

Understanding the Port

San Juan is the rare port where the destination starts the moment you step off the ship. Five centuries of history, fortress walls, and pastel streets sit right at the pier. Your only real decision is whether to stay inside the old city or venture out to the rainforest.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Port Area

Ships dock at the Old San Juan piers, steps from the old city. The forts, shops, and restaurants are all walkable from the gangway.

Cash & Currency

This is the United States. US dollars, US credit cards, US cell plans, no roaming. English is widely spoken alongside Spanish.

Getting Around

Old San Juan is a walking city: hilly, cobbled, and worth every step. Taxis run set zone fares from the pier, and Uber works here. The old free trolley no longer runs.

GOOD

Old San Juan on Foot

Best for: Short stops, easy days, minimal logistics

- ✓ Blue cobblestones and pastel colonial streets
- ✓ Shops, plazas, and cafes from the gangway
- ✓ Back at the ship whenever you want

Low effort, high reward.

BETTER

The Full Fortress Day

Best for: History lovers, photographers, walkers

- ✓ El Morro and Castillo San Cristóbal
- ✓ The city walls and their famous garitas
- ✓ Mofongo lunch and a piragua on the plaza

Start early. The forts are cooler in the morning.

BEST

Rainforest or Rum

Best for: First timers, nature lovers, explorers

- ✓ El Yunque: waterfalls in a US national rainforest
- ✓ Casa Bacardí: tours and tastings across the bay
- ✓ Beach time at Condado if hours allow

Timing management required. Plan around all aboard.

Top Experiences to Consider

GOOD

The Old City

Wander the blue cobblestones, browse the shops on Calle Fortaleza, and finish on the Paseo de la Princesa by the harbor. No taxi, no schedule, no stress.

BETTER

El Morro & San Cristóbal

Two massive Spanish forts anchor the old city, connected by the walls above the sea. One \$10 ticket covers both; bring a card, the park is cashless. The views at El Morro are the photo of the trip.

BEST

El Yunque or Casa Bacardí

El Yunque's waterfalls and canopy views are about an hour east. Prefer to stay close? Casa Bacardí sits just across the bay with tours and tastings.

Where Staff & Travelers Recommend

El Morro

The signature San Juan experience. Centuries of fortress above the Atlantic, and the most recognizable view in Puerto Rico.

Old San Juan Itself

Cruisers consistently say the old city is the excursion. Comfortable shoes and curiosity beat any tour bus here.



Castillo San Felipe del Morro, Old San Juan



Calle Fortaleza, Old San Juan

Key Considerations

Old San Juan is hilly and cobblestoned, so comfortable shoes matter more than a taxi here. Midday brings heat and crowds; the forts are cooler and quieter in the morning. Since this is a US territory, there is no currency exchange, no roaming charge, and no fuss.

El Yunque is a half-day commitment with real drive time, so book it as an organized tour and protect your all aboard time. If your ship overnights or stays late, the old city at dusk is a different, softer experience worth staying for.



Paseo de la Princesa, Old San Juan



Condado Beach, San Juan



La Mina Falls, El Yunque National Forest

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Port Orientation

FROM THE PORT (OLD SAN JUAN)

● Old San Juan streets	At the gangway
● Castillo San Cristóbal	~ 10–15 min walk
● El Morro	~ 20–25 min walk across the old city
~ 5–10 min by taxi	
● Escambrón Beach	Closest swim
~ 10–20 min by taxi	
● Condado & Isla Verde	Resort beaches
~ 20 min by taxi	
● Casa Bacardí (Cataño)	Taxi, or cheap ferry from Pier 2
~ 1 hour by tour	
● El Yunque rainforest	East of the city

DON'T FORGET

Confirm your all aboard time before you leave the ship.
Set a phone alarm. The ship will not wait for you.

Key Takeaway

San Juan rewards walkers. The best of this port is free, historic, and starts at the end of the gangway.

Save the taxi money for a mofongo lunch, and save the rainforest for a day with generous port hours.

ETA will help you choose the right experience based on your travel style.

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Did You Know?

The Oldest City Under the US Flag. San Juan was founded in 1521, making it one of the oldest European-founded cities in the Americas.

Blue Streets. Legend says Old San Juan's blue cobblestones, the adoquines, arrived as ship ballast. What is certain: they are cast iron slag that weathers to that signature blue.

Birthplace of the Piña Colada. Invented in San Juan in 1954, and Puerto Rico's official drink since 1978. Two spots still argue over the credit, and both will happily pour you one.

A Rainforest in the US Forest System. El Yunque is the only tropical rainforest in the US National Forest System.

The Song of the Coquí. Puerto Rico's tiny coquí frog sings its own name all night, and Puerto Ricans would not have it any other way.