

Beach View Apartments **Puerto Rico**

www.beachviewapartments.com

877-812-1067 (Toll Free)

To Do / Tourist Attractions

San Juan Metro Area

Old San Juan: Old San Juan is the second oldest City in the Western Hemisphere and the oldest city under the US flag.

Old San Juan dates back to the late 1400's, and many cultural and historical sites are found in Old San Juan. Much of the old Spanish architecture has been restored and you can shop and eat while taking in this old historic atmosphere. You will find many jewelry stores, boutiques, cigar shops, souvenir shops, art galleries, restaurants, bars and more. You will also find many Puerto Rican, African, Jamaican and other specialty shops. There is even a "Coach" store.

A must-see, even if you do nothing else on the island. This seven-square-block area is surrounded by 17th-Century walls and contains most of the island's historical treasures, including two forts (El Morro and San Cristóbal), the oldest governor's mansion in the Western Hemisphere in continuous use, several Spanish-era Cathedrals and Casa Blanca, once home to the family of Juan Ponce de León. Between them is a grid of narrow cobbled stone streets lined with pastel-colored houses adorned with wood balconies. Don't miss La Fortaleza, the governor's mansion; La Alcadia (City Hall); San José Church, one of the few Gothic-style cathedrals in the Caribbean; El Convento Dominicano, a former convent that is now a cultural center; and Casa Blanca, built to house the family of Puerto Rico's Spanish discoverer, Ponce de León.

There may be no better way to enjoy the heart of Viejo San Juan – the Old City – than by simply wandering its narrow lanes on foot to discover what lies around the next corner. It might be a tiny bar where you can sip a cool cocktail, or an open-air café serving a rich espresso. You might discover a garden in the patio of a grand old colonial building, browse an art gallery, or people-watch in one of the many plazas. Plaza San José is an especially popular gathering spot for young people; slightly more peaceful is Plaza Colón, which is also the site of a famous statue of Christopher Columbus.

In addition, the area is home to some of the island's best shopping and dining. The area is on a hilly incline and you'll get tired out before you know it in the sun. Wear good walking shoes, walk as much as possible in the shade, and stop frequently for cool drinks.

El Morro Fortress: Castillo de San Felipe del Morro (El Morro Fort) is Puerto Rico's best known fortress. It was built over 400 years ago by the Spaniards to guard the entrance of the San Juan Bay. Spanish troops fortified this "Morro", which means 'Promontory', to keep sea borne enemies out of San Juan. It helped protect San Juan's coastline throughout the 17th and 18th centuries from many unsuccessful attacks by the French, the English, the Dutch, Pirates and others.

Today this dramatic castle welcomes multitudes of arriving cruise ships and aircraft to the busiest port in the Caribbean. Over two million visitors a year explore theme windswept

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ramparts and pathways, where the history of 400 years of Spanish rule in Puerto Rico comes alive. The fort saw action for the last time during the Spanish - American War in 1898.

It is a National Historic Site, administered by the US National Park Services. The Spaniards started construction on this six-level fortress in 1539, but it wasn't until 1787 that the fort was deemed complete. Castillo de San Felipe del Morro was declared a World Heritage site by the United Nations in 1933.

You can learn more about the fortress at the on-site museum. Tours by park rangers can be arranged for educational groups; please call in advance.

Open daily from 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. except Christmas. Admission is \$2 for adults, \$1 for children ages 13-17 and seniors over 62. It's free for children 12 and under. Located at the western tip of Old San Juan, 729-6960.

San Cristobal: Built in 1634 and even larger than its sister fort El Morro, this World Heritage Site protected San Juan's land approaches for centuries. Be sure not to miss the restored 18th-century Spanish troop quarters. Tours by park rangers can be arranged for educational groups; please call in advance. Open daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m. except Christmas. Admission is \$2 for adults, \$1 for children ages 13-17 and seniors over 62 and free for children 12 and under. Located on the hill overlooking Plaza Colón, just west of the capitol building, Old San Juan; 729-6960.

La Fortaleza: The oldest Governor's Mansion, built between 1533 and 1540 as a fortress against Carib attacks but greatly expanded in the 19th century. Also known as the Santa Catalina Palace, La Fortaleza is the oldest governor's residence in continuous use in the Western Hemisphere. Access to the official areas is not permitted. Free tours of the gardens and public areas are available in both English and Spanish. Open Mon.-Fri. (except during state functions) 9 a.m.-4 p.m., free to the public. Groups of 30 or more are required to make reservations, it's best to call ahead and schedule a time for your tour. Located at the western end of Fortaleza St., Old San Juan, 721-7000, ext. 2211, 2323 and 2358.

Casa Blanca: The city's oldest fort (built in 1521), this charming building is best known as the home of Juan Ponce de León's family. Today it is a museum that features artifacts from the Indians that lived on the island as well as examples of 16th- and 17th-century colonial family life. Open Tues.-Sat. 9 a.m.-noon, 1-4:30 p.m. Admission is \$1 for adults, 50¢ for children and seniors. 1 San Sebastián St., Old San Juan; 724-4102.

San Jose Church: Built in the 1530s, *Iglesia de San José* ("Church of San José") in Old San Juan is the second oldest church in the western hemisphere, and a wonderful example of Spanish gothic architecture.

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San Juan Cathedral: This beautiful neoclassical church, *Catedral de San Juan* ("San Juan Cathedral") was built in 1521. The original structure was destroyed by a hurricane in 1526. Rebuilt in 1540, and even more famous and beautiful than *Iglesia de San José*, San Juan Cathedral sits merely steps away from San Jose Church on Cristo Street. San Juan Cathedral is one of the most important religious landmarks in Puerto Rico. The Cathedral is the final resting place of Juan Ponce de León, the first Governor of Puerto Rico.

The Cathedral also has an interesting tour, which includes the remains of Ponce de León (which were removed from the Iglesia de San José in 1908 and relocated here) and a wax-covered, glass-encased mummy of a saint.

Architecture buffs should not miss the Gothic Chapel which is the oldest part of the building and has magnificent archways.

Open daily 8:30 a.m.- 4 p.m, Free to the public. Mass is celebrated daily; check schedule for times. 151 Cristo St., Old San Juan; 722-0861.

Christ Chapel (Capilla Del Cristo): Capilla de Cristo, the Chapel of Christ, was built as a memorial to celebrated a miracle.

According to legend, in 1753 a young horseman named Baltazar Montañez, got carried away during festivities in honor of San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist) and raced down Calle Cristo street and plunged over its steep precipice. Historical records maintain the man died, but legend contends that he lived and to express his gratitude, the young man had the chapel erected that same year.

Another version of the story has it that the horse miraculously stopped before plunging over the cliff. Regardless, this Catholic Chapel was built, and inside is a small silver altar dedicated to the Christ of Miracles. Today, the chapel, located on Calle Cristo near Paseo de la Princesa, is a landmark and its Campeche paintings and gold and silver altar are highlights. Admission is free. The chapel is open for a very limited amount of hours each week.

Isla Verde Tourist Strip: Isla Verde is a district of the City of Carolina (San Juan Metro Area). It is bordered to the north by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west by Condado, to the south by San Santurce and to the east by downtown Carolina. Isla Verde has been, for decades, a main tourist area in Puerto Rico, hosting various hotels, casinos, discotheques and restaurants. Isla Verde is the best tourist strip in Puerto Rico and has one of the finest white sand beaches on the Island (Isla Verde Beach) with a wide variety of activities.

Rivaling Condado as the in spot for tourism, this strip east of the Condado has large hotels, good restaurants and lots of nightlife. The Isla Verde beach skirting the coast is considered by many the best beach in San Juan, and it can be boppin' on weekends when Puerto Ricans head toward the shores.

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Condado Tourist Strip: You can go for a stroll and enjoy the scenery of this cute costal strip; or enjoy shopping and lunch in it's many beach front boutiques and restaurants along Ashford Avenue. This area hugging the Atlantic Ocean was once the hot spot on the island for vacationing jet-setters. Today Condado is again making a name for itself as the place to be with upscale shops, fine restaurants, jumping casinos and trendy clubs luring visitors and locals alike.

Miramar: This beautiful residential area tucked between Ponce de León and Fernández Juncos avenues has some stately homes dating from the early decades of the 1900s. Take a stroll along the side streets and enjoy the great Spanish-style patios and gardens.

Other Areas Around the Island

Cabo Rojo/Boquerón: South of Rincón on the west coast, this area is filled with fishermen, scenic views and great beaches. The Boquerón beach is a favorite with islanders looking to get away for a weekend, and the climb to the Cabo Rojo Lighthouse on the southeastern tip is a great hike. Seafood restaurants are abundant; look for a whole line of them at Joyuda Beach.

Fajardo: The gateway to ocean sports in Puerto Rico, you'll be able to arrange snorkeling, diving and fishing trips here. Las Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve and Seven Seas beach are also here. Ferries and planes leave to the offshore islands of Vieques and Culebra.

Panoramic Route: Small towns and villages and tobacco and coffee farms dot the central mountain area. Best seen by driving the "panoramic route," a series of curving roads which cross the island from east to west. Give yourself at least three days for the adventure, and have a good map on hand (the route is usually highlighted on most road maps).

Ponce: Ponce, the second largest city in Puerto Rico, was named after Juan Ponce De Leon, the first governor of Puerto Rico. The City is very proud of its nickname, "The Pearl of the South." Known for its exquisite turn-of-the-century architecture and its whimsical firehouse on the main square, Ponce boasts Puerto Rico's best art museum--the Ponce Museum of Art. The drive from San Juan via the Luis A. Ferré Expressway affords some fantastic views. Visiting the city can be done in a day trip. Is this island's cultural heart. Restored in a 19th century style, it has small winding streets and plazas, museums, gas lamps and horse-drawn carriages, and a truly exceptional firehouse.

Ponce Firehouse: This fanciful red and black striped building on Ponce's main square was first a pavilion for a fair, then a firehouse and is now a museum.

In 1883, a large fire threatened the lives of those living in Ponce, as well as the economy of Puerto Rico as a whole (given Ponce's virtual role as the island's banking and agricultural capital). The volunteer firemen stationed at the Parque de Bombas engaged in a long fight with the fire, taking twenty-two days to extinguish the blaze. They continued to fight the fire even though the Major ordered them out of the City. For that, the group was honored many times

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both in Ponce and the rest of Puerto Rico. Nowadays, a photo of the firefighters hangs on the walls of the Parque de Bombas building. In 1983, the 100th anniversary of the brigade's victory over the infamous fire was commemorated at the station.

In 1885, the station went on to officially be named Ponce's fire station, thus every firefighting operation in Ponce and adjacent cities was dispatched from the Parque de Bombas. Meana was soon named mayor of Ponce. Later on the building was painted in Ponce's traditional city colors, red and black (as were a series of houses towards the western part of the city that were built as housing for many of Ponce's firefighters, who lost their own homes to the blaze).

The station continued to serve the city of Ponce until 1990, lasting a total of 108 years as a fire station. Before the station itself was closed, it was converted into a museum. Of most prominence are the artifacts used by the 1882 fire brigade to combat the 1883 fire, and other artifacts of historical significance. The station became a major tourist attraction, but continued to operate as a fire station until its closure. Before , some of the firemen would give visitors free station tours voluntarily when they were not attending emergencies.

After the fire station was decommissioned in 1990, the building was preserved as a museum. According to some estimates, the Ponce firefighters' museum, still known generally as *Parque de Bombas*, is one of Ponce's most visited sites annually.

Open Wed.-Mon. 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Free Admission. Plaza Las Delicias, Ponce; 284-3338.

Ponce Museum of Art: Housed in a dramatic building designed by Edward Durrell Stone, this museum features a collection of more than 2,100 paintings, sculptures and prints spanning five centuries of Western art. The works of Rubens, Gainsborough, Leighton and other international artists are on display, as well as most of the best Latin American painters. A research library and three gracious gardens are open to the public. Open daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$2 for children. Las Américas Avenue, Ponce; 848-0511, 848-0505

Serrallés Castle: Situated on a hill overlooking Ponce, this palatial estate was once home to the Serrallés family, one of the most powerful producers of rum in Puerto Rico. The museum chronicles the history of the rum and sugar cane industry, as well as the family's role in creating Don Q, Ponce's world-famous rum. A cafe and an arts and crafts shop are also located on the grounds. Open Tues.-Thurs. 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.; Fri.-Sun. 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. \$3 adults; \$2 senior citizens; \$1.50 children ages 3-5. 17 El Viga Hill, Ponce; 259-1774, 259-1775.

Rincon: This city on the western coast is known for its whale watching and surfing in the winter and early spring, and for great sunsets year-round. A small and fun-loving crowd of surfers, mainly from the states, hangs out here most of the time. You'll find beaches for surfing, swimming and sunbathing, as well as small hotels and restaurants.

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Mona Island: Is a protected Natural Reserve. Ecologically unique it is home to red-footed boobies, endangered sea turtles, giant iguanas, and many unique species of birds, plus limestone cliffs, caves, indian rock paintings and mangrove forests. This island is only accessible by chartered boat. It measures about 11 km by 7 km (7 miles by 4 miles), and lies 66 km (41 miles) west of Puerto Rico, of which it is administratively a part.

Culebra: (Snake Island) is an island municipality of Puerto Rico originally called Isla Pasaje and Isla de San Ildefonso. It is located approximately seventeen miles east of the Puerto Rican mainland, twelve miles west of St.Thomas and nine miles north of Vieques. Culebra is spread over 5 wards and Culebra (Dewey) Pueblo (The downtown area and the administrative center of the city). The island is also known as Isla Chiquita (Little Island) and Ultima Virgen (Last Virgin). Residents of the island are known as *Culebrenses*. The island is approximately 7 by 5 miles (11 by 8 km).

In 1875, a black Englishman named Stevens was made the first governor of Culebra by the government of Vieques. He was given the task of protecting the island and the fishermen from pirates. He was assassinated later that same year.

On October 27, 1880, Cayetano Escudero Sanz settled on the island of Culebra. This first settlement was called San Ildefonso, to honor the Bishop of Toledo, San Ildefonso de la Culebra. Two years later, on September 25, 1882, construction of the Culebrita Lighthouse began and it was completed on February 25, 1886. It was the oldest operating lighthouse in the Caribbean until 1975, when the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard finally closed the facility.

In 1902, Culebra was integrated as a part of Vieques. One year later, on June 26, President Theodore Roosevelt established the Culebra Naval Reservation.

A bird refuge was established on February 27, 1909. In 1939, the U.S. Navy began to use the Culebra Archipelago as a gunnery and bombing practice site. This was done in preparation for the United States' involvement in World War II. In 1971 the people of Culebra began protests, known as the Navy - Culebra protests, for the removal of the U.S. Navy from Culebra. Four years later, in 1975, the use of Culebra as a gunnery range ceased and all operations were moved to Vieques.

This tiny island is normally one of the most quiet places in Puerto Rico, and is a great place for getting closer to nature. Leatherback turtles nest here in the spring, and a number of birds make the island and its offshore cays their nesting ground.

Culebra's famous beach, Flamenco, features powdery white sand, calm turquoise waters, paths, picnic tables and even old, rusting military tanks from when the U.S. Navy did exercises on the island. The beach is nestled in a cove between two beautiful green mountains, and is listed as one of the top ten beaches in the world. There's very little shade on the beach itself, so bring plenty of suntan lotion.

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Vieques: Vieques is an island-municipality of Puerto Rico in the northeastern Caribbean. Vieques lies about 8 miles (13 km) to the east of the Puerto Rican mainland, and measures approximately 21 miles (34 km) long by 4 miles (6 km) wide

The two main towns of Vieques are Isabel Segunda (sometimes written "Isabel II"), the administrative center located on the northern side of the island, and Esperanza, located on the southern side. At peak, the population of Vieques is around 10,000. The island's name is a Spanish spelling of a Native American word said to mean "small island". It also has the nickname "Isla Nena", usually translated from the Spanish as "Little Girl Island", as a reference to its being perceived as Puerto Rico's little sister island. During the colonial period the British name was "Crab Island".

Vieques is best known internationally as the site of a series of protests against the US Navy's use of the island as a bombing range and weapons testing ground, which eventually led to the Navy's departure in 2003.

This small island is casual and laid back and great for scouting out beaches and other water sports. Snorkeling is excellent, especially at Blue Beach (Bahía de la Chiva). Aside from archeological sites, such as La Hueca, and deserted beaches, a unique feature of Vieques is the presence of two pristine bioluminescent bays, including Mosquito Bay. Vieques is also famous for its wild or semi-wild horses, which roam free over parts of the island.

Vieques also has two Bioluminescent Bays. This unique bay contains up to 720,000 single-celled bioluminescent dinoflagellates (micro-organisms) per gallon of water. These half-plant, half-animal organisms emit a flash of bluish light when agitated at night. The high concentration of these creatures (*Pyrodinium bahamense*) can create enough light to read a book from.

Parks / Forests / Tours

Arecibo Observatory Tours: The dish is nestled in the hills of the City of Arecibo. The dish measures a thousand feet in diameter and spans about 20 acres, and is the most sensitive radio telescope in the World, with the capability to probe objects 10 billion light-years away. It took some of the first pictures of Earth's changing surface signaling global warming and has mapped the surface of Mars with more precision than any other instrument. It's the only radio telescope in the world that can predict with accuracy just where and when an asteroid would hit Earth.

The Arecibo Observatory made popular by research done here looking for extraterrestrials. In fact part of the movie "Contact", was filmed here. The dish was also displayed in the climactic last scene in the James Bond movie *Goldeneye*, the (inevitable) showdown between 007 and the bad guy took place right here. The huge radar/radio telescope at the Arecibo Observatory is a great photo opportunity.

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The observatory is part of the National Astronomy and Ionosphere Center operated by Cornell University, an interactive visitors center offers basics on astronomy and atmospheric science. Open Wed.-Fri. noon-4 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., Holidays 9 a.m.-4 p.m. \$3.50 adults, \$1.50 children and senior citizens. Take Route 129 to 134, then Route 635 to 625, which ends at the observatory. Watch for road signs. Arecibo; 878-2612 For more information about the dish, [click here](#).

Bacardi Rum Tours: Puerto Rican rum goes back about 400 years and Puerto Rico is known as the "Rum Capital of the World". Bacardi and Don Q are the largest producers on the island, and Puerto Rico is the only rum-producer in the world to maintain a minimum aging law for its rum. Another very popular rum is "Ron Del Barrilito". You can get three main categories of rum here: light, dark, and *añejo* (aged).

Puerto Rico is home to Bacardi's largest rum distillery in the world, this plant produces millions of cases a year. Guided tours of the plant take you through the rum-making process, and the museum ("Cathedral of Rum") that chronicles the history of rum and the Bacardi family. Visiting Bacardi is a great way to learn about the rum-making process and sample some complimentary rum!

Free guided tours are given every half hour Mon.- Sat. 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. except holidays. Route 165, km. 2.6, Cataño; 788-8400. For tour information, [click here](#). For more information about Puerto Rican Rums, [click here](#).

Hacienda Buena Vista: Set in the lush countryside of southern Puerto Rico, this restored 150-year-old working farm provides an intriguing glimpse into 19th-century agricultural life. Trained guides offer detailed descriptions of Buena Vista's workings. Included is the century-old equipment that processes the corn and coffee grown on the farm. Guided tours in English and Spanish are available; advance reservations required. Open Wed.-Sun. Admission: \$5 adults, \$2 children. Route 10, north of Ponce; 722-5882 weekdays; 284-7020 weekends.

El Yunque: Located approximately an hour from the ritzy resorts of San Juan, a trip to El Yunque rain forest is a visit to a primitive land that has remained virtually unchanged. El Yunque offers trail hikes, waterfalls, grand vistas and a variety of birds (including a rare parrot), flora, and some wildlife. You'll also be happy to know that there are no dangerous animals in the rainforest.

The only rain forest in the National Parks system, El Yunque is a 28,000-acre forest preserve, located about an hour outside of San Juan in the central eastern region. Hike along the 13 trails that cover 23 miles of breathtaking terrain, picnic alongside such spectacular sites as La Coca Falls, learn about the delicate ecosystem of rain forests from around the world at the El Portal Tropical Forest Center, or enjoy the dramatic views from the Yokahu Observation Tower. Guided tours are available through the forest's Rent-a-Ranger program. Reservations for guided tours are required.

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Ph: 787-888-1810 Open daily 8 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed on Christmas. The El Portal Center opens at 9 a.m. Admission \$3 for adults; \$1.50 for children 5 to 12 and seniors 65 and older; children 4 and younger free. Route 191, Río Grande; 888-1880. For more information, click here.

Las Cabezas de San Juan: This nature preserve, whose name means "the headlands" in Spanish, features a variety of terrain connected by a series of trails and boardwalks to explore. Also located in this park is a beautifully restored 19th-century lighthouse called El Faro, complete with a nature center and an observation deck, where you can enjoy sweeping views of El Yunque Rain Forest and neighboring islands. Trained guides, demonstrations and special programs and exhibits make Las Cabezas educational as well as fun. English, Spanish and group tours available; advance reservations required. Open Wed.-Sun. except New Year's, Epiphany (Jan. 6), Good Friday, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$2 for children. Located just north of Fajardo on Route 987 near Las Croabas; 722-5882 weekdays; 860-2560 weekends.

Guanica Dry Forest: Has less than 30 inches of rain a year with temperatures averaging around 100F. As a result this 10,000-acre preserve has a number of unique plants and animals, which you can hike to see.

Rio Camuy Caves: One of the most massive cave networks in the Western Hemisphere, a trip to these caves in the northwestern part of Puerto Rico is worth the effort. A trolley car takes visitors down to the caves, where footpaths wind through stalactites and stalagmites in Cueva Clara. Afterward, trolleys on tours that run before 2 p.m. stop at two sinkholes. Set in a park-like area, there's also a cafeteria and gift shop. Wear comfortable clothes and non-slip shoes. Open Wed.-Sun. 8 a.m., the last tour departs at 3:45 p.m. Tours are given on a first-come, first-served basis. Come early to beat the crowds on holidays and weekends. \$10 adults; \$7 children 12 and younger; \$5 senior citizens. Route 129, km. 18.9, Camuy; 763-0568. Ph: (787) 898-3100

Caguana Indian Ceremonial Park: The Taino Indians held their religious and recreational ceremonies 800 years ago in this park. You can see their games courts, petroglyphs, monoliths and Indian artifacts to learn about this fascinating culture.

Tibes Indian Ceremonial Center: This is the oldest cemetery in the Antilles, with some 200 skeletons unearthed from AD 300 and ballcourts and dance grounds from AD 700.

Cabo Rojo NWR: The refuge lies along the coastal plain of southwestern Puerto Rico and is one of the few blocks of land remaining in public ownership in this area. The habitat is sub-tropical dry forest with approximately 210 acres of grasslands, 320 acres of forest and 50 acres of brush. Ph: 787-851-7258

Culebra NWR: The refuge has diverse habitats including sub-tropical dry forests, mangroves, brush, grasslands and 22 small islands. The small rocky cays serve as temporary home to 13 species of nesting seabirds. Ph: 787-742-0115

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Laguna Cartagena NWR: Laguna Cartagena is the only freshwater marsh of significant size in southwestern Puerto Rico. The area is a stopover for neotropical migrants and several species of waterbirds. The endangered yellow-shouldered blackbird and peregrine falcon have been reported on the refuge. Ph: 787-851-7258

Coqui Water Park: Opening February 1st, 2008, **El Conquistador Resort and Golden Door Spa** will enhance its offerings with a new, state-of-the-art water park (open daily 9:30am - 6:00pm). Featuring pools, slides, a lazy river, sunbathing deck and more, this facility will allow every age to have some fun in the sun.

Museums/Art Galleries

Puerto Rico is a very cultural and has many beautiful Museums for your enjoyment.

Pablo Casals Museum: Dedicated to the world renowned master cellist, who chose San Juan as his home city, displays manuscripts, photographs, and other memorabilia of the master.

Ballaja Barracks: Once home of the Spanish troops of the City, houses in the second floor, the Museum of the Americas, which offers a display that show the colonization of the New World.

Puerto Rico Museum of Art (Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico) in Santurce, is a must-see. The permanent collection, housed in a recently renovated neoclassical building, features locally created works from the 17th century to the present. The new east wing – dominated by a five-story-tall stained-glass window – houses traveling shows, a family gallery, and a theater (dedicated to the late Puerto Rican actor Raúl Juliá) that has a beautiful handmade lace stage curtain. Outside, a five-acre sculpture garden awaits.

Housed in a early 20th century building and a new annex, this new museum houses Puerto Rican art from the Colonial period to the present. Acres of gardens in the back are full of tropical plants, trees and paths. Open Mon.-Tues. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Wed. 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults; \$3 for children, students, seniors and the disabled. 300 De Diego Ave., Santurce; 977-6277.

Ponce Firehouse: This fanciful red and black striped building on Ponce's main square was first a pavilion for a fair, then a firehouse and is now a museum.

In 1883, a large fire threatened the lives of those living in Ponce, as well as the economy of Puerto Rico as a whole (given Ponce's virtual role as the island's banking and agricultural capital). The volunteer firemen stationed at the Parque de Bombas engaged in a long fight with the fire, taking twenty-two days to extinguish the blaze. They continued to fight the fire even though the Major ordered them out of the City. For that, the group was honored many times both in Ponce and the rest of Puerto Rico. Nowadays, a photo of the firefighters hangs on the

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walls of the Parque de Bombas building. In 1983, the 100th anniversary of the brigade's victory over the infamous fire was commemorated at the station.

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The station continued to serve the city of Ponce until 1990, lasting a total of 108 years as a fire station. Before the station itself was closed, it was converted into a museum. Of most prominence are the artifacts used by the 1882 fire brigade to combat the 1883 fire, and other artifacts of historical significance. The station became a major tourist attraction, but continued to operate as a fire station until its closure. Before , some of the firemen would give visitors free station tours voluntarily when they were not attending emergencies.

After the fire station was decommissioned in 1990, the building was preserved as a museum. According to some estimates, the Ponce firefighters' museum, still known generally as *Parque de Bombas*, is one of Ponce's most visited sites annually.

Open Wed.-Mon. 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Free Admission. Plaza Las Delicias, Ponce; 284-3338.

Ponce History Museum: The unique history of Ponce neatly unfolds in this museum housed in a 1911 neoclassical building. Open Mon., Wed.-Fri. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sat.-Sun. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Admission is \$3 for adults, \$1 for children. 53 Isabel St., Ponce; 844-7071.

Ponce Museum of Art: Housed in a dramatic building designed by Edward Durrell Stone, this museum features a collection of more than 2,100 paintings, sculptures and prints spanning five centuries of Western art. The works of Rubens, Gainsborough, Leighton and other international artists are on display, as well as most of the best Latin American painters. A research library and three gracious gardens are open to the public. Open daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$2 for children. Las Américas Avenue, Ponce; 848-0511, 848-0505

Serrallés Castle: Situated on a hill overlooking Ponce, this palatial estate was once home to the Serrallés family, one of the most powerful producers of rum in Puerto Rico. The museum chronicles the history of the rum and sugar cane industry, as well as the family's role in creating Don Q, Ponce's world-famous rum. A cafe and an arts and crafts shop are also located on the grounds. Open Tues.-Thurs. 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.; Fri.-Sun. 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. \$3 adults; \$2 senior citizens; \$1.50 children ages 3-5. 17 El Vigía Hill, Ponce; 259-1774, 259-1775.

Beach View Apartments

Puerto Rico

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Beaches/Water Fun

It's not just the sheer volume of beachfront that makes Puerto Rico a favorite Caribbean destination, but the quality and variety of them. From beaches with black, magnetic sand to beaches with rusted military tanks left as a poignant memorial; from secluded, idyllic spots to glitzy, star-studded stretches of resort-front property; and from surfing havens to tranquil waters, Puerto Rico has a tremendous variety of beaches.

San Juan has terrific beaches. The *balnearios*, such as El Escambrón, in Puerta de Tierra, and Carolina, in Isla Verde, have showers, lifeguards, gazebos, and parking – but most locals head for Isla Verde Beach. Backed by a strip of residential buildings and hotels (many of the latter have ocean-facing outdoor bars), Isla Verde Beach is the real San Juan scene. You can rent chairs and umbrellas, and when it's time for a bite, check out Ciao Mediterranean Café, which has live music on the weekends in summer.

Here's a look at some of the best:

Boqueron Beach: Stretching more than a mile along the west coast on a tranquil bay, islanders flock to this beach on summer weekends and holidays.

Flamenco: Culebra's famous beach features powdery white sand, calm turquoise waters, paths, picnic tables and even old, rusting military tanks from when the U.S. Navy did exercises on the island. The beach is nestled in a cove between two beautiful green mountains, and is listed as one of the top ten beaches in the world. There's very little shade on the beach itself, so bring plenty of suntan lotion.

Isla Verde Beach: See and be seen on this long stretch of sand gracing the shoreline in front of the Isla Verde hotels, which often fills up on weekends. The water is warm and great for swimming, and you'll find shade trees, jet sking, para sailing, boating, refreshment carts and restaurants nearby.

Luquillo Beach: Probably the most photographed beach in Puerto Rico, Luquillo is lined with palm trees and blessed with calm waters. A park-like area lies on the other side of a wide stretch of sand. Near the beach's entrance on Route 3 a long line of kiosks sell Puerto Rican snacks, from empanadillas (turnovers filled with meat, fish or chicken) to deep fried potato fritters.

Seven Seas Beach: Nice for swimming and relaxing, this beach is next to Las Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve on the east coast.

Sun Bay: You could be one of just a few on this beautiful crescent-shaped beach on Vieques. Horses often graze among palm trees in the grassy area in front of the beach.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Coqui Water Park: Opening February 1st, 2008, **El Conquistador Resort and Golden Door Spa** will enhance its offerings with a new, state-of-the-art water park (open daily 9:30am - 6:00pm). Featuring pools, slides, a lazy river, sunbathing deck and more, this facility will allow every age to have some fun in the sun.

Snorkeling

East Wind: Swim, snorkel and beachcomb for a day. Picnic and snorkeling instruction included. Half-day and sunset sails also available. Transportation available from San Juan. Marina Puerto del Rey, Fajardo.

Ph: (787) 860-3434

Fun Cat: Capt. Greg Korwek takes snorkelers and those just looking for a day in the sun to cays around Fajardo in his 51-foot catamaran. Outing includes picnic lunch, refreshments and rum drinks and floats for non-swimmers. Transportation available from San Juan. Villa Marina, Fajardo. Ph: (787) 728-6606

Get Snorkeled! with Captain Richard: Fascinating shore-based underwater nature tour for snorkelers and non-snorkelers alike. Richard Barone points out underwater wonders as well as gives snorkeling instruction. A great outing for families. Off the shore of Esperanza, Vieques. Ph: (787) 741-1980

Muff the Magic Fun Boat: Jack LaRocque takes guests to snorkeling spots around Culebra and its offshore cays in a funky, thatched-roof boat. Snorkeling gear rentals available. Look for him in Posada La Hamaca guest house in Dewey or next door at Mamacitas restaurant. Culebra. Ph: (787) 397-7494

Spread Eagle II: Snorkel, Picnic Sail. Snorkel one of the small off shore islands of Fajardo and enjoy white sand beaches, tropical fish and living reef. Includes an all-you-can-eat premium sandwich buffet lunch plus snacks, soda, Piña Coladas and rum punch. Use of all equipment and instruction included. Each passenger gets a brand new snorkel to use and keep. Great for swimmers and non-swimmers. Sailing Catamaran is fully licensed. Transportation is available from San Juan hotels. Villa Marina, Fajardo. Ph: (888) 523-4511

Scuba Diving

Aquatica Underwater Adventures: SCUBA Diving/Hotel Services services on the west coast. Specialize in diving/snorkeling. Desecheo Island.

Puerto Rico Diver Supply: All dive packages include tanks, weights, boat dives indicated, guide, beverages and snacks on board.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Blue Caribe Dive Center: Take a resort course or an open water PADI certification course or dive around the waters of Vieques. Kayak trips also available to Vieques' bioluminescent bay. Esperanza, Vieques. Ph: (787) 741-2522

Coral Head Divers: PADI and NAUI certification courses available as well as a resort course including a lesson in the pool and a shallow water dive. Scuba boats take divers to 20 sites off the east coast around Humacao. Palmas del Mar, Humacao. Ph: (787) 850-7208

Innovation: Hop on this party-dive boat and explore the islands and cays off the east coast of Puerto Rico. There's lunch and rum punch, and non-divers can snorkel and beachcomb. Hotel pick-up available in San Juan, departs from Villa Marina. Fajardo. Ph: (787) 728-6606

Reeflink Divers: Naturalists will be on board with you, so expect to learn something about the waters. PADI certification, resort courses and a scuba diving/snorkeling trip to Culebrita island and its baths are offered. In the Dinghy Dock Restaurant in Dewey, Culebra. Ph: (787) 741-0581

Sea Ventures Pro Dive Center: Get certified by taking a PADI course. One-day resort courses offered. Certified scuba divers can dive in one of 20 different sites off the shores of Puerto Rico's east coast. Puerto del Rey Marina, Route 3, km. 51.4, Fajardo. Ph: (787) 863-DIVE

Bio Bay Tours

Vieques has two Bioluminescent Bays. This unique bay contains up to 720,000 single-celled bioluminescent dinoflagellates (micro-organisms) per gallon of water. These half-plant, half-animal organisms emit a flash of bluish light when agitated at night. The high concentration of these creatures (*Pyrodinium bahamense*) can create enough light to read a book from.

Bio Bay tours Vieques Aqua Frenzy Kayaks \$30. This is a great kayak trip, and they use the best kayaks. Eddie is a good guide. Tel. 787-741-0913. cell 787-240-7985. Tim offers a morning birding trip in the mangroves. (he is the most experienced kayak guide in Vieques and knows his birds) \$45. An afternoon mangrove, beach, music, dinner and biobay trip. \$75.

Island Adventures offers a biobay trip by pontoon boat only. \$30.. Tel. 787-741-0720. Head Guide Mark Martin is a very knowledgeable guide.

Blue Caribe Kayaks \$30. also offers an evening biobay trip by kayak. Tel. 787-741-2522. Snorkeling equipment rental too.

Enchanted Islands Eco Tours Offers well trained guides on their kayak trips as well as transportation from San Juan. Call Nilsa or John. Tel. 787- 888-2887. They also do several •

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Kayaking Puerto Rico Eco Tours Offers well trained guides as well as transportation from San Juan. Call Dalberto Tel. 787-435-1665 or Percy Tel. 787-564-5629.

Boat Tours

Eco-Isleño: Hop on a power catamaran in Fajardo, spend the evening in Vieques exploring the bioluminescent bay, then return to Fajardo the same night. Day trips also available to Culebra. Puerto del Rey Marina, Fajardo. Ph: (787) 860-3434

Island Adventures: See fireworks in the water in the Mosquito Bay in Vieques. Groups transported on special non-polluting motorized pontoon boats. Casa del Francés Inn, near Esperanza, Vieques. Ph: (787) 741-0720

Airborne: Take a trip around San Juan Bay or head out into the ocean on a romantic 35-foot sailing sloop. Sails from Club Náutico. Stop 91/2, Fernández Juncos Avenue, Miramar. Ph: (787) 728-6606

Club NÁUTICO International Power Boats: Rent a motorboat or a sailboat and explore the waters on your own. Half-day and full-day rentals available. Villa Marina, Route 987, Km. 1.3, Fajardo. Ph: (787) 860-2400

Boat Charters

Parguera Fishing Charters: offering charters for fishing, sightseeing, snorkeling and ecotourism-expeditions (guided by a marine biologist) in Puerto Rico. Ph: (787) 382-4698

San Juan Waterfun: Come and enjoy the most complete watersports center in the Caribbean. Ph: (787) 531-4510

Gran Regata Cutty Sark: Se escogerán 4 tripulantes puertorriqueños que nos representen y que a su vez tengan la valentía de vivir esta aventura hasta el final.

Aqua Terra Sailing - Customized Charters: Skippered cruises from the Caribbean to the Riviera or Seychelles. Relax or learn to sail with ASA certified instructors. Gourmet chef aboard.

Austria Vienna Cat: Sailing tours between the Caribbean in winter and the Mediterranean in summer on a 40 ft catamaran taking up to 7 guests.

Barrington-Hall Sailing Holidays: Luxury crewed charters on motor and sailing yachts and catamarans on the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Fishing

Shiraz Charters: Sportfishing charters of Puerto Rico. As for our special arrangements for tournaments. Fish in the big tournaments in San Juan or St. Thomas or go crazy in a local Puerto Rican tournament, which is more than just a sportfishing experience.

Benitez Fishing Charters: Jump on an air-conditioned 45-foot Hatteras and go look for that record-breaking blue marlin. Up to six people can join the adventure, and Captain Benitez will hook you up with others interested in the trip. Club Náutico de San Juan, Stop 91/2, Fernández Juncos Avenue, Miramar. Ph: (787) 723-2292

Lady Traveller: Go deep-sea fishing on this 58-foot Betram or take an island charter to Vieques, Culebra or St. Thomas. Villa Marina, Fajardo. Ph: (787) 863-2821; (787) 863-1646

Parguera Fishing Charters: Spend a half day or full day with Captain Mickey Amador, who welcomes beginners and experts alike. Look for blue marlin or tuna in deep water, or stay near the reefs for grouper, snapper and mackerel. Route 324, La Parguera. Ph: (787) 382-4648

Club Deportivo Del Oeste: This marina is one of the springboards for ocean adventures on the west coast. Route 102, Barrio Joyuda, Cabo Rojo. Ph: (787) 851-8880

Club NÁUTICO de San Juan: Many of the deep-sea fishing charters leave from this marina just minutes away from Old San Juan and the Condado. Stop 91/2, Fernández Juncos Avenue, Miramar. Ph: (787) 722-0177

Puerto del Rey Marina: From one of the newest marinas in Puerto Rico, you can catch a catamaran, suit up for scuba diving or hook up with a fishing charter. There are also restaurants and boating supply stores. Route 3, km. 51.4, about an hour from San Juan, Fajardo. Ph: (787) 860-1000

Villa Marina: Rent a boat or join a snorkeling expedition at this popular marina. Route 987, km. 1.3, about an hour from San Juan. Fajardo. Ph: (787) 728-2450

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Dancing / Night Clubs

Puerto Ricans are very social and friendly people. They take their nightlife very serious and love to dress up for the occasion. Every Friday is known as “Social Friday”, and Friday’s are generally very busy nights at all nightclubs. There are many nice clubs to go for drinks and dancing.

Name	Location	Phone
Borinquen Grill & Brewing Company	Isla Verde	787 268-1900
Cafe Bohemio	Old San Juan	787 723-9020
Club Brava (El San Juan Hotel & Casino)	Isla Verde	787 791-1000
Club Lazer	Old San Juan	787 725 7581
Liquid (The Water Club)	Isla Verde	787 728-3666
Lupi's Sports Bar	Isla Verde	787 253-1664
Oyster Bar, The	Isla Verde	787 726-2161
Shots Sport Bar & Grill	Isla Verde	787 253-1443
Soleil Beach Club & Bistro	Isla Verde	787 726-7614
Stargate	San Juan	787 725 4664
Wet (The Water Club)	Isla Verde	787 728-3666

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Gambling

Almost every major hotel has a casino and you must be 18 years old to gamble. Below is a partial list.

El San Juan Hotel and Casino: This is one of the nicest casinos in all of Puerto Rico. It is located right on the Isla Verde Ave. strip next to Inter-Continental.

Inter-Continental Hotel and Casino, Isla Verde

Ritz Carton Hotel and Casino, Isla Verde

Marriot Hotel and Casino, Condado

El Condado Plaza Hotel and Casino, Condado

El Convento Hotel and Casino, Old San Juan

Restaurants

For traditional Puerto Rican cooking prepared as only a grandmother can, head for Ajili- mojili, in San Juan's Condado area. Once seated in the plantation-style restaurant, ask your waiter, who will be dressed as a "jibaro", or "country person", to start you off with some fritters, known as *Surtido*. Try the *Yautía Dumplings* and *Mofongo*, a casserole of plantains and meat or seafood. The main dish in Puerto Rico is, Arroz y Habichuelas (Rice and Beans).

Below is a partial list of restaurants in Puerto Rico:

Dragonfly

364 Calle La Fortaleza, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/977-3886

Cuisine: Asian
Price: \$12 to \$20

It's not hard to find this little restaurant -- it's the one with crowds milling about on the sidewalk. If you can stand the wait -- as you undoubtedly will, since reservations aren't accepted -- then you'll get to sample chef Roberto Trevino's Latin-Asian cuisine. (For the best chance of avoiding a line, come when it opens at 6 PM.) The *platos* (plates) are meant to be shared, so order several for your tables. Favorites include pork-and-plantain dumplings with an orange dipping sauce, smoked-salmon pizza with wasabi salsa, and lamb spareribs with a tamarind glaze. The dining room, all done up in Chinese red, resembles an opium den. Reservations not accepted. AE, MC, V. Closed Sun. No lunch.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Café Berlin

407 Calle San Francisco, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-5205

Cuisine: Cafes
Price: \$12 to \$20

A handful of tables spill out onto the sidewalk at this unpretentious place overlooking Plaza Colón. There's something on the menu for everyone, from turkey breast in a mustard-curry sauce to salmon in a citrus sauce. There are even several good vegetarian dishes, including tofu in a mushroom sauce. Inside is a small bar, one of the few places in Puerto Rico that serves draft beer. AE, MC, V.

La Bombonera

259 Calle San Francisco, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-0658

Cuisine: Cafes
Price: \$8 to \$12

You can't miss the gorgeous stained glass on the facade of this local landmark, which was established in 1903. In the window you'll see piles of freshly baked pastries. Inside there's a long counter with salmon-colored stools and a wall lined with booths of the same interesting shade. It's extremely popular in the morning -- particularly on Sunday -- but it's open until 8:30 for lunch and dinner. All this even though the food is only average and the grumpy waiters give the appearance of having worked here since the day it opened. AE, MC, V.

Pamela's

Numero Uno Guesthouse, 1 Calle Santa Ana, Ocean Park, San Juan,
Puerto Rico
787/726-5010

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

For the ultimate tropical dining experience, make a beeline here, the only city restaurant that offers outdoor seating on the sand, just steps away from the ocean, though it's also possible to dine indoors in air-conditioned comfort. The contemporary Caribbean menu is as memorable as the alfresco setting; daily specials might include blackened salmon glazed with a Mandarin honey sauce or Jamaican jerk shrimp and coconut corn arepas with guava coulis. AE, D, MC, V.

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Puerto Rico

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Platos

2 Calle Rosa, Isla Verde, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/791-7474

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

In the heart of Isla Verde, this restaurant attracts a young, hip crowd. The menu is something old, something new. Puerto Rican favorites are jazzed up, so that the skirt steak is served with pumpkin risotto and the grilled pork is covered with a guava glaze. The bar is a great place for a beer in the afternoon or for cocktails before heading to the clubs. AE, MC, V.

Casa Borinquen

109 Calle San Sebastián, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/725-0888

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

A portrait of independence leader Pedro Albizu Campos adorns the building's facade, a holdover from the days when a group of artists turned the crumbling walls of this house into the Museo sin Techo ("Roofless Museum"). Today it does have a roof, as well as a tropical-themed dining room serving radically delicious local cuisine. Look for the pumpkin and macadamia-nut ravioli or the grilled lamb on sugarcane skewers. There's an excellent wine shop on the premises, and on Tuesday and Thursday evening there's a free tasting upstairs. AE, D, MC, V. Closed Mon.

La Fonda del Jibarito

280 Calle Sol, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/725-8375

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

Sanjuaneros have favored this casual, family-run restaurant for years. The conch ceviche and chicken fricassee are among the specialties on the menu of *comida criollo* dishes. The back porch is filled with plants, and the dining room is filled with fanciful depictions of life on the street outside. The ever-present owner, Pedro J. Ruiz, is filled with the desire to ensure that everyone is happy. Reservations not accepted. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Great Taste

1018 Av. Ashford, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/721-8111

Cuisine: Chinese
Price: \$8 to \$12

Chinese restaurants can be found everywhere in San Juan, but this one is worth a special trip. Don't be disappointed by the dining room, which has little personality. Every bit of creativity goes into the food. As you might guess, it's heavy on the seafood, with dishes like fish with ginger and scallion or fried shrimp with crispy minced garlic. There are plenty of meat dishes as well, including shredded duck with spicy bean sauce. (If you can't find it on the menu, look under the heading for chicken.) There's a dim sum menu with nearly 40 different choices, and a sushi bar with enough selections to put other places to shame. Make sure to take a look at the beautiful view over the Laguna del Condado. AE, D, DC, MC, V.

Pikayo

Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, 299 Av. José de Diego, Santurce,
San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/721-6194

Cuisine: Contemporary
Price: Over \$30

Chef Wilo Benet is clearly the star here -- a plasma television lets diners watch everything that's going on in his kitchen. The Puerto Rico native artfully fuses Caribbean cuisine with influences from around the world. Veal is served in a swirl of sweet-pea couscous, for example, and beef medallions are covered with crumbled blue cheese and a red-wine reduction. The regularly changing menu is a feast for the eye as well as the palate, and might include perfectly shaped tostones stuffed with oven-dried tomatoes, or mofongo topped with saffron shrimp. A changing selection of paintings wraps around the minimalist dining room -- the restaurant is, after all, inside a museum. It's in Santurce, just south of Condado. AE, MC, V. Closed Sun. and Mon.

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Puerto Rico

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Tangerine

San Juan Water & Beach Club, 2 Calle Tartak, Isla Verde, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/728-3666

Cuisine: Contemporary
Price: \$12 to \$20

The dining room spills onto a terrace fronting the ocean, whose steady breezes are as much a part of the dreamy scene as the muted-orange lighting and cream walls. This place is all about sensual pleasures, so it's no surprise that the descriptions of many of the dishes sound a bit risqué. (A plate with three types of marinated fish is named, quite simply, "Threesome.") Appetizers such as roasted pumpkin soup with lemongrass foam and crispy wild mushroom dumplings are seductive but overpriced. Artful entrées include chicken breast stuffed with eggplant puree and a pan-seared sea bass with sea-urchin butter sauce. AE, MC, V.

Chez Shack

Rte. 995, Km 1.8, Vieques, Puerto Rico
787/741-2175

Cuisine: Eclectic
Price: \$12 to \$20

This restaurant is not a shack -- but it's close. It's in a delightfully ramshackle building on a one-lane road winding through the hills. The dining room is inches from the pavement, but it's unlikely a single car will pass by while you're enjoying your meal. Chicken, beef, and seafood are grilled to tender perfection. The restaurant is justifiably famous for its weekly barbecue night with a steel band, but there's usually some good jazz or island rhythms on the sound system. The restaurant is on Route 995, off Route 201. Reservations essential. AE, MC, V.

La Chaumière

367 Calle Tetuan, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-3330

Cuisine: French
Price: \$20 to \$30

With black-and-white floor tiles, wood-beamed ceiling, and floral-print curtains, this two-story restaurant evokes provincial France. It has been under the same management since 1969, and with all that experience the service is smooth. Daily specials augment a menu of stellar French classics, including breast of duck with a cassis glaze and veal with a mustard cream sauce. If you want to go all out, there's the huge chateaubriand for two. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Sun. No lunch.

Beach View Apartments

Puerto Rico

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Tantra

356 Calle La Fortaleza, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/977-8141

Cuisine: Indian
Price: \$8 to \$12

This little gem sits square in the middle of Old San Juan's up-and-coming restaurant row, known locally as SoFo (South Fortaleza Street). The menu, which combines Indian and Caribbean flavors, has traditional dishes such as tandoori chicken and inventive surprises like beef tenderloin in a casava purée. The jewel-tone interior invites you to linger, and many patrons do so for an after-dinner puff on an Asian water pipe. AE, MC, V.

La Mallorquina

207 Calle San Justo, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-3261

Cuisine: Latin
Price: \$12 to \$20

Dating from 1848, La Mallorquina is thought to be the island's oldest restaurant. The menu is heavy on such basic Puerto Rican and Spanish fare as *asopao* (a stew with rice and seafood) and *paella*, but the atmosphere is what really recommends the place. Friendly, nattily attired staffers zip between tables against peach-colored walls and beneath the whirl of ceiling fans. AE, MC, V. Closed Sun.

Lolita's

Rte. 3, Km 41.3, Barrio Juan Martín, Luquillo, Puerto Rico
787/889-5770 or 787/

Cuisine: Mexican
Price: Under \$8

Burritos -- 15 different kinds, including the non-traditional "soy meat" -- are the specialties of this casual Mexican restaurant. Combo plates let you taste a bit of everything, from tacos to enchiladas. Everything is washed down with oversized margaritas, of course. Those who eschew tequila can try the house sangria or a vintage from the unusually varied wine list. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Ramiro's

1106 Av. Magdalena, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/721-9049

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: \$20 to \$30

The smell of chef Jesus Ramiro's imaginative Castilian cooking fills this sea-green dining room. Ramiro is also known for his artistic presentation: flower-shaped peppers filled with fish mousse, a mix of seafood caught under a vegetable net, roast duckling with sugarcane honey, and, if you can stand more, a kiwi dessert sculpted to resemble twin palms. AE, DC, MC, V.

El Picoteo

El Convento Hotel, 100 Calle Cristo, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/723-9621

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: \$20 to \$30

You could make a meal of the small dishes that dominate the menu at this tapas restaurant. You won't go wrong ordering the sweet sausage in brandy or the turnovers stuffed with lobsters and passing them around the table. If you're not into sharing, there are five different kinds of paella that arrive on huge plates. There's a long, lively bar inside; one dining area overlooks a pleasant courtyard, whereas the other takes in the action along Calle Cristo. Even if you have dinner plans elsewhere, consider stopping here for a nightcap. AE, D, DC, MC, V.

Blossoms

El Conquistador Resort & Golden Door Spa, Rte. 987, Km 3.4, Fajardo,
Puerto Rico
787/863-1000

Cuisine: Asian
Price: \$20 to \$30

Hung with elaborate lanterns, this dining room is a fanciful version of the Far East. The first thing you'll notice is the sound of meats and vegetables sizzling on the large teppanyaki tables. The chefs here know they're on stage, and they perform with a flourish. Hunan and Szechuan specialties round out the menu. Despite the abundance of fresh fish, it's not so easy to find a sushi bar in this part of Puerto Rico. The one here, with a seemingly endless array of dishes, is excellent. Reservations essential. AE, D, DC, MC, V. No lunch Mon.-Sat.

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Puerto Rico

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Tamboo

Rte. 413, Km 4.7, Rincón, Puerto Rico
787/823-3210

Cuisine: Cafes
Price: Under \$8

Here is a bar and grill that doesn't fall too much into either category. The open-air kitchen prepares any number of unusual items, from king-crab sandwiches to chicken-and-basil wraps. The bar, also open to the elements, serves a mean margarita. Happy hour sometimes starts dangerously early -- at 10 AM on Saturday. The deck is a great place to watch the novice surfers wipe out on the nearby beach. MC, V.

Kasalta

1966 Calle McLeary, Ocean Park, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/727-7340

Cuisine: Cafes
Price: \$8 to \$12

Those who think coffee can never be too strong should make a beeline to Kasalta, which has an amazing inky black brew that will knock your socks off. Make your selection from the display cases full of luscious pastries and other tempting treats. Walk up to the counter and order a sandwich, such as the savory Cubano, or such items as the meltingly tender octopus salad. AE, MC, V.

Yerba Buena

1350 Av. Ashford, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/721-5700

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

Tables on the terrace are hard to come by at this restaurant, one of the most popular in Condado. That's fine, because the glassed-in dining room is even more comfortable and has exactly the same view. Cuban classics such as *ropa vieja* (meat cooked so slowly that it becomes tender shreds) seamlessly blend local dishes with imaginative presentation. The shrimp has a coconut-and-ginger sauce, the halibut filet one of mango and orange liqueur. The restaurant claims to use the "original" recipe for its *mojito*, Cuba's tasty rum, lime, and mint drink. Live Latin jazz is played many nights. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Rosa's Sea Food

536 Calle Tablado, Fajardo, Puerto Rico
787/863-0213

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

Despite its name, this family-run restaurant at Marina Puerto Real is also a good spot for beef and chicken. But if you want to see what people from all around the island are raving about, stick with the seafood. The specialty here is pieces of lobster, simmered with onions, tomatoes, and red peppers. The grilled and sautéed fresh fish, from tuna to red snapper, is also a winner. You can't miss the restaurant, as it's inside a two-story house painted a vivid shade of pink. Reservations not accepted. AE, MC, V. Closed Wed.

Parrot Club

363 Calle Fortaleza, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/725-7370

Cuisine: Contemporary
Price: \$12 to \$20

Loud and lively, this place is intent on making sure everyone is having a good time. You're likely to strike up a conversation with the bartender as you enjoy a passion-fruit cocktail or with the couple at the next table in the covered courtyard. Something about the atmosphere -- ear-splitting salsa music and murals of swaying palm trees -- makes connecting easy. The menu has contemporary variations of Caribbean classics. You might start with mouthwatering crabcakes or tamarind-barbecued ribs, followed by blackened tuna in a dark rum sauce or seared sea bass with lobster, leek, and scallop confit. Reservations not accepted. AE, DC, MC, V.

Barú

150 Calle San Sebastián, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/977-7107

Cuisine: Contemporary
Price: \$12 to \$20

A well-traveled menu has earned Barú a solid reputation among sanjuaneros, so it's often crowded. The dishes, all served in medium-sized portions so you can order several and share, range from Middle Eastern to Asian to Caribbean. Favorites include oysters in a soy-citrus sauce, risotto with green asparagus, and carpaccio made from beef, tuna, or salmon. More substantial fare includes filet mignon with horseradish mashed potatoes and pork ribs with a ginger-tamarind glaze. The dining room, in a beautifully renovated colonial house, is dark and mysterious. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon. No lunch.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Chez Daniel

Anchor's Village Marina, Rte. 906, Km 86.4, Humacao, Puerto Rico
787/850-3838

Cuisine: Continental
Price: \$20 to \$30

When the stars are out, there could hardly be a more romantic setting than this restaurant in the Anchor's Village Marina. The casual atmosphere belies the elegance of Daniel Vasse's culinary creations. His French country-style dishes are some of the best on the island. The Catalan-style *bouillnad*e, full of fresh fish and bursting with the flavor of a white garlic sauce, is exceptional. Pair it with a bottle from the extensive wine cellar. Sunday brunch, with its seemingly endless seafood bar, draws people from all over the island. Reservations essential. AE, MC, V. Closed Tues. No lunch Mon.-Thurs.

El Patio de Sam

102 Calle San Sebastián, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/723-1149

Cuisine: Eclectic
Price: \$8 to \$12

A great selection of beers -- 26, to exact, including the locally brewed Medalla -- make this a popular late-night spot. Just as appealing is the dimly lighted courtyard that gives the place its name. The menu consists mostly of steaks and seafood, but there are plenty of opportunities to sample Puerto Rican fare. Save room for the flan, which melts in your mouth. There's entertainment (usually a guitarist singing old standards) every night but Sunday. AE, D, DC, MC, V.

Otello's

El Conquistador Resort & Golden Door Spa, Rte. 987, Km 3.4, Fajardo, Puerto Rico
787/863-1000

Cuisine: Italian
Price: \$20 to \$30

You can dine inside, enveloped in the soft glow cast by dozens of candles, or slide outside to the terrace for a meal under the stars. This northern Italian restaurant, one of the many at the El Conquistador Resort, is among the best on the island's eastern coast. It's certainly one of the most elegant, with crisp linens and delicate crystal. Start with the minestrone soup -- it's a guaranteed winner -- and follow it with fettuccine tossed with grilled shrimp or one of the other pasta or dishes. Reservations essential. AE, D, DC, MC, V. No lunch.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Pito's Seafood

Rte. 2, Sector Las Cucharas, Ponce, Puerto Rico
787/841-4977

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

Choose from the waterfront terrace or one of the enclosed dining rooms at this longtime favorite east of Ponce in Las Cucharas. No matter where you sit, you'll have a view of the ocean. The main attraction is the freshly caught seafood, ranging from lobster and crab to salmon and red snapper. To indulge yourself, try the shrimp wrapped in bacon -- a specialty of the house. There's also a wide range of chicken and beef dishes. From the expansive wine cellar you can select more than 25 different wines by the glass. There's live music on Friday and Saturday nights. AE, MC, V.

La Dorada

1105 Av. Magdalena, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-9583

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

This fine seafood establishment in the middle of Condado's restaurant row is surprisingly affordable. The grilled seafood platter is the specialty, but there are plenty of other excellent dishes, including mahimahi in caper sauce and codfish in green sauce. The friendly staff makes you feel genuinely welcome. AE, D, MC, V.

Atlántica

7 Calle Lugo Viñas, Puerta de Tierra, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-0890

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$12 to \$20

This popular restaurant is across from its namesake, so it's no surprise that the seafood is the freshest around. Start with a plate of fried calamari, served lightly breaded and accompanied by a spicy sauce, then move on to the broiled lobster tail or grilled red snapper in a garlic sauce. Locals swear by the paella, which is loaded with scallops, clams, shrimp, and squid. The restaurant is just west of Playa Escambrón. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Soleil

Rte. 187, Km 4.5, Piñones, Puerto Rico
787/253-1033

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$12 to \$20

A bit more refined than some of its neighbors, this restaurant actually sits on a wooden platform positioned *above* the sand. Even nicer is the upstairs deck that lets you gaze at the ocean instead of the parking lot. The grilled steak served with *chimichurri* is as good as it gets, and juicy barbecued chicken with tamarind sauce is equally tasty. There are also a couple of bars, and bands playing Latin music set the scene on weekend nights. The staff can get overwhelmed when there's a crowd. AE, MC, V.

Pulpo Loco by the Sea

Rte. 187, Km 4.5, Piñones, Puerto Rico
787/791-8382

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

Talk about truth in packaging -- the Crazy Octopus has its palm-shaded tables planted firmly in the sand just a few yards from the ocean. As you might guess, octopus, oysters, mussels, and crab lead the lineup at this colorful seafood shack, though you can always munch on local favorites like fried codfish fritters. If your thirst is greater than your hunger, you can opt for a beer served in a plastic cup. The staff is friendly, and seems to know all the customers on a first-name basis. AE, MC, V.

Miró

74 Av. Condado, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/723-9593

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: \$12 to \$20

Like its namesake, the painter Joan Miró, this small restaurant draws its inspiration from the Catalan region of Spain, where the cuisine is heavy on seafood and hearty tapas. Prints by the artist hang on the walls, lending the dining room a colorful feel. Start off with braised chorizo and peppers, or steamed clams with garlic. Main courses include delicious lamb chops, as well as grilled tuna with anchovy and caper butter or codfish in a red-pepper and eggplant sauce. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Happy Belly's

Rte. 4466, Km 7.5, Isabela, Puerto Rico
787/872-6566

Cuisine: American
Price: \$8 to \$12

If you're in the mood for a hamburger or club sandwich, this laid-back restaurant is a good choice. The seating is comfortable wooden booths that overlook Playa Jobos -- the wind that whips up the waves may also blow away your napkin. In the evening the menu changes to more substantial fare, everything from shrimp scampi to baby back ribs. But many people just come for the socializing and the sunsets. AE, MC, V.

Cafeteria Mallorca

300 Calle San Francisco, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/724-4607

Cuisine: Cafes
Price: \$8 to \$12

The specialty at this old-fashioned eatery is the *mallorca*, a sweet pastry that's buttered, grilled, and then sprinkled with powdered sugar. Wash one down with a terrific cup of *café con leche*. For something more substantial, try the breakfast mallorca, which has ham and cheese. The waitstaff -- all dressed in crisp green uniforms and caps -- are friendly and efficient. MC, V. Closed Sun.

Ajili-Mójili

1006 Av. Ashford, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/725-9195

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

Set in a plantation-style house, this elegant dining room sits on the edge of Condado Bay. Traditional Puerto Rican food is prepared with a flourish. Sample the fried cheese and *bolitas de yautia y queso* (cheese and yam dumplings), then move on to the *gallinita rellena* (stuffed cornish game hen). The plantain-crusting shrimp in a white-wine herb sauce is delicious, as is the paella overflowing with shrimp, octopus, mussels, chicken, and spicy sausage. Prices, however, are pretty high despite the quality. AE, DC, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Aguaviva

364 Calle La Fortaleza, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-0665

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$12 to \$20

The name means "jellyfish," which explains why this ultracool, ultramodern place has lighting fixtures shaped like that sea creature. Elegantly groomed oysters and clams float on cracked ice along the raw bar. The extensive menu is alive with inventive ceviches, some with tomato or roasted red peppers and olives, and fresh takes on classics like paella. For something more filling, try dorado served with a shrimp salsa, or tuna accompanied by seafood enchiladas. You could also empty out your wallet for one of the *torres del mar*, or towers of the sea. This gravity-defying dish has come hot or cold and includes oysters, mussels, shrimp -- you name it. Oh, and don't pass up the lobster mashed potatoes. Those alone are worth the trip -- and the wait. Reservations not accepted. AE, D, MC, V.

Chumar

Rte. 3, Km 66, Naguabo, Puerto Rico
787/874-0107

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: Under \$8

As at the other food kiosks along Playa Húcares, you order at the counter and then grab a seat at one of the plastic tables that line the sidewalk. It's right on the ocean, so you are almost guaranteed that the fish will be fresh. Paper plates and plastic cutlery accompany the down-home seafood. MC, V.

Galloway's

12 Calle José de Diego, Boqueron, Puerto Rico
787/254-3302

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

From a covered deck overlooking Bahía Boquerón, catch the sunset while enjoying seafood -- caught fresh from local waters, of course. There's a lively happy hour and occasional live music. This place is along the main drag, but is set back from the street so you don't have to be a part of the passing parade. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon.-Wed.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Taverna Española

Calle Carlos Lebrón and Calle Santa Rosa, Isabel Segunda, Vieques,
Puerto Rico
787/741-1175

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: \$12 to \$20

Right on the main square in Isabel Segunda, this family-run restaurant may not look much like Spain, but it certainly tastes like it. The menu is heavy on the seafood, including a respectable paella. There are plenty of other dishes as well, including grilled shrimp and octopus simmered in garlic sauce. You won't see many tourists here, but it's packed with locals on the weekend. AE, MC, V.

Bebos Café

1600 Calle Loíza, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/268-5087

Cuisine: Latin
Price: \$8 to \$12

At this longtime favorite huge platters of delicious comida criolla are constantly streaming out of the kitchen. The friendly service and low prices are why the place is always packed. The menu includes everything from grilled flank steak to seafood-stuffed mofongo to barbecued ribs. The selection of good local desserts includes flan and dense, moist *tres leches* cake. Breakfast is also popular. AE, MC, V.

Lupi's

313 Calle Recinto Sur, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-1874

Cuisine: Mexican
Price: \$8 to \$12

Dining in Old San Juan doesn't have to mean fighting for a table. This Mexican restaurant is the best of the string of laid-back eateries along Calle Recinto Sur. Plates of steaming hot tacos, burritos, and other reasonably authentic fare arrive at your table within minutes of placing your order. And if you want to watch the big game -- whatever that might happen to be -- it will doubtless be playing in the television over the bar. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Anchor's Inn

Rte. 987, Km 2.7, Fajardo, Puerto Rico
787/863-7200

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$12 to \$20

Seafood is the specialty at this restaurant perched high on a bluff overlooking the ocean. This is a great place to sample specialties such as *chillo entero* (fried whole red snapper). The convenient location, down the road from El Conquistador Resort, lures travelers who have had enough hotel food. Reservations not accepted. AE, MC, V. Closed Tues.

El Bohío

Rte. 102, Km 9.7, Joyuda, Puerto Rico
787/851-2755

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$12 to \$20

Watch seagulls dive for their dinner while you dine on a covered deck extending out into the bay. The long list of seafood is prepared in a variety of ways: shrimp comes breaded, stewed, or skewered; conch is served as a salad or cooked in a butter and garlic sauce. And the lobster can be prepared in just about any way you can imagine. AE, DC, MC, V.

La Casona

609 Calle San Jorge, Santurce, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/727-2717

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: \$20 to \$30

Business executives come here for power lunches, but La Casona is also a nice spot for a romantic dinner. The restored Spanish colonial residence has well-appointed rooms and blooming gardens. The menu is based solidly in Spain, but has many creative flourishes -- start with the duck *pâté* or smoked salmon and move on to the duck breast in a raspberry sauce or the rack of lamb, which is first baked and then sautéed with brandy and fruit. It's in Santurce, just south of Condado. AE, D, DC, MC, V. Closed Sun.

Cowabunga's

Rte. 115, Km 11.6, Rincón, Puerto Rico
787/823-5225

Cuisine: American
Price: Under \$8

This little place is Rincón's answer to Ben & Jerry's. (It even borrowed the trademark cow spots for its facade.) The 16 flavors, especially the creamy butter pecan, are a blast from the past. After taking on the town's legendary waves, you can sit down to a juicy hamburger or hot dog while surfing though cyberspace at one of the lightning-fast terminals or thumbing through a tome from the lending library. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

El Eden

Off Calle Escudero, Dewey, Culebra, Puerto Rico
787/742-0509

Cuisine: American
Price: Under \$8

Looking for something to pop in your picnic basket? This deli on the edge of town makes scrumptious salads and sandwiches that are big enough for two. There's also the island's best selection of wine and beer. To get here, cross the bridge on Calle Escudero, then take a quick right and a quick left. MC, V.

Che's

35 Calle Caoba, Punta Las Marías, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/726-7202

Cuisine: Argentine
Price: \$12 to \$20

On the eastern edge of Ocean Beach, this Argentine-style steak house is worth the trip. Haven't tried churrasco, the marinated skirt steak that locals love? This is the place to do it. Other specialties of the kitchen include grilled sweetbreads. The hamburgers are huge, and the french fries are fresh. The wine list, which tends toward Chilean and Argentine vintages, is also a winner. It's in Ocean Park, just before you get to Isla Verde. AE, D, DC, MC, V.

Shimas

Westin Río Mar Beach Golf Resort & Spa, 6000 Río Mar Blvd., Río Grande, Puerto Rico
787/888-6000

Cuisine: Asian
Price: \$12 to \$20

The designers of this Asian-style eatery certainly had their tongues in their cheeks. Keeping the place cool are Japanese-style fans that wave at you from the ceiling. The sushi bar is a big draw, as are the Chinese and Thai entrées on the cross-cultural menu. Start with the duck spring rolls, then move on to the lobster with a sweet-and-spicy sauce. Reservations essential. AE, D, DC, MC, V. No lunch.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Kudetá

314 Calle La Fortaleza, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/977-5023

Cuisine: Asian
Price: \$20 to \$30

The name is an inside joke -- it's pronounced like *coup d'état*, the French term for "revolution." A bit of an exaggeration, perhaps, but the kitchen has scored more than a few victories with dishes that blend Caribbean main dishes with Asian cooking methods. That's why the steak is covered with a wasabi demiglace and the oysters are submerged in a tasty green curry. The minimalist dining room is also a triumph, especially the sage-colored banquettes covered with aubergine-and-gold pillows. The black-clad staff couldn't be friendlier, and they are happy to help you negotiate the menu. AE, MC, V.

Pinky's

51 Calle María Moco, Ocean Park, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/727-3347

Cuisine: Cafes
Price: Under \$8

This tiny café near the beach is known for its gourmet wraps and sandwiches, as well as its freshly squeezed juices and fruity frappés. The pink sub is a blend of turkey, salami, and mozzarella, topped with black olives, chopped tomatoes, and basil. The surfer wrap is a mix of grilled turkey and mozzarella topped with pesto mayonnaise. Don't see what you want? You are free to make up your own. Seating is limited, but takeout is available. Or place your order from the beach, where speedy delivery people tend to your hunger pangs. MC, V. Closed Mon. No dinner.

La Patisserie

1504 Av. Ashford, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/728-5508

Cuisine: Cafes
Price: \$8 to \$12

Everything -- from the pastries to the pastas -- is delicious at this café on a quiet block in Condado. For breakfast there are wonderful omelets stuffed with fresh vegetables and imported cheeses. For lunch there are sandwiches -- from pastrami to king crab -- served on croissants, baguettes, or any other type of bread. For dinner try the grilled salmon or the chicken in white wine. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Frutti Mar

101 Diez de Andino, Ocean Park, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-4103

Cuisine: Cafes
Price: Under \$8

This bright luncheonette off bustling Loíza Street has great vegetarian fare, baked goods, and fruit frappés. There are tasty garden burgers, and eggplant, hummus, and tofu sandwiches and platters. The Saturday special, vegetarian *sancocho* is a hearty blend of tubers and vegetables, slow-cooked in a sweet-herb sofrito. The natural carrot muffins, pistachio coffee cake, and Arabian desserts will have you carrying paper bags out of the place. It's open only until 6 PM. No credit cards. Closed Sun. No dinner.

Rincón Tropical

Rte. 115, Km 12, Rincón, Puerto Rico
787/823-2017

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

Don't be scared off by the cheap plastic tables and chairs. What you should notice is that they are almost always full of locals enjoying the area's freshest seafood. The kitchen keeps it simple, preparing dishes with the lightest touch. Highlights include the mahimahi with onions and peppers, or fried red snapper with beans and rice. Fried plantains make a nice accompaniment to almost anything. AE, MC, V.

San Jacinto

Off Rte. 333, Guánica, Puerto Rico
787/821-4941

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

Popular with day-trippers to Gilligan's Island, this modest restaurant sits right at the ferry terminal. This doesn't mean, however, that the dining room has views of the Caribbean. For those, grab one of the concrete picnic tables outside. The menu is almost entirely seafood, running the gamut from fried snapper to broiled lobster. When it's not high season the menu can be limited to two or three items. MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

La Parrilla

Luquillo Beach, Kiosk #2, Luquillo, Puerto Rico
787/889-0590

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: Under \$8

There are more than 50 *kioskos*, or food stands, along the highway on the way to Luquillo Beach. They all serve basically the same thing -- fried seafood. This place, true to its name, also has a grill, so there are burgers and other meat dishes in addition to the fish. There's even a comfortable patio in the rear that let's you escape the traffic noise. No credit cards.

La Bahía

Off Calle Escudero, Dewey, Culebra, Puerto Rico
787/484-1243

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

She's been in the kitchen for more than 25 years, which explains why Margarita Suárez never gets flustered, no matter how many people pack into her little restaurant. Her specialty is seafood, and dishes like conch simmered with onions and garlic are simple and satisfying. Don't be surprised if she offers you a taste of whatever else she's cooking. Make sure to try her mofongo -- it's not available anywhere else on the island. The restaurant is a little hard to find; from Calle de Escudero, turn onto the road that runs past the new school. Take the first left and continue uphill until you see the restaurant on your left. MC, V. Closed Mon.-Wed.

Casa Dante

39 Av. Isla Verde, Punta Las Marías, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/726-7310

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

If you're curious about mofongo -- sweet plantains mashed into a paste and filled with just about anything imaginable -- this is where locals will send you. This self-proclaimed "casa del mofongo" adds chicken or any combination of seafood to an excellent version. You can even order it as a side alongside grilled churrasco or sautéed red snapper. The restaurant sits in Ocean Park, on the border of Isla Verde, and does delivery as well. MC, V. Closed Mon.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Juanita Bananas

Calle Melones, Km 1, Culebra, Puerto Rico
787/742-3855

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

Trees overflowing with bananas, papayas, and passion fruit line the walkway that leads to one of Culebra's best eateries. Chef Jennifer Daubon, whose parents also ran a restaurant on the island, focuses on the freshest local produce, which is why about an acre of land on the surrounding hillside is used for growing vegetables and herbs. The menu changes with the seasons, but look for dishes like lobster limonjili, which is medallions of lobster in a fresh lime and garlic sauce. The dining room, with its low lights and soft music, is the most romantic in Culebra. Reservations essential. MC, V.

Caribbean Grill

Ritz-Carlton San Juan Hotel, Spa & Casino, Av. Las Gobernadoras
(Rte. 187), Isla Verde, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/253-1700

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$20 to \$30

Seafood is the specialty of this restaurant, one of the most popular in the Ritz-Carlton. Fresh fruit makes an appearance in many dishes, adding a distinct flavor. Start off with shrimp ceviche with a tangerine-cilantro sauce, then move on to the jerk spiced tuna steak or the red snapper baked in a banana leaf. Don't expect stuffed parrots and other paraphernalia; The elegant dining room is reminiscent of a plantation house. You can also dine outdoors on the terrace. AE, D, DC, MC, V. No dinner Sun.

Café Tompy

56 Calle Isabel, Ponce Centro, Ponce, Puerto Rico
787/840-1965

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: Under \$8

The prices are right at this no-frills cafeteria, which draws a lot of locals for lunch. You can sample such down-home Puerto Rican cuisine as roasted chicken marinated with local spices or slices of roast pork in a honey-sweet glaze. You can pile on the side dishes, which include toasted plantains and creamy potato salad. There's also a selection of sandwiches piled high with meats and cheeses. It's open daily for lunch and dinner, and for breakfast every day except Sunday. MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Café Media Luna

351 Calle Antonio Mellado, Isabel Segunda, Vieques, Puerto Rico
787/741-2594

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

Tucked into a beautifully restored building in Isabel Segunda, this eatery has been a favorite for many years. Its popularity might be due to the convenient downtown location, or the intimate tables on the balconies that surround the second-floor dining room. More likely, however, it's the creativity of the cooks. (You can watch all the action, as the kitchen is in full view.) Try the cornish hen in a sweet-spicy coconut sauce or the seared yellowfin tuna served with vegetable tempura. Not so hungry? Then share one of the tasty pizzas. Half a dozen are on offer at any given time. Reservations essential. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon. and Tues. No lunch.

Muralla

Rte. 191, Km 7.4, Río Grande, Puerto Rico
No phone

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: Under \$8

The rangers at El Yunque swear by this place, a cement-block building just past Cascada La Cola. You won't find a cheaper meal anywhere in Puerto Rico, that's for sure. The *arroz habicuela con pollo* (fried chicken with rice and beans) is a steal at less than \$5. The barking dog on the roof and the unusual artwork in the open-air dining room -- a huge blob of papier mâché that may or may not be a boulder -- add to the atmosphere. Get here early, as the place closes at 5 PM. No credit cards. Closed Thurs. No dinner.

Martin's BBQ

Rte. 1 at Cayey exit off Rte. 52, Cayey, Puerto Rico
787/738-1144

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: Under \$8

Locals come to this restaurant for a quick fix of traditional slow-roasted chicken with all the trimmings -- rice and beans, tostones, and yucca. You order your food at the counter, choosing precisely how much chicken and which side dishes you want. There are picnic tables outside, tables inside, and take-out service. MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Billí

144 Calle Flamboyán, Esperanza, Vieques, Puerto Rico
787/741-1382

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

Next door to Bananas, this place deserves more than the overflow from its more established neighbor. It has the same view, a fresher decor, and more authentic food. For lunch, order a tasty sandwich such as skirt steak with mango, peppers, blue cheese, and caramelized onions that is accompanied by cassava fries. For more substantial fare, there's fried chicken with a guava glaze or angel-hair pasta with crab meat stewed in coconut milk and tomatoes. In the evening you can stop by for a beer and not have to shout to be heard. AE, MC, V.

Horned Dorset Primavera

Rte. 429, Km 3, Box 1132, Rincón, Puerto Rico
787/823-4030

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: Over \$30

People come from all over the island for a meal at the Horned Dorset Primavera, and it's easy to see why. A pair of stone stairways sweep you up to the elegant dining room, with black-and-white marble floors and chandeliers with ruby-red shades. From the terrace you'll hear the constant crash of the waves. Chef Aaron Wratten has been doing double duty since he bought the restaurant in 2005, but you can't tell from the delights that stream out of the kitchen. The five-course daily menu and the nine-course tasting menu change daily, but might include pan-seared scallops with asparagus risotto or roasted grouper with pumpkin purée. Dress is formal by island standards, meaning that no shorts are allowed. One disappointment: the wine list is well-traveled, but not to budget destinations. Reservations essential. AE, MC, V.

Barbara-Rosa's

Calle Escudero, Dewey, Culebra, Puerto Rico
787/742-3271

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: Under \$8

Her husband is on hand to chat with the customers, but Barbara Petersen does everything else: takes your order, cooks it up, and serves it with a flourish. You won't find better food anywhere on the island, and that includes the places that charge twice as much. Locals swear by her tender, flaky fish and chips. (The secret, Barbara's husband happily points out, is using red snapper.) Finish with key lime pie or peach and pineapple cobbler. MC, V. Closed Sun. and Mon.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Bananas

142 Calle Flamboyán, Esperanza, Vieques, Puerto Rico
787/741-8700

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

If you're looking for authentic island cuisine, this ain't it. This longtime favorite, across from the waterfront in Esperanza, is geared almost entirely to gringos. That doesn't mean the grub isn't good, though. Find a spot at one of the curvy concrete tables and order the red-snapper sandwich (popular at lunchtime), or go all out for babyback ribs or jerk chicken. The salads are excellent, including the *caribeño* (fresh greens with curried chicken) and the *festival* (greens with grilled chicken, blue cheese, and cranberries). At night Bananas is the hot spot on this side of the island. AE, MC, V.

Antojitos Puertorriqueñas

160 Río Mar Blvd., Río Grande, Puerto Rico
787/888-7378

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

The menu here couldn't be simpler -- dishes like fried pork with plantains or stewed crab with beans and rice are your best options. The premises are just as straightforward, just a covered patio with plastic tables and chairs. But at these prices, who can complain? No credit cards.

El Suarito

6 Calle Derkes, at Calle Hostos, Guayama, Puerto Rico
787/864-1820

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: Under \$8

You're surrounded by history at this restaurant in a building that dates from 1862. The site has seen life as a repair shop for horse-drawn buggies, a gas station, and -- since the mid-1950s -- a restaurant. The place is always hopping with townspeople who stop by at all hours for a meal or a drink. You can get eggs and toast for breakfast, sandwiches throughout the day, and roasted chicken or liver and onions for dinner. MC, V. Closed Sun.

El Mar de la Tranquilidad

Rte. 3, Km 118.9, Patillas, Puerto Rico
787/839-6469

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

Get a table on the terrace at the edge of the Caribbean. You'll find good Puerto Rican cuisine and lots of seafood, including lobster, red snapper, and *mofongo* (mashed plantains with seafood). Be sure to sample one of the restaurant's daiquiris -- there's a huge list from which to choose. AE, MC, V. No dinner Mon.-Wed.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

El Fogón de Abuela

Lago Dos Bocas, Utuado, Puerto Rico
787/894-0470

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

This rustic restaurant on the edge of Dos Bocas Lake would make any Puerto Rican grandmother envious. The menu features stews, red snapper (whole or filleted), and fricassees, including pork chop, goat, and rabbit. You arrive either by taking the public boat from El Embarcadero on Route 612, by calling the restaurant from the dock and requesting a boat be sent to pick you up (free of charge), or by driving to the south side of the lake. From Utuado, take Route 111 to Route 140 to Route 612 and follow that to its end. The restaurant is open weekends only. MC, V. Closed Mon.-Thurs.

La Pared

Posada Porlamar, Rte. 304, Km 3.3, La Parguera, Puerto Rico
787/899-4015

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

Many restaurants in La Paraguera sit beside the bay, but very few have an actual view. This elegant, second-floor dining room at the rear of Posada Porlamar overlooks a lovely stretch of coastline ringed by mangrove trees. The menu is the best in town, going well beyond the standard surf-and-turf offerings. There's rack of lamb, for example, but here you'll find it topped with goat cheese. The lobster tail is as fresh as anywhere else on the strip, but is topped with a tasty guanabana sauce. MC, V.

La Guardarraya

Rte. 127, Km 6.0, Yauco, Puerto Rico
787/856-4222

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

In an old-fashioned country-style house, this extremely popular restaurant serves some of the best chuletas can-can that you'll find anywhere. Other traditional dishes include stewed rice and pork, steak with onions, and fried chicken. Save room for the vanilla flan, which is the specialty of the house. This is a good place to stop for lunch or dinner when you're traveling along the southern coast on Route 2. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Dinghy Dock

Calle Fulladoza, Dewey, Culebra, Puerto Rico
787/742-0581

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

Culebra's version of heavy traffic -- the arrival and departure of the water taxi -- takes place around the dock that gives this restaurant its name. The menu leans toward grilled meats, from pork chops to sirloin steaks. Daily specials often concentrate on the restaurant's forte: creole-style seafood, including swordfish and yellowtail. The adjacent bar is usually packed with expats. It can get noisy, so don't expect a quiet dinner for two. MC, V.

A La Banda

Rte. 3, Km 51.4, Fajardo, Puerto Rico
787/860-9162

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

At Puerto del Rey Marina, this waterfront eatery has tables in a dining room with nautical details or on a terrace overlooking the boats bobbing on the waves. Steaks and poultry figure on the menu, but the kitchen truly excels at seafood dishes, including fresh lobster. MC, V.

Victor's Place

2 Calle Jesús T. Piñero, Luquillo, Puerto Rico
787/889-5705

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

In a small blue building on the main plaza, this local institution has been serving up Puerto Rican specialties since 1936. Traditionally prepared seafood dishes like the *asopao* (a thick soup flavored with conch, octopus, or lobster) come with large servings of beans, rice, and fried plantains. If you want something fancier, there's lobster tail rolled in bacon or Conch in a spicy sauce. The decor is nautical, with fishing nets hanging from the ceiling. MC, V. Closed Mon.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Los Chapines

Calle 3, El Combate, Puerto Rico
787/254-4005

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: Under \$8

This rustic seaside shack -- painted, like Annie's, a vivid shade of orange -- sells a variety of fish and chicken dishes. Be sure to try one of the specialty sandwiches, which are made with deep-fried plantains instead of bread. The deck in back is a perfect place to catch the breeze. MC, V.

Las Vegas

Rte. 191, Km 1.3, Río Grande, Puerto Rico
787/809-6586

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$12 to \$20

The atmosphere here is casual, thanks to the many hikers that drop in on their way to or from El Yunque. But the food is a cut above what you'd expect to find in such an out-of-the-way place. Look for tartare of red snapper served with fried plantains or crab turnovers with melon chutney. The roasted lamb in a wine and herb sauce makes a hearty dinner. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon.-Wed.

La Piedra

Rte. 7718, Km 0.8, Aibonito, Puerto Rico
787/735-1034

Cuisine: Caribbean
Price: \$8 to \$12

Near the Mirador Piedra Degetau, this hilltop restaurant has a panoramic view of Aibonito. You can see the lights of the city through the floor-to-ceiling windows. The food is abundant, from the chicken with tamarind sauce to the pork loin in an orange glaze. Even the side dishes, including the fried plantains, are memorable. If you're in the area on Sunday, drop by for the excellent buffet. D, MC, V. Closed Mon. and Tues. No dinner Wed. and Thurs.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Zabó

14 Calle Candida, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/725-9494

Cuisine: Contemporary
Price: \$12 to \$20

In a restored plantation house surrounded by a quiet garden, this inventive restaurant seems as if it's out on the island somewhere rather than just off bustling Avenida Ashford. Make sure to order several of the tasty appetizers -- such as breaded calamari in a tomato-basil sauce -- so you can share them your dinner companions. Of the notable main courses, try the veal chops stuffed with provolone and pancetta, or the miso-marinated salmon served over lemony basmati rice. AE, D, DC, MC, V. Closed Sun. and Mon. No lunch Tues.-Thurs. or Sat.

Amadeus

106 Calle San Sebastián, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-8635

Cuisine: Contemporary
Price: \$12 to \$20

Facing Plaza San José, this bright and airy restaurant often throws open the doors and lets its tables spill into the square. If you want a little more privacy, there's also an interior courtyard and an intimate dining room with whitewashed walls, linen tablecloths, and lazily turning ceiling fans. Expect nouvelle Caribbean appetizers such as dumplings with guava-rum sauce or plantain mousse with shrimp, and entrées such as ravioli with a goat-cheese and pork with mango and sugarcane. AE, MC, V. Closed Sun. No lunch Mon.

Chayote

Hotel Olimpo Court, 603 Av. Miramar, Miramar, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-9385

Cuisine: Contemporary
Price: \$20 to \$30

Slightly off the beaten path, this chic eatery is definitely an "in" spot. The chef gives haute international dishes tropical panache. Starters include chayote stuffed with prosciutto and corn tamales with shrimp in a coconut sauce. Half the entrées are seafood dishes, including pan-seared tuna with a ginger sauce and red snapper served over spinach. The ginger flan is a must for dessert. The sophisticated dining room is hung with works by local artists. It's in Miramar, just a few blocks from Condado. AE, MC, V. Closed Sun. and Mon. No lunch Sat.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Carli Café Concierto

Plazoleta Rafael Carrión, Calle Recinto Sur and Calle San Justo,
Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/725-4927

Cuisine: Contemporary
Price: \$12 to \$20

As you might guess from the name, the music is as much of a draw of the food at Carli Café Concierto. The genial owner and host, Carli Muñoz, once toured with the Beach Boys (note the gold album on the wall). Many evenings he plays the gorgeous grand piano, often accompanied by singers and musicians who happen to drop in. In the Banco Popular building that dominates the skyline, this intimate bistro has black-marble tables scattered around the room. Have a seat indoors or on the outdoor patio, and dine on such Mediterranean-Caribbean specialties as seared loin of lamb or ravioli in a light pesto sauce. AE, MC, V. Closed Sun.

Mark's at the Meliá

Hotel Meliá, 75 Calle Cristina, Ponce Centro, Ponce, Puerto Rico
787/284-6275

Cuisine: Contemporary
Price: \$12 to \$20

Hidden behind an etched-glass door, this discreet restaurant is one of the best on the island. Chef Mark French has won praise for his creative blend of European cooking techniques and local ingredients. That skill results in appetizers like terrine of foie gras with dried cherry compote and smoked salmon topped with caramelized mango. The menu changes often, but you're likely to see such entrées as plantain-crusting dorado and rack of lamb with a goat cheese crust. The chocolate truffle cake draws fans from as far away as San Juan. This is a family-run business, so Mark's wife, Melody, is likely to greet you at the door. Reservations essential. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon.

The Palm

El San Juan Hotel & Casino, 6063 Av. Isla Verde, Isla Verde, San
Juan, Puerto Rico
787/791-1000

Cuisine: Continental
Price: \$12 to \$20

The same great steaks and seafood are served here as at this popular chain's other locations, including the original in New York City. When you leave, you half expect to look up at the Brooklyn Bridge. Caricatures of local and international celebrities stare down at you from the walls. The dark wood of the bar and the other furnishings let you know that you're in for some serious dining. The 10-ounce filet mignon is relatively petite, at least when compared to the rib eye that weights in at 24 ounces. Then there's the lobster, which starts at 3 pounds and goes higher. AE, D, DC, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Augusto's

Courtyard Miramar, 801 Av. Ponce de León, Miramar, San Juan,
Puerto Rico
787/725-7700

Cuisine: Continental
Price: \$20 to \$30

Austrian-born chef Augusto Schreiner, a graduate of the Salzburg Culinary School, regularly wins awards for his classic European cuisine. The menu changes seasonally; some of the dishes commonly served are veal chops with roasted root vegetables and duck breast with bok choy. The angular lines of the dining room are softened by large bouquets of flowers. AE, MC, V. Closed Sun. and Mon. No lunch Sat.

Sand and the Sea

Rte. 715, Km 5.2, Cayey, Puerto Rico
787/738-9086

Cuisine: Eclectic
Price: \$12 to \$20

In the open-air dining room, the south-coast views are breathtaking, and the evening breezes are cool enough that you might find the fireplace ablaze. Nightly piano performances of show tunes and Puerto Rican ballads take away any remaining chill, especially when they become sing-alongs. Grilled churrasco and seafood dominate the menu, which changes so often that it's posted on a blackboard. Try the "Russian" *tostones* (fried green plantains with sour cream and caviar). The place is open only on weekends. AE, D, MC, V. Closed Mon.-Thurs.

Uva

359 Calle Antonio Mellado, at Calle Luis Muñoz Rivera, Isabel Segunda,
Vieques, Puerto Rico
787/741-2050

Cuisine: Eclectic
Price: \$20 to \$30

On Vieques, Carlos Alzogaray has single-handedly changed how people approach seafood. The chef at this "Caribbean-fusion" eatery serves mahimahi, as does everyone else, but he turns it into ceviche with a lemon-passionfruit sauce. His tuna steak is marinated in a soy-ginger sauce and served over soba noodles. Even his lobster is completely rethought, appearing as a carpaccio with avocado ragout. Meat dishes include a huge rib-eye with lobster mashed potatoes. And there's a great wine list, as you might guess from the pillars covered with thousands of corks. For lunch, you can pick up wraps and other items at the less expensive Uva Next Door. Reservations essential. AE, MC, V. Closed Tues.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

La Ostra Cosa

154 Calle Cristo, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-2672

Cuisine: Eclectic
Price: \$12 to \$20

This restaurant's succulent prawns, grilled and served with garlic butter, are supposed to be aphrodisiacs. Well, everything on the menu is rated for its love-inducing qualities. (Look out for those labeled "Ay, ay, ay!") There are some seats indoors, but opt for a seat in the walled courtyard. With brilliant purple bougainvillea tumbling down and moonlight streaming through the trees, it's one of the city's prettiest alfresco dining spots. The gregarious owner, Alberto Nazario, brother of pop star Ednita Nazario, genuinely enjoys seeing his guests satisfied. He'll sometimes take out a guitar and sing old folk songs. Don't be surprised if the locals sing along. AE, MC, V.

Casa Bavaria

Rte. 155, Km 38.3, Barranquitas, Puerto Rico
787/862-7818

Cuisine: German
Price: \$8 to \$12

Enjoy a bit of Germany at this out-of-the-way eatery outside the town of Orocovis, about 16 km (10 mi) northwest of Barranquitas. Casa Bavaria is a kitschy blend of biergarten and casual country restaurant. Choose bratwurst and sauerkraut or chicken with rice and beans. On weekends, patrons spend a good part of the day enjoying the view from the terrace, singing along with the jukebox, and joking with the waiters, some of whom speak German as well as English and Spanish. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon.-Wed.

Il Perugino

105 Calle Cristo, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-5481

Cuisine: Italian
Price: \$20 to \$30

This colonial-era house has been transformed into something out of ancient Rome. But did those Romans ever feast on appetizers like foie gras on a bed of white onions or marinated salmon with chives? As good as these are, the main courses are even better. The ravioli stuffed with chicken liver, spinach, and black truffles are a wonder, as is the pork filet with thyme and blueberries. The extensive wine cellar, housed in the former cistern, is sure to contain the perfect complement to your meal. Everything here is discreet, from the entrance (just an awning over a doorway) to the service. MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Crú

Normandie Hotel, 499 Av. Muñoz Rivera, Puerta de Tierra, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/729-2929

Cuisine: Italian
Price: \$20 to \$30

If you thought carpaccio was only made with beef, then you're in for a wonderful surprise. At Crú, one of San Juan's best new restaurants, a special carpaccio menu includes old standards like beef with truffle oil and Parmesan cheese, as well as new concoctions like halibut with fresh mango and cuttlefish with caramelized onions. It's all laid out for you on a bed of ice so you can choose whatever strikes your fancy. Main dishes include penne with porcini mushrooms and filet of lamb with eggplant. The dining room, like the rest of the Normandie Hotel, has some wonderful art-deco flourishes. AE, MC, V.

La Buona Lasagne

104 Calle Diez de Andino, Ocean Park, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/721-7488

Cuisine: Italian
Price: \$8 to \$12

Don't let the elegance fool you. The prices are truly reasonable at this restaurant far from the well-trodden areas and in a restored art-deco structure with tile floors, large picture windows, and pastel walls. The menu includes about 30 pasta dishes, all freshly made with top-quality ingredients. The basic meat lasagne is just as good as the more elaborate penne with smoked salmon and a cream sauce. AE, MC, V. Closed Sun. No dinner Mon.-Wed.

Via Appia

1350 Av. Ashford, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/725-8711

Cuisine: Italian
Price: \$8 to \$12

The food at this no-frills café is just as authentic and as tasty -- from the pizza to the veal and peppers to house red wine -- as its higher-priced *paisanos*. The outdoor-seating area looks out on Condado's busy Ashford Avenue, which is usually filled with people coming from and going to the beach. The wine bar next door has a bit more ambience. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Mangére

Rte. 693, Km 8.5, Dorado, Puerto Rico
787/796-4444

Cuisine: Italian
Price: \$12 to \$20

Any night of the week you're likely to find this place packed with locals, who come for the convivial atmosphere as much as the delicious Italian fare. The glassed-in dining room gets noisy, so you may have to shout when you order the veal medallions with portobello and porcini mushrooms or the salmon with capers. Unusual for these parts, there's even a good selection of vegetarian options, including a hearty broccoli alfredo. The wine list, which naturally focuses on Italian vintages, is impressive. AE, D, MC, V.

Sofia

355 Calle San Francisco, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/721-0396

Cuisine: Italian
Price: \$12 to \$20

Ignore the tongue-in-cheek recordings of "That's Amore." Everything else in this red-walled trattoria is the real deal, from the gleaming vegetables on the antipasto table to the interesting vintages on the small but well-chosen wine list. Start with the squid stuffed with sweet sausage, then move onto the linguine with clams and pancetta or the cannelloni filled with roasted duck and topped with marscapone cheese. The plates of pasta are huge, so you might want to consider a half-order (which is more the size of a three-quarter order). Save room for -- what else? -- a tasty tiramisu. AE, MC, V.

Palio

Westin Río Mar Beach Golf Resort & Spa, 6000 Río Mar Blvd., Río Grande, Puerto Rico
787/888-6000

Cuisine: Italian
Price: \$20 to \$30

Northern Italian dishes such as rack of lamb with olive tapenade and poached salmon with spinach are the star attractions at this award-winning restaurant. The friendly staff serves everything with a flourish, whipping up the salads and other dishes beside your table. The arrival of the specialty coffees, served in mugs engulfed in blue flames, is such a showstopper that people at neighboring tables applaud. The dining room, with its black-and-white checkerboard floor and its dark-wood paneling, is gently curved, so it never feels cramped. Reservations essential. AE, D, DC, MC, V. No lunch.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Spanglish

105 Calle Cruz, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/722-2424

Cuisine: Latin
Price: \$8 to \$12

On a quiet side street, this café has a laid-back vibe that has people coming back again and again. The food, from old family recipes, includes Puerto Rican favorites like garbanzo-bean stew flavored with ham and sausage and veal tips simmered in wine. The creamy flan has also developed quite a following. There's a small bar in back where you can sample the trademark drink, a fruity rum punch. MC, V.

Uvva

Hostería del Mar, 1 Calle Tapia, Ocean Park, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/727-0631

Cuisine: Mediterranean
Price: \$12 to \$20

You might feel you're in the South Pacific or Bali when you take a seat at one of the bamboo tables at this romantic restaurant, especially when you see the oiled teak beams across the ceiling and the shutters that swing up to catch the breeze. The menu has a bit of a split personality -- the appetizers lean toward Caribbean favorites, whereas the entrées are mostly Mediterranean staples. It all comes together with such dishes as seared tuna with a ginger and cilantro vinaigrette or sesame-crusting salmon served on a bed of Asian vegetables. There are always several vegetarian options on the menu. AE, D, DC, MC, V.

Cielito Lindo

1108 Av. Magdalena, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/723-5597

Cuisine: Mexican
Price: \$8 to \$12

You know the moment you walk in the door that this is the real deal. The first clue is the smell of grilled meat coming from the kitchen. The juicy flank steaks are indeed standouts, but so are the burritos and enchiladas. There's also a wide selection of margaritas, each one iced to perfection and served with a lime wedge. The decor -- paper streamers hanging from the ceiling -- will remind you of eateries in small towns all over Mexico. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

La Ceiba

Rte. 153, Coamo, Puerto Rico
787/825-2299

Cuisine: Mexican
Price: Under \$8

The highway leading to Coama is lined by dozens of fast-food restaurants. Luckily, there are a few family-owned eateries worth stopping for, one of the best of which is this open-air cantina. You'll find the usual tacos, burritos, quesadillas, and fajitas, as well as some interesting Puerto Rican dishes like chicken breast stuffed with shrimp. World-class margaritas are served at the bar. MC, V.

Chaparritas

Calle Luna 171, San Germán, Puerto Rico
787/892-1078

Cuisine: Mexican
Price: \$8 to \$12

On San Germán's main drag, this place certainly feels like a traditional cantina. The Mexican food here is the real deal. Although you'll find some dishes that are more Tex than Mex, such as the cheesy nachos, the kitchen does best with more authentic tacos, burritos, and enchiladas. For something a bit more off the wall, try the shrimp fried in tequila. Closed Sun.-Wed.

The Reef

Off Rte. 187, Km 1, Piñones, Puerto Rico
787/791-1973

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

This place has one of the most dazzling views of San Juan, especially in the evening when the city lights are twinkling. Perched atop a coastal bluff, it's at the first left once you cross the bridge into Piñones. Grab one of the tables on the deck and order some of the simple seafood dishes like octopus or king-crab salads, served in *vasos* or *platos* (glasses or plates). MC, V.

La Llave del Mar

Paseo de Las Américas, Arroyo, Puerto Rico
787/839-6395

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

This casual restaurant sits across from the Arroyo's waterfront walk. In the evening, tables spill out onto a tiled terrace. Popular with locals, it serves seafood dishes like broiled red snapper as well as grilled steaks. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon. and Tues.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

El Ancla

9 Av. Hostos Final, Ponce Playa, Ponce, Puerto Rico
787/840-2450

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

Families favor this laid-back restaurant, whose dining room sits at the edge of the sea. The kitchen serves generous and affordable plates of fish, crab, and other fresh seafood with tostones, french fries, and garlic bread. Try the shrimp in garlic sauce, salmon filet with capers, or the delectable mofongo. Finish your meal with one of the fantastic flans. The piña coladas -- with or without rum -- are exceptional. AE, MC, V.

La Concha

End of Rte. 325, Playa Santa, Ensenada, Puerto Rico
787/821-5522

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

This family favorite specializes in all types of seafood. Mofongo leaves the kitchen overflowing with shrimp, lobster, or conch. The hearty *asopao* (a thick soup) is made with shrimp or chicken. There's also fried chicken with rice and beans and skirt steak covered with mushrooms. The restaurant is west of Guánica, past the western section of the Bosque Estatal de Guánica. From Route 116, take Route 325 to the end. AE, MC, V.

Costa Marina

Calle Chapin G-8, Salinas, Puerto Rico
787-824-647

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

At the Marina de Salinas, this seafood restaurant has porthole windows that look out onto the dozens of sailboats anchored nearby. From the steeply sloped ceiling hang strings of semaphore flags and huge model ships. Some of the specialties include *ensalada de carrucho* (conch salad) and *arroz mamposteao de jueyes* (rice with crab). Make sure to try fish with the local mojo isleño. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

La Casita

Rte. 304, Km 3.3, La Parguera, Puerto Rico
787/899-1681

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$12 to \$20

The so-called "Little House" isn't little at all -- it's a sizeable establishment that sits smack in the middle of the town's main road. Generous portions make this family-run restaurant one of the town's favorites. Try the *asopao*, which is made with shrimp, lobster, or other types of seafood. You can take a table in the rather bland ground-floor dining room or on the second-floor terrace, which has a view of the water. MC, V. Closed Mon.

Bamboobei

Rte. 187, Km 5, Piñones, Puerto Rico
787/253-0948

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

You can't miss this funky hangout because of its eye-catching color scheme. But behind the brilliant blue building is a great deck that looks across a bike path to the beach. There's always live music on weekends -- jazz on Saturday, something else on Friday. Other times you can just enjoy the rhythms floating out from the speakers. The menu is pretty much what you'd expect -- heavy on the seafood -- but it jazzes things up with lots of coconut and tropical fruit. MC, V.

Annie's

Calle 3, El Combate, Puerto Rico
787/254-2553

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

A dining room with windows facing the ocean is a fitting place to try some of the southwest coast's best seafood. You can snack on *empanadillas* (deep-fried fritters), then move on to red snapper with rice and beans or plantains stuffed with seafood. This place, in an unmistakable orange building on the main drag, is casual and friendly. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon.-Wed.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Escambrón

Playa Escambrón, Puerta de Tierra, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/724-3344

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

You can see two of the forts of Old San Juan -- Fuerte San Filipe del Morro and Fuerte San Cristóbal -- from the covered terrace of this seafood restaurant. The beach itself is only a few feet away. The food here is more creative than you'd expect, with dishes ranging from shrimp with cilantro and roasted garlic butter to lobster grilled with a rum and butter sauce. Not in the mood for seafood? There are plenty of meat dishes, including skirt steak and pork chops. The restaurant is walking distance from the Caribe Hilton and the Normandie. AE, MC, V.

The Waterfont

Rte. 187, Km 5, Piñones, Puerto Rico
787/791-5859

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$12 to \$20

A bit farther down the beach than its rowdier rivals, this restaurant attracts a slightly older crowd of *sanjuaneros* whose primary objective is eating rather than drinking. The menu is also more mature, offering such entrées as red snapper in a garlic sauce or lobster tails in lemon butter. If you can't decide, the sampler platter has everything from fried fritters to fresh oysters. You can choose a table in the dimly lighted dining room or outside on the covered patio. AE, MC, V.

Villa Pesquera

Rte. 877, Km 6.6, Río Grande, Puerto Rico
787/887-0140

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

The view of the Río Espíritu may initially draw you into this restaurant, but it's the savory seafood that will keep you coming back. Try the catch of the day -- whatever it is, it's always a winner. This is also a sweet spot for a sunset cocktail. MC, V.

Tutti Frutti

Rte. 187, Km 5, Piñones, Puerto Rico
787/791-2787

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

If you're looking for a break from all that seafood, try this brightly painted café facing the main drag, which serves some of the town's best comida criolla. The unusual name refers to the fresh-fruit smoothies that are constantly being whipped up in the blender. If you can't decide on a flavor, take a cue from the scowling pineapple positioned over the front door. The café is open late on weekends. No credit cards.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Tino's

Rte. 102, Km 13.6, Joyuda, Puerto Rico
787/851-2976

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$12 to \$20

The colorful neon sign outside this restaurant touts its signature dish: an earthenware goblet overflowing with mashed plantains and seafood. It comes in two sizes, but the smaller one is usually enough to satisfy all but the biggest appetites. There are plenty of other dishes on the menu, from red snapper in a spicy sauce to lobster with butter. There's no ocean view, but the elegant dining makes up for it. AE, DC, MC, V.

Richie's

Río Mar Blvd., just past entrance to the Westin Río Mar Beach Golf Resort
& Spa, Río Grande, Puerto Rico
No phone

Cuisine: Seafood
Price: \$8 to \$12

Perched on a mountaintop, this restaurant -- a well-located option for Westin Río Mar guests who don't want to dine on-property -- has an pair of open-air dining rooms that overlook the coastline. It's no surprise that seafood is the specialty here -- try the fried plantains filled with shrimp, conch, octopus, or lobster for an appetizer, then move on to grouper stuffed with crab and served in a spicy sauce. The staff is young and eager to please. AE, MC, V.

Brass Cactus

Rte. 3, Complejo Turistico Condominio, Luquillo, Puerto Rico
787/889-5735

Cuisine: Southwestern
Price: \$8 to \$12

"Gringoland" is how one local described this Tex-Mex eatery. There are so many English-speaking tourists that management doesn't even bother to print the menu in Spanish. But the ribs and burgers melt in your mouth, and the helpings of crispy fries are generous. Nearly every dish -- Southwestern or otherwise -- is washed down with beer. Televisions broadcast the latest sporting events, and on the weekend bands often replace the jukebox. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

BBH

North Shore Rd., Isabel Segunda, Vieques, Puerto Rico
787/741-1128

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: \$8 to \$12

In this stylish dining room there's not a bad seat in the house. Choose one of the comfortable couches near the door, a stool at the bar, or a banquette overlooking the swimming pool. A few choice tables are outside on the covered terrace. Just as good is the wide array of small dishes created by chef Christopher Ellis. Not content to stay in Spain, his tapas travel the globe. Some, like the chipolte barbecued pork, are clearly from Mexico. The mussels, in red coconut-curry broth, have an Asian flair. If there is a wait for a table, your server will suggest you enjoy a cocktail at the Palms, which is just around the corner. Reservations essential. AE, D, MC, V.

El Ladrillo

Calle Méndez Vigo 334, Dorado, Puerto Rico
787/796-2120

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: \$20 to \$30

This cozy spot covers its brick walls (*ladrillo* means "brick") from floor to ceiling with original paintings. Many of the dishes on the menu are Spanish, which might account for the many portraits of Don Quixote. There's a wide selection of seafood -- try the *zarzuela*, a combination of lobster, squid, octopus, and clams. Lobster is a specialty, and you can order it *a la criolla* (in a spicy stew), *a la parrilla* (from the grill), or *ajillo* (with a garlic sauce). The steaks are also good, especially the filet mignon. The red-jacketed waiters really know their stuff. AE, MC, V.

El Estoril

100 Calle Méndez Vigo, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico
787/834-2288

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: \$12 to \$20

The elegant tiled dining room calls to mind the old world, while the friendly, relaxed service is all about the new one. Seafood is the specialty: order a traditional paella or the unusual lobster wrapped in mozzarella and bacon and flambéed. If you're in the mood for something lighter, you can order tapas in the wood-and-brick bar. Call ahead, as private parties sometimes close the place to visitors. AE, MC, V. Closed Sun.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Compostela

106 Av. Condado, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/724-6088

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: \$20 to \$30

A 10,000-bottle wine cellar is just one of the draws of this Spanish restaurant. The chef is often honored in local competitions for specialties such as lobster with basil butter, medallions of lamb with raspberries, and duck with orange and ginger sauce. The paella is the best in town. The dining room is elegant, with crisp linens and gleaming silverware. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Sun. No lunch Sat.

Tapas Café

50 Calle Dr. Santiago Veve, San Germán, Puerto Rico
787/264-0610

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: Under \$8

One of the biggest surprises in San Germán is this wonderful little restaurant facing Plaza Santo Domingo. The dining room looks like a Spanish courtyard, complete with blue stars swirling around the ceiling. Don't expect tiny portions just because it serves tapas -- several of the dishes, including the medallions of beef topped with a dab of blue cheese, could pass as full entrées anywhere. You'll find old favorites on the menu, including spicy sausage in red wine, but some new creations as well, such as the yam and codfish fritters. MC, V. Closed Mon. and Tues. No lunch Wed. and Thurs.

Urdin

1105 Av. Magdalena, Condado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/724-0420

Cuisine: Spanish
Price: \$12 to \$20

The name of this restaurant comes from the Basque word for "blue," which also happens to be the dining room's dominant color. The menu here is mostly Spanish dishes, but Caribbean touches abound. The soup and seafood appetizers are particularly good, and a highly recommended entrée is *chillo urdin de lujo* (red snapper sautéed with clams, mussels, and shrimp in a tomato, herb, and wine sauce). AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Rincón Argentina

69 Calle Salud, at Calle Isabel, Ponce Centro, Ponce, Puerto Rico
787/840-3768

Cuisine: Steak
Price: \$12 to \$20

Housed in a beautifully restored criollo-style house, Rincón Argentina is one of the city's most popular restaurants. Completely unpretentious, this is the kind of steak house you find all over South America. The specialty of the house is *parrilladas*, meaning just about anything that comes off the grill. Don't pass up the skirt steak, served here with the best chimichurri you'll find anywhere. On cool evenings take a table on the terrace. Otherwise, wander through the maze of dining rooms until you find a table you like. Reservations essential. AE, MC, V.

Island Steakhouse

Crow's Nest, Rte. 201, Km 1.6, Vieques, Puerto Rico
787/741-0011

Cuisine: Steak
Price: \$12 to \$20

When islanders go out to dinner, they often end up at this spot far away from the beach. But its location on a rather secluded hilltop doesn't mean fewer crowds. This is especially true each Friday, when the chef throws the regular menu out the window and cooks up "novo Latino" fare and it's hard to secure a table. On a normal night, get one of the sizzling steaks, which range in size from "petite" to "hearty." The rib-eye, one of the most popular items, weighs in at 20 ounces. There's also seafood, of course. The lobster basted with spiced rum is especially fine. The second-floor terrace might remind you of a tree house, as it looks directly into the branches. The restaurant is on Route 201, between Isabel Segunda and Esperanza. Reservations essential. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon.-Thurs. No lunch.

Fogata

Sheraton Old San Juan Hotel & Casino, 100 Calle Brumbaugh, Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico
787/289-1944

Cuisine: Steak
Price: \$20 to \$30

This dining room seems to be blushing -- the walls and the gauzy curtains are the same shade of crimson. It has nothing to be ashamed of, as it serves some delicious grilled meats. After you select an entrée -- say, skewered shrimp or double-cut veal chops -- you can cover it with toppings ranging from a rum-peppercorn glaze to spiced butter. If you can't decide, the mixed grill has a bit of everything. The view of the Bahía de San Juan usually includes an ocean liner or two. AE, MC, V.

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

A La Brasa

Rte. 693, Km 8.5, Dorado, Puerto Rico
787/796-4477

Cuisine: Steak
Price: \$12 to \$20

Argentine-style steak houses have become quite popular, and this modest little place is no exception. You can watch as the cook tosses your meat on the grill, flipping it with a casual flair. The selections are many, from the 12-ounce flank steak to the 18 ounces of beef short ribs. A delicious dessert selection is the *panqueque de dulce de leche*, a caramel-filled crepe. AE, D, MC, V.

M Bar

359 Calle Antonio Mellado, at Calle Luis Muñoz Rivera, Isabel Segunda,
Vieques, Puerto Rico
787/741-4000

Cuisine: Steak
Price: \$12 to \$20

In the center of Isabel Segunda, this bar and grill is definitely for meat lovers. The chef will throw just about anything on the grill, from assorted sausages to pork chops to rib-eye steaks. (Locals swear the latter are the best on the island.) There's also grilled seafood, including half and whole lobsters. Add one of the lip-smacking glazes, such as honey-soy sauce, garlic butter, or tamarind barbecue sauce. This eatery is in the same building as the immensely popular Uva. Reservations essential. AE, MC, V. Closed Mon.

Golf

Bahia Beach Plantation: An 18-hole course featuring 75 acres of man-made lakes and huge greens along the beach. Open daily 7 a.m.-dusk. About 40 minutes east of San Juan between Río Grande and Loíza on Route 187, km. 4.2. Ph: (787) 256-5600

Berwind Country Club: This 18-hole championship course in Río Grande is set in a palm grove. Open to the public Mon.-Tues., Thurs.-Fri. 7 a.m.-5 p.m., Wed. before 11 a.m. Members only Wednesday afternoons, weekends and holidays. Route 187, km. 4.7, about 40 minutes east of San Juan. Río Grande. Ph: (787) 876-5380

Coamo Springs: Designed by Ferdinand Garbin, this course is nestled in the hills of Coamo and is known for its rugged beauty. Opens daily at 7:20 a.m. Located in the southern region of the island, northeast of Ponce off Route 150, Coamo. Ph: (787) 825-1370

Dorado Del Mar: Members and non-members are welcome at this 18-hole Chi Chi Rodríguez signature course. Urbanization Dorado del Mar, Dorado. Ph: (787) 796-3065

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Hyatt Dorado Beach: This hotel sports two 18-hole championship courses, both designed by Robert Trent Jones. The West Course has tree-lined fairways with plenty of water and bunkers, and the recently renovated East Course is long and can be windy with contoured greens. Open daily to hotel guests and non-guests 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m. An hour's drive west of San Juan, Dorado. Ph: (787) 796-1234, Ext. 3713

Hyatt Regency Cerromar: Two Robert Trent Jones designed 18-hole championship courses here have been ranked among the best in the Caribbean. Both the North Course and the recently renovated South Course are long and well-bunkered. Open daily to hotel guests and non-guests 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m. An hour's drive from San Juan, Dorado. Ph: (787) 796-1224, Ext. 3210

Palmas del Mar: This resort features The Palm, an 18-hole course designed by Gary Player and the new 18-hole Flamboyán designed by Rees Jones. Open daily to resort guests and non-guests 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Route 906, km 86.4, on the east coast, about 50 minutes from San Juan. Humacao. Ph: (787) 285-2255

Westin Río Mar: Two championship golf courses are spread over this resort: The Ocean Course designed by Tom and George Fazio and the Greg Norman-designed River Course. Open daily to guests and non-guests 6:30 a.m.-7 p.m. About 45 minutes east of San Juan. Río Grande. Ph: (787) 888-8811

Wyndham El Conquistador: On the east coast in Fajardo, this course features a par-72, 18-hole course designed by Arthur Hills. Open daily 7 a.m.-dusk to hotel guests and non-guests. Non-guests should reserve early, especially during the high tourist season. 1000 Conquistador Ave., Las Croabas area, Fajardo. Ph: (787) 863-6784

Horseback Riding

Hacienda Carabalí: Mount an elegant Paso Fino horse and ride into the foothills of the El Yunque rain forest. The two-hour scenic trip includes a river swim. Route 992, about 35 minutes from San Juan, Luquillo. Ph: (787) 889-5820

Tropical Paradise Horseback Riding: Ride horses along beaches or in lush forests. Route 643, near the Hyatt resorts, Vega Baja. Ph: (787) 720-5454

Hacienda Campo Alegre: Trail rides along pristine beaches, lush green mountains, tropical forests and cliff caves Yauco. Ph: (787) 856-2609

Tropical Paradise Horseback Riding: Ph: (787) 720-5454

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To Do / Tourist Attractions

Shopping

Plaza Las Américas Shopping Mall : Plaza Las Americas (locals refer to it simply as the "Plaza") looks like a traditional shopping mall on the outside; inside it's more like a modern-day Puerto Rican marketplace. There are some 21 cinemas, 25 restaurants, and more than 300 stores, from Macy's and Banana Republic (for that necessity you forgot to pack) to unique independent shops. Artists make and sell their work in the halls, where you can get anything from abstract paintings to santos, traditional carved-wood figures of saints.

Plaza Carolina Shopping Mall: The second largest mall in the area, with shops, department stores, cinemas, restaurants, and a food court. Valet Parking is also available.

Old San Juan: You can find jewelry stores, boutiques, cigar shops, souvenir shops, art galleries, restaurants, bars and more. You will also find many Puerto Rican, African, Jamaican and other specialty shops. There is even a "Coach" store.