



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- ❑ Driving is on the right.
- ❑ Drivers are required to carry a valid national driving license, good for up to 90 days; vehicle documents and proof of insurance. US drivers may use their state license; drivers from some countries will need an International Driving Permit (IDP).
- ❑ Customs officials may require proof of a return or onward ticket, or sufficient funds to cover expenses.
- ❑ The US Dollar is the official currency. Major credit cards are widely accepted.
- ❑ Women drivers and women traveling alone may be subject to harassment and verbal abuse. Drive with windows up and doors locked.
- ❑ On average, more than 320 pedestrians are killed in traffic crashes each year.
- ❑ Legal blood alcohol limit is below 0.08 g/dl for all drivers. Despite legal limits, alcohol remains a common factor in traffic crashes.
- ❑ Puerto Rico experiences more than 200,000 traffic crash deaths annually, out of a population of 3.264 million people.



Source: CIA Factbook

ROAD CULTURE

- **Drivers often** disregard traffic rules and run through red lights.
- **Aggressive** road behavior, including tailgating and road rage, is common.
- **Many motorists** fail to use turn signals and may cross multiple lanes of traffic without warning.
- **Drivers may** turn left from right lanes, even on busy multi-lane roads.
- **Motorists** on narrow mountain roads may not use their horn to warn approaching drivers.
- **Drivers** often disregard the presence of pedestrians, even in pedestrian zones.
- **Hitchhiking** is common. Do not offer rides to unknown persons.
- **At city** intersections, individuals asking for money frequently approach vehicles.
- **Drivers may** stop suddenly and park in the middle of roads.
- **Motorcyclists** often disregard safety rules and drive recklessly.

ROAD CONDITIONS

- **There are** 26,862 km (16,691 miles) of roads, including 454 km (282 miles) of expressways (called “autopistas”). Most are paved; toll expressways are generally well-maintained.
- **Road conditions** vary throughout the island. Not all damage from recent hurricanes has been repaired.
- **Traffic congestion** is common.
- **Many mountain** roads are poorly lit, narrow, winding and inadequately maintained. Guardrails may be broken or non-existent. There are many blind curves.
- **Potholes** and unmarked speed bumps are common.
- **Road signs** are in Spanish.
- **Speeds** are measured in miles-per-hour; most road signs display distances in kilometers.
- **Streets often** have more than one name, or are identified by a number. In some place, a kilometer marking is also used (coinciding with the km distance shown on road markers).
- **Traffic** along coastlines and in cities is frequently congested, particularly in San Juan.
- **Most** main highways are toll roads. Cash payment is accepted at some toll stations; payment may also be made through electronic AutoExpreso readers which can be acquired through car rental agencies.
- **There are** frequent disruptions to electricity and telecommunications. Phone and GPS service may be intermittent or unreliable.
- **Demonstrations** sometimes occur and can affect road travel and public transportation.
- **Avoid** all public gatherings; even peaceful demonstrations may suddenly turn confrontational.
- **Pedestrian** infrastructure is underdeveloped beyond cities. Outside of San Juan, there are few sidewalks.
- **Drivers** frequently disregard existing crosswalks and pedestrian zones.
- **Loose animals** are common, particularly in rural areas.



Road Conditions, continued

- **The following roads** may present particular challenges to motorists:
 - » **Ruta Panorámica Luis Muñoz Marín** connects Mayagüez to the coastal town of Maunabo. The 269-km (167-mile) route includes roads PR-105, PR-143 and PR-182. The narrow, twisting road has many blind curves and hairpin turns, and is subject to washouts following heavy rain. Speeding drivers, large transport trucks and lack of road dividers add to dangers.
 - » **Cerro de Punta/Cerro Puntita** road is located in the Cordillera Central section of the Reserva Forestal Toro Negro. The steep, narrow road leads to a mountain peak. The road is not wide enough to accommodate cars coming from opposite directions, requiring one driver to back up. There are multiple blind corners and unprotected drop-offs. The road is steep, with an average grade of 16.7%. Deep potholes are common. Rains create treacherous and slippery surface conditions. Do not attempt this road.
 - » **Highway 344** in Hormigueros is regarded as one of the country’s most dangerous roads. The route runs beside a steep cliff with no barriers. Rain and wind increase dangers.

REGIONAL AND SEASONAL CONDITIONS

- **During** annual Carnival celebrations, traffic congestion and incidences of drink driving increase.
- **Puerto Rico** is subject to severe storms, hurricanes, flooding and fog.
- **Hurricane season** is generally from mid-May to late November. Small storms may develop quickly into major hurricanes.
- **Flooding** often occurs following heavy rain. Do not step or drive into flood waters, which may contain strong currents or obscure potholes, tree branches or other debris.
- **Fog** is common in mountainous areas, especially during winter months.
- **Be familiar with emergency procedures.** The Red Cross provides a website and free, downloadable emergency app: <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies>

TRANSPORTATION

- **Transportation options** include cars, taxis, rideshares, buses, “públicos” (minibuses), one light rail system and boats.
- **Traffic** is heavy. Most people travel by private car.
- **Buses** in the San Juan metro area are operated by the Department of Transportation and Public Works (DOT).
- **Coach buses** are available from major companies including VIP Limo and Gray Line Puerto Rico.
- **Públicos/minibuses** (sometimes vans) operate during the day along fixed routes throughout the island. Drivers do not depart until vehicle is full. Many are overcrowded.
- **Público** drivers generally do not speak English.
- **Destinations** for públicos are written on cards placed in the front window of vehicles.
- **In small towns**, públicos generally stop at the central plaza.
- **Where available**, local bus stations are called Terminal de Carros Públicos, or “la terminal.”
- **Use only** official, licensed taxis.
- **Most taxis** are metered, but drivers may fail to activate meter unless requested by passenger. Agree on fare prior to travel.

Maximum Speed Limits

Type of road	Maximum speed
Urban areas	25 mph (40 kph)
Rural roads	45 mph (72 kph)
School zones	15 mph (24 kph)
Highways	55 to 65 mph (88 to 105 kph)

Always adjust speed according to signage, hazards and weather conditions.

Signs are generally pictorial and may not follow European Union conventions.

Stop	No passing zone	No parking: Taxi stand	Do not enter	Flood-prone area ahead	Speed limit	Dip in road	One-way road	Yield



Transportation, continued

- **Taxi routes** to popular tourist areas in main cities often have fixed rates.
- **Tourist taxis** in San Juan are white, with “Taxi Turistico” door signs.
- **Tren Urbano** is the light rail system in San Juan.
- **Rideshares** are available in cities. Use only services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver’s name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- **Cycling** is dangerous. Outside of San Juan, there are no bike lanes. Drivers generally disregard the safety of bicyclists. Poorly lit roads increase dangers.
- **Boats** include ferries and private vessels. Safety records vary among operators; some boats may not be licensed, insured or carry adequate life-saving equipment.
- **There are** regular ferry routes operated by the Puerto Rico Port Authority to the islands of Culebra and Vieques, and international service to the Dominican Republic. Ferry schedules and tickets are available online. Posted schedules are unreliable.
- **Ferry tickets** must be purchased in advance; separate tickets are required for any luggage brought onboard. Local residents are given priority seating. On weekends and holidays, seats for visitors may be unavailable.
- **Do not** board boats that appear to be overcrowded, when seas are rough, or during inclement weather. For safety, bring your own life preserver.

TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

- **Drivers must** be at least 18 years old, and 23 years of age to rent a vehicle. Some rental agencies may have additional restrictions.
- **Seat belt** use is required for drivers and passengers.
- **Children under** four years of age must be secured in a child safety seat; children from ages four to eight or who are under 144.7 centimeters (57 inches) in height must ride in a booster seat.
- **Children** under the age of 12 years must be seated in rear seats of vehicles.
- **Helmets** are compulsory for motorcycle drivers and passengers. For safety, fasten helmet.
- **At intersections**, give way to traffic on the right.
- **When** turning left, yield to oncoming traffic.
- **Yield** to other vehicles already present in a traffic circle.
- **At intersections** with stop signs on all roads, drivers who arrive first have right-of-way.
- **Use** the left-hand lane for overtaking.
- **Right turns** at red lights are allowed unless signs indicate otherwise.
- **Speed cameras** are common.
- **Police vehicles** must keep their lights on at all times.

San Juan (Capital)

- » Transportation options include cars, taxis, rideshares, buses, “públicos” (minibuses), light rail and boats.
- » Traffic is heavy. Most people travel by private car.
- » Driving is not recommended. Traffic conditions are often congested, particularly during twice-daily rush hours. Drivers are generally aggressive and disregard traffic rules.
- » There is a large cruise port. Motorized, foot and bicycle traffic increases when ships are in port.
- » Unmarked, alternating one-way streets are common.
- » Buses are operated by the Department of Transportation and Public Works (DOT).
- » There are 30 bus routes connecting the entire metro area, including Toa Baja, Cataño, Bayamón, Guaynabo, San Juan and Carolina.
- » Buses are generally clean and air-conditioned.
- » Route maps and information are not readily available. Bus stops usually do not include information about destinations served by specific buses.
- » Regular city buses operate from 5 am to 9 pm on weekdays, and 6 am to 8 pm on Saturdays and holidays.
- » Express buses and Metrobus routes 1 and 2 operate from 4:30 am to 10 pm daily. Express buses are identified by the letters “ME.”
- » Bus stops are marked with green signs with the word “Parada.” Buses must be flagged, or drivers will not stop.
- » Fare boxes are located next to the bus driver. Coins are necessary.
- » Coach buses are available from major companies including VIP Limo and Gray Line Puerto Rico.



San Juan, continued

- » Públicos (minibuses or vans) operate during the day along fixed routes throughout the island. Drivers do not depart until vehicle is full. Vehicles are frequently overcrowded.
- » Many público drivers do not speak English.
- » Destinations for públicos are written on cards placed in the front window of vehicles.
- » Tren Urbano light rail links the municipalities of San Juan, Bayamón and Guaynabo.
- » Tren Urbano trains generally operate every 16 minutes from 5:30 am to 11:30 pm.
- » Transit passes are required to use buses and light rail. Passes may be purchased at all Tren Urbano stations.
- » English-speaking staff can be found in many Tren Urbano stations.
- » Private shuttle buses/vans are available for hire.
- » Taxis are readily available. Use only licensed, registered vehicles.
- » Tourist taxis are white, with a “Taxi Turistico” sign on doors.
- » Taxis are metered, but drivers may fail to activate meter unless requested by passenger. Agree on fare prior to travel.
- » In tourist areas, taxi routes often have fixed rates. Stands can be found near hotels.
- » Rideshares are available. Use only services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver’s name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- » Pedestrians should use caution. Cobblestone streets and uneven sidewalks are common.
- » Drivers generally disregard those on foot, even in marked crossings.
- » Cycling is dangerous, despite established bike lanes. Drivers often fail to provide safe margins for cyclists.
- » There are designated bike lanes in some areas, including a route linking the waterfront in the old section of the city to the community of Piñones.
- » Bike rentals are available in many parts of the city.
- » Boats include ferries and private vessels. Safety records vary widely among operators. Some private boats may not be licensed, insured or carry adequate life-saving equipment.
- » There are regular ferry routes operated by the Puerto Rico Port Authority to the islands of Culebra and Vieques, and international service to the Dominican Republic. Ferry schedules and tickets are available online. Posted schedules are unreliable.
- » Ferry tickets must be purchased in advance; separate tickets are required for luggage brought onboard. Local residents are given priority seating. On weekends and holidays, seats for visitors may be unavailable.
- » Do not board boats that appear overcrowded, when seas are rough, or during inclement weather. For safety, bring your own life preserver.
- » San Juan/Luis Muñoz Marín Airport is located about 8.6 miles (14 km) from the city.
- » Transportation to the city includes cars, taxis, rideshares, buses and públicos.
- » Airport taxis may be found in queues outside of the arrivals area. Fare prices depend upon number of passengers, destination and amount of luggage. Airport staff are available to assist passengers in determining fares.
- » Buses and públicos connect to the city. Routes are complicated and include connections. Exact fare is required.
- » Most major car companies are represented at the airport. Ensure that vehicle is equipped with an AutoExpreso toll payment sticker.

Ponce

- » Second-largest city, located in the Porta Caribe region. Plaza las Delicias is the main square.
- » Transportation options include cars, taxis, rideshares, buses, “públicos” (minibuses or vans), trolleybuses and boats.
- » Public transport is limited to buses, including públicos and private coaches.
- » Públicos operate during the day along fixed routes. Drivers do not depart until vehicle is full. Many are overcrowded.
- » In general, público drivers do not speak English. Destinations are written on cards in the front window of vehicles.



Ponce, continued

- » Coach services are available from major companies including VIP Limo and Gray Line Puerto Rico.
- » Use only official, licensed taxis. Most are metered, but drivers may turn on meters only when requested by passenger. Agree on fare prior to travel.
- » Taxis may be hailed on the street, or found near large hotels and popular tourist destinations.
- » Taxi drivers may not speak English. Carry destination written in Spanish.
- » Rideshares are available. Use only services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver's name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- » There is a tourist trolleybus in the old part of town.
- » Pedestrians should be cautious. Streets and sidewalks may have uneven surfaces. Drivers often disregard those on foot, even at crosswalks.
- » Cycling carries high risks. There are no bike lanes.
- » Drivers generally disregard the safety of bicyclists. Poorly lit roads increase dangers.
- » Boats include ferries and private vessels. Safety records vary widely among operators. Some private boats may not be licensed, insured or carry adequate life-saving equipment.
- » Posted ferry schedules are unreliable. Tickets must be purchased in advance; separate tickets are required for luggage. Local residents are given priority seating. On weekends and holidays, seats for visitors may be unavailable.
- » Do not board boats that appear overcrowded, when seas are rough, or during inclement weather. For safety, bring your own life preserver.
- » Mercedita International Airport is about 3.7 miles (6 km) from city center.
- » Transportation to and from the city is by cars, taxis, rideshare and públicos.
- » Rental car agencies are represented at the airport.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND INCLUSIONS FOR MOBILITY CHALLENGED

- **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** is strictly enforced in Puerto Rico. Accommodations for persons with physical or sensory challenges are widely available.
- **Some** older hotel and public buildings have not been retrofitted with ramps or other accessible features. Contact hotel prior to travel to inquire about elevators and ramps.
- **Tourist trolleys** in Ponce are equipped with ramps and extra hand rails. Public buses, metro cars and taxis are required by law to be wheelchair-accessible.
- **Lack of sidewalks** and uneven footing on cobblestone streets, particularly in historic districts, may create difficulties for those who are mobility challenged.
- **Wheelchair-designated** parking spaces are offered in all urban and rural neighborhoods. Disabled parking permits from all US States are recognized by the Puerto Rico Police Department.
- **The Discover Puerto Rico** website has information and tips for travelers with mobility and other challenges: <https://www.discoverpuertorico.com/accessible-travel>

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- **Pre-program** emergency numbers into your phone before departure.
- **Responders to emergency numbers** generally speak Spanish, but English-speaking staff are usually available to assist.
 - » Police, ambulance and fire: 911
- **Response times** to emergency situations varies, and may be longer in rural areas or where heavy traffic is present.
- **Ambulance services** are privately operated, and may not be staffed with trained paramedics.
- **Payment** for ambulances is required up front.
- **The standard** of medical care varies throughout Puerto Rico. Physicians are board-certified.
- **Local authorities** describe facilities and doctors as “comparable with those of the United States;” however, facilities, care and equipment may be of a lower standard outside of cities and in remote areas.

Emergency Information, continued

- **There is** a shortage of trained physicians in many parts of Puerto Rico. Long waiting times are common, particularly in public hospitals and clinics. Private clinics and hospitals may have shorter wait times and a higher standard of care.
- **Various** prescription medications may not be available.
- **Some medications** prescribed in other countries are illegal in Puerto Rico. Check legality before travel to avoid possible arrest or detainment. Carry all medicines in their original packaging accompanied by a written doctor's prescription.
- **Serious illness** or injury may require medical evacuation.
- **If involved in a crash:**
 - » Call police and notify car rental agency.
 - » Do not move vehicle unless it creates a danger to other road users.
 - » Take photographs if possible.
 - » Exchange contact and insurance information with other driver(s) and any witnesses.
 - » Obtain copy of police report.



ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION FOR SAFE INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRAVEL (ASIRT)

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company crash on the roads of Turkey.

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