 787-783-6377  
#D-13, Gardenville, San Juan Metro (AB/8)

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