



Puerto Rico Handbook



CLIMATE

- The climate in Puerto Rico can change throughout the day. It ranges anywhere from hot and sunny, to humid, cloudy, or rainy.
- Be sure to apply sunscreen at least every two hours, and more often if you are swimming or sweating. The sun is very strong in Puerto Rico.

ELECTRICITY

- You will not need a converter or an adapter, as the outlets are like those in the continental United States.

CLOTHING

- Reference the Xperitas Puerto Rico packing list for advice on what to bring. Puerto Ricans dress similarly to people from any western country.
- Dress in layers to accommodate the changes in weather, and always bring your raincoat or umbrella, a light sweatshirt, and a water bottle with you in your day pack.
- In Puerto Rico, the dress is casual. However, if you are going to visit a school or church, you will need to wear more formal clothing. *For example, jeans/slacks without holes/rips or a long skirt/shorts and a collared shirt or a short-sleeved top.*
- As air conditioning tends to be turned up high in some restaurants, you may want to bring a light sweater.
- Bring a pair of shoes you do not mind getting muddy while hiking in the rainforest, such as old tennis shoes or close-toed water shoes.

CULTURAL TIPS

In Puerto Rico air conditioning is not as common and/or can be very expensive. The best way to cool down is to wear light clothing and stay out of the sun.

Electricity and gas are much more expensive in Puerto Rico than in other parts of the United States. Be conscious of how long your showers are and make sure to turn off the lights behind you.

Be ready to try new foods and always offer to help in the kitchen during your family stay.

Puerto Ricans don't like bartering and there are very few places where it is culturally and socially acceptable.

MONEY

- As it is a part of the United States, Puerto Rico uses the U.S. dollar as its currency. Contact your bank to alert them of your travel plans.
- Bring a combination of cash and cards (about \$200-300 total). **Be sure to bring a debit card with a pin number** to take out cash from ATM machines.
- Be sure to carry your cards and most of your money in your money belt or neck pouch while travelling!
- While in the country, only walk around with the money that you need and photo or paper copy of your ID. The rest can be left in your hotel safe.
- Small bills are better (1s, 5s and 10s), as oftentimes large bills are not accepted at small shops or in markets. Credit cards are accepted in hotels and larger restaurants and stores.
- A backup, emergency credit/debit card is a good idea in case one card is lost or stolen.

FOOD

- Breakfast is included daily. Any other included meals are noted on your itinerary.
- Travelers can find food for every budget! Most restaurants are comparable in price to the U.S., though there are smaller, more typical restaurants and cafeterias that are more economical. Buying snacks at *kioskos*, local *comida rápida* restaurants, or the grocery store is usually the cheapest way to go!
- Puerto Rico tap water is generally safe to drink, but you can also purchase bottled water if desired.
- Mealtimes are similar to the United States, though lunch is usually the largest meal of the day, with a smaller dinner.

TIPPING

Tipping is very important as many in the tourism industry depend on tips as a part of their regular income. Here is a guide to tipping in Puerto Rico:

Guides and drivers Tips are included in the program price, though you may feel free to tip them an additional amount if you feel they did a great job.

Restaurants Tip 15-20% if it is not already included in the bill

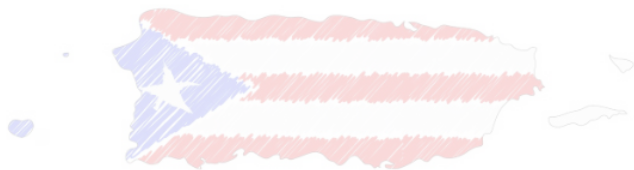
Bellboys If hotel staff helps you carry your luggage in to or out of the hotel, it is customary to tip them \$1-\$2 for each bag that they carry for you.

Hotel Maids Please leave \$2-\$3 per night for the maid. It is nice to leave the tip on a daily basis rather than at the end of your stay, as it might not be the same person cleaning your room each day.

If you have any other questions about tipping, ask your guide!

IN-COUNTRY TRANSPORTATION

- Greet the driver.
- Keep buses clean and loud noises to a minimum. Remember that smells intensify in small places.
- Be on time and don't make the buses wait for you.
- Student hotel sleeping arrangements may involve sharing beds, as some hotels utilize a single large bed for their double rooms or two large beds for their triple/quadruple rooms.
- If your program has a guide, you will find they are a wonderful support and source of information for the program. That said, as the group leaders, you are still responsible for your students during travel. We ask that you partner with the guide as you travel and work to support them in their efforts or guidelines set for the group. We encourage you to work as a team with your guide!



Health & Safety

- Be sure to keep your identification (passport, license, visa, green card, or documentation) most of your money, and your cards in your money belt or neck pouch!
- If there is a safe in your hotel room, lock your valuables in there while you are out and about. If not, hide money and valuables in your suitcase. Don't forget to check the hotel safe before leaving!
- Pay extra close attention to your belongings and be sure to keep your valuables close to you at all times, especially when in crowds of people or walking on the street.
- If you have a purse/bag, bring a cross-body purse/bag that zips shut. If you are carrying a backpack, be sure that valuables are not located in easily accessible pockets. We also recommend wearing your backpack in front of you versus on your back as you may normally do.
- Always travel in groups of **three or more**.
- Remember that the Xperitas emergency line is available 24/7, but please only call it when you are experiencing a true emergency.
- Review the travel and vaccine recommendations for travelers provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). See Current Health and Safety Updates for information about current world events and illnesses.
- Keep printed insurance card on you at all times.

Communication

COMMUNICATION TIPS

Puerto Ricans often greet each other with a handshake. Women may greet men and other women with a beso, or a kiss on the cheek. When entering a room or a store, it is very common to greet the other people around with an hola, buenos días, or buenas tardes. When leaving, don't forget to say hasta luego, ciao, or adios.

*Puerto Ricans love to make people feel comfortable, so they might automatically respond in English. Students should be considerate and firm, and say, "I am learning Spanish. Can you please speak to me in Spanish?"
(Estoy aprendiendo español. ¿Podrías hablar conmigo en español?)*

Overall, just keep an open mind and try not to refer to stereotypes!

- Check with your cell phone provider regarding your coverage in Puerto Rico. At least one leader must be able to contact Xperitas if needed.
- WhatsApp is used as the primary messaging app in Puerto Rico. You can download WhatsApp for free and create an account to communicate with people back home. There is often WiFi (or a computer for public use) available in your hotel, but keep in mind the connection is often weak.
- Ask your leader(s) about their policy around technology use while on the program. Limit your cellphone use while participating in group activities and interacting with locals. It is seen as rude to be on your phone while your guide addresses the group. You will have time to check your phone on the bus in addition to mornings and evenings.
- A great way for the entire group to stay in communication with parents/guardians back home is via a blog, WhatsApp group chat, private Facebook group, or group email.