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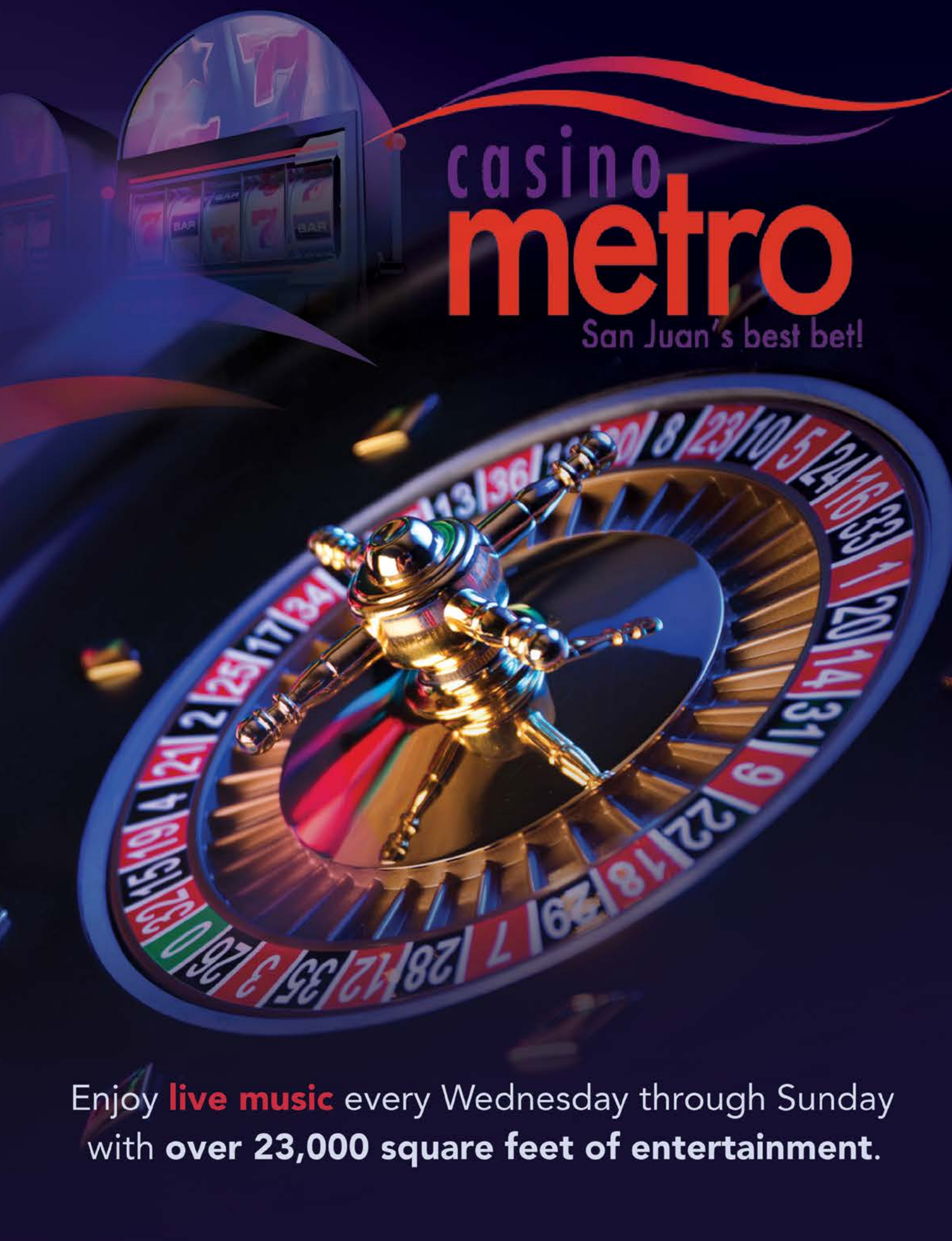


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Puerto Rico is a true gem of the Caribbean, offering a unique blend of breathtaking natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. Picture yourself lounging on sun-kissed beaches where soft white sands meet the crystal-clear turquoise waters. Whether you're drawn to the lively energy of Condado or the serene charm of Vieques, our coastlines are the perfect escape to relax, unwind, and soak in the gentle ocean breeze.

As you explore beyond the shore, discover the lush greenery of our rainforests, especially the awe-inspiring El Yunque National Forest. Hike along its trails and encounter cascading waterfalls, exotic wildlife, and the peaceful sounds of nature—a truly rejuvenating experience. Puerto Rico's diverse ecosystems also offer thrilling adventures, from zip-lining through treetops to kayaking in magical bioluminescent bays.

centuries-old architecture and charming cobblestone paths. Visit iconic landmarks like El Morro and San Cristóbal forts and enjoy the joyful rhythm that local artists and musicians bring to every corner.

Of course, your experience wouldn't be complete without savoring the flavors of Puerto Rico. Our cuisine is a rich tapestry of cultural influences, full of bold and delicious dishes. From lechón and arroz con gandules to pastelón and mofongo, each bite tells a story. Indulge in creations by our talented chefs, sip our world-renowned coffee, and cool off with a classic piña colada—after all, it was born right here!

We invite you to fully embrace the beauty, flavor, and warmth that make Puerto Rico so special. Whether you're seeking adventure, relaxation, or a little of both, our island will welcome you with open arms and leave you with cherished memories—and maybe even a desire to return again and again.

Welcome to Puerto Rico. We're so glad you're here!
Warmest regards,



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**Chairman of the Board
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Dear VISITORS:

On behalf of the Puerto Rico Hotel and Tourism Association, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to our beautiful island. As the Chairman of the Board, I am thrilled to extend my warmest greetings to all travelers seeking adventure, relaxation, and cultural enrichment.

Puerto Rico is a remarkable destination that captivates the heart and soul. From our stunning beaches with crystal-clear waters to the lush rainforests of El Yunque, our natural beauty is unmatched. Explore the vibrant streets of Old San Juan, where history and modernity intertwine, showcasing colorful architecture and rich cultural heritage. Indulge in our world-renowned cuisine, a delightful fusion of flavors that reflects our diverse history and traditions.

Our island is not just a paradise for nature lovers; it is also a hub of exciting activities and

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We invite you to experience the warmth of our people, the richness of our culture, and the beauty of our landscapes. Let Puerto Rico be your home away from home, where unforgettable memories await you.

Welcome to Puerto Rico!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Bustamante'.



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OUR COVER

Playa Ostiones is a hidden gem nestled in the municipality of Cabo Rojo. This stunning beach is known for its golden sands that stretch for miles and its tranquil waters, ideal for swimming and snorkeling.

It is part of the Reserva Natural Finca Belvedere, which was part of the old Belvedere sugar plantation. The sugar cane fields have reverted to their natural state, and this area is protected by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DRNA).

One of the highlights of Playa Ostiones is its natural beauty surroundings, with lush greenery and coastal cliffs that offer a stunning contrast to the blue waters. Visitors can also enjoy activities such as paddleboarding or kayaking, adding an adventurous twist to their beach day. With its welcoming environment and picturesque scenery, Playa Ostiones is an essential stop for anyone looking to experience the natural beauty of Puerto Rico and create unforgettable memories.



Photo credit: Discover Puerto Rico



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Sustainable Travel

IN PUERTO RICO

The Green Path

With incredible flora and fauna, Puerto Rico is a beautiful place to rest, recharge, and immerse yourself in the beauty nature has to offer. Following the Green Path is a commitment to protecting its culture, environment, and traditions. It encourages residents and visitors to adopt eco-friendly practices and support local businesses, ensuring a sustainable future. Walking this path means forging a deeper connection with the land, making choices that honor its people and landscapes while leaving a lasting positive impact. Let the Island inspire you to live more mindfully—wherever you go.

Food Print

SAVOR THE FLAVOR, KEEP IT LOCAL

Puerto Rico's culinary scene blends bold flavor with sustainability. Local chefs embrace seasonal ingredients, reduce waste, and support farmers and fishers. Visitors can dine farm-to-table, visit eco-farms, or try fresh, responsibly caught seafood. Even cocktails (or mocktails) tell a green story—infused with herbs grown nearby. Enjoying food here means celebrating the Island and its people, while leaving a lighter environmental footprint with every delicious bite.

Legacy Journey

HONORING CULTURE, EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Puerto Rico's culture is alive, vibrant, and proudly preserved. To help sustain its richness, engage with local artists, musicians, and tour guides who carry on the Island's traditions. Take part in workshops, join festivals, or explore heritage sites—you'll walk the path of this legacy yourself. Whether it is through historic architecture, the rhythms of bomba, or handcrafted art, each experience deepens the Boricua spirit and supports communities who keep it thriving. You're not just learning about history—you're helping to keep it alive for future generations.

Nature Path

EXPLORE WITHOUT LEAVING A TRACE

Puerto Rico is a land of natural wonder—from lush rainforests and pristine beaches to mysterious caves and sparkling bays, the Island invites endless outdoor adventures. Step off the beaten path and explore mindfully. Hike scenic trails, kayak through mangroves, or swim in glowing bioluminescent waters—all while honoring the delicate ecosystems that make these experiences possible. Travel with certified eco-guides, reduce single-use items, and follow Leave No Trace principles. Every mindful choice helps preserve these wild, beautiful places, so they remain just as magical long after your visit.

Conscious Stays

REST WITH PURPOSE

Eco-conscious lodging is redefining how to stay in Puerto Rico. Choose accommodations that prioritize sustainable practices, like solar power, water conservation, and locally sourced materials. Whether it's a thoughtfully renovated hotel, a rainforest cabin or a beachside villa, the Island offers stays that blend comfort with purpose. Many even offer ways to give back—through recycling, cultural immersion experiences, or community-driven initiatives. So, rest easy knowing your trip sustains Puerto Rico from the moment you check-in to the heartfelt hasta luego.

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MIGDALIA MEDINA

Publisher and Chief Editor

Discover the magic of Puerto Rico **AS THE ULTIMATE VACATION DESTINATION**

The best part of going on a vacation is seeing new places, having new experiences and meeting new people. Even if you live in the most magical place on earth, it's good to get away and see something different.

In this issue of BIEVENIDOS we focus on some of the key attractions that makes Puerto Rico so appealing for travel such as the vibrant city of Old San Juan with its rich history and culture that includes its variety of churches. The plethora of outdoor adventures from skydiving to eco-sports, its diverse and elevated cuisine to it's innovative cocktails, the majestic countryside mountains, its pristine beaches perfect for water sports, thrilling sporting events and spa experiences that nourish the mind, body and soul.

And if we are talking about the ultimate vacation destination, than Puerto Rico is the perfect mix of fun, beachy and hip.

I hope the summer is full of travels for you to get away and explore new adventures. It's the perfect time to collect souvenirs, create lasting memories, as well as get refreshed and renewed.

Safe travels,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Migdalia Medina.



THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO EXPLORE

To explore Puerto Rico and all its attractions, visit or call the Puerto Rico Tourism Information Centers.

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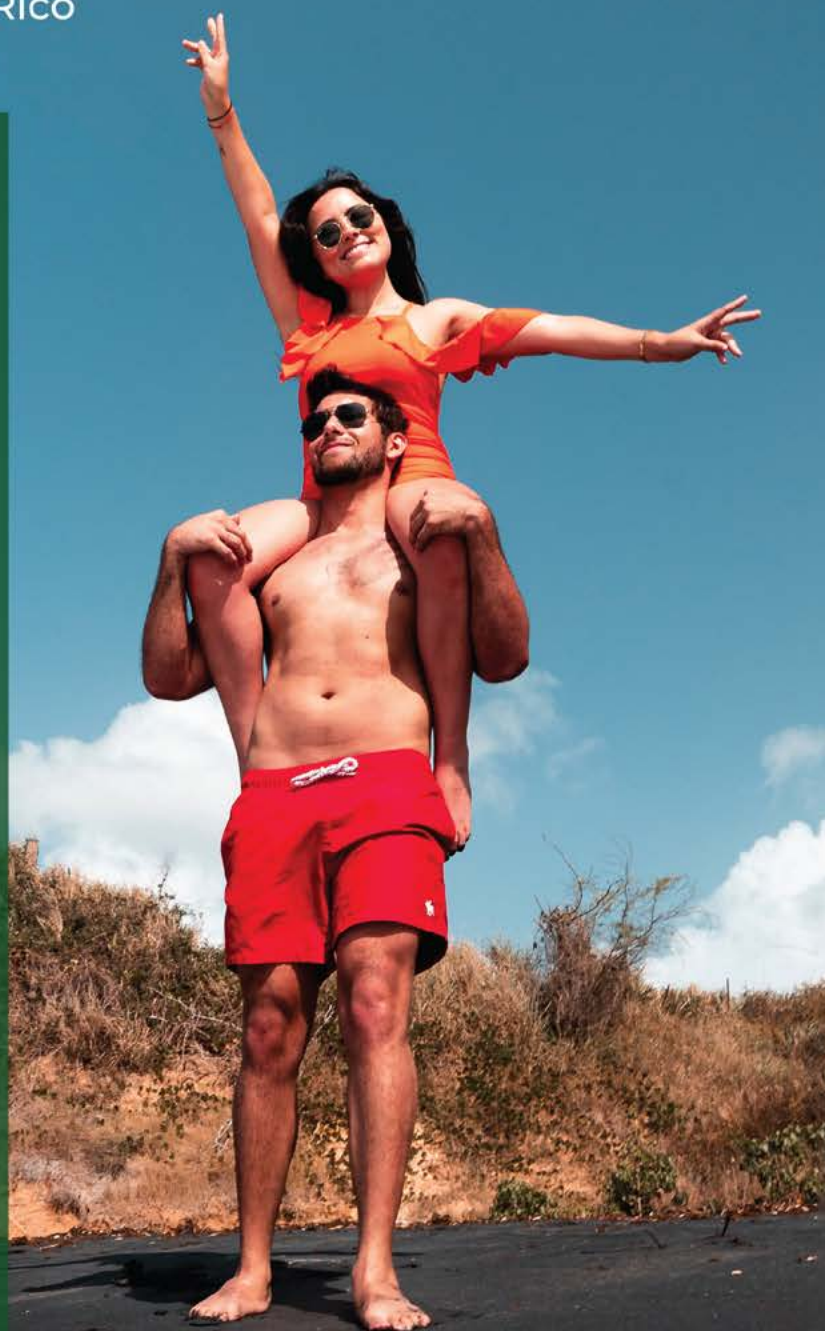
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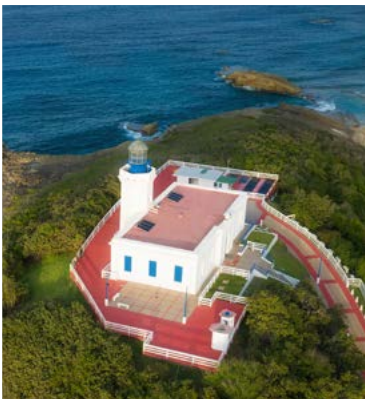
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PRHTA celebrates 75 years



By LUIS LOPEZ DIAZ

of making
Puerto Rico
shine as a
tourism
destination

This year the Puerto Rico Hotel & Tourism Association (PRHTA) celebrates its 75th anniversary as one of the prime movers and players in an industry which is still not only one of the most significant cornerstones of Puerto Rico's economy, but one that provides visitors with a varied, rich, and diverse destination experience.

"In 1950 a group of hoteliers who were investing in Puerto Rico's then emerging tourism sector saw the need to address issues pertaining to what they knew was the potential of Puerto Rico as a tourism destination, of the island's potential of providing

a special and unique experience to visitors," said Clarisa Jimenez Mayoral, current PRHTA President & CEO. "We carry on that mission to work towards a healthy, robust tourism industry, addressing all issues related to tourism on the island, from creating awareness for growth potential in all segments, to looking out for legislation that is related and may affect the tourism and travel sector."

One goal remains the same after 75 years, visitors experience - and which Jimenez Mayoral stressed is essential for the continued success and growth of the industry in Puerto Rico.

We all work towards that goal of
making a stay in Puerto Rico
and unforgettable, unique,
and special experience.

"It's all about the visitors experience," said Jimenez Mayoral. "It can make or break a destination, and at the PRHTA we come together, representing all sectors of the industry, to make sure that when it comes down to it visitors and local tourists as well have the best experience possible. One that will become a repeat visit or will spread the word about what a fantastic destination Puerto Rico is."

Throughout the history of the PRHTA, the organization has evolved along with the trends of travel and tourism in Puerto Rico, and its current 400 corporate members, which includes everyone from large, medium, and small brand hotels to small or medium guesthouses, national airlines, tour, and transportation companies.

"All of our members one way or another have to do with services or products that cater to the hospitality industry. We all work towards that goal of making a stay in Puerto Rico and unforgettable, unique, and special experience," said Jimenez Mayoral, adding that the PRHTA is comprised of a series of committees where members address issues related to the travel and tourism industry in Puerto Rico. These include the Government Affairs Committee, which aims to

keep abreast of legislation that may affect the tourism industry, developing and recommending legislation aimed at supporting and further developing tourism in Puerto Rico to a Marketing Committee, whose tasks is aimed at improving the ability to market Puerto Rico as a premier tourism destination.

"We work to foster a mix in what we offer as a destination," said Jimenez Mayoral. "That mix is essential for Puerto Rico to remain an attractive destination. We must ensure that we can cater to the business and family travelers, as well as to travelers that are looking for a nature-based experience, to guests that prefer the luxury of a brand name hotel, to those travelers that are seeking an informal experience such as guesthouses."

While it takes a lot of hard work, more than 80,000 employees at all levels in Puerto Rico's tourism sector make the island an unforgettable destination to those who visit.

"And what truly makes it worthwhile is always that sense of what we do puts a smile of joy and satisfaction on our guests faces, and because of what we do, Puerto Rico will continue to shine as a world-class destination," said Jimenez Mayoral. 



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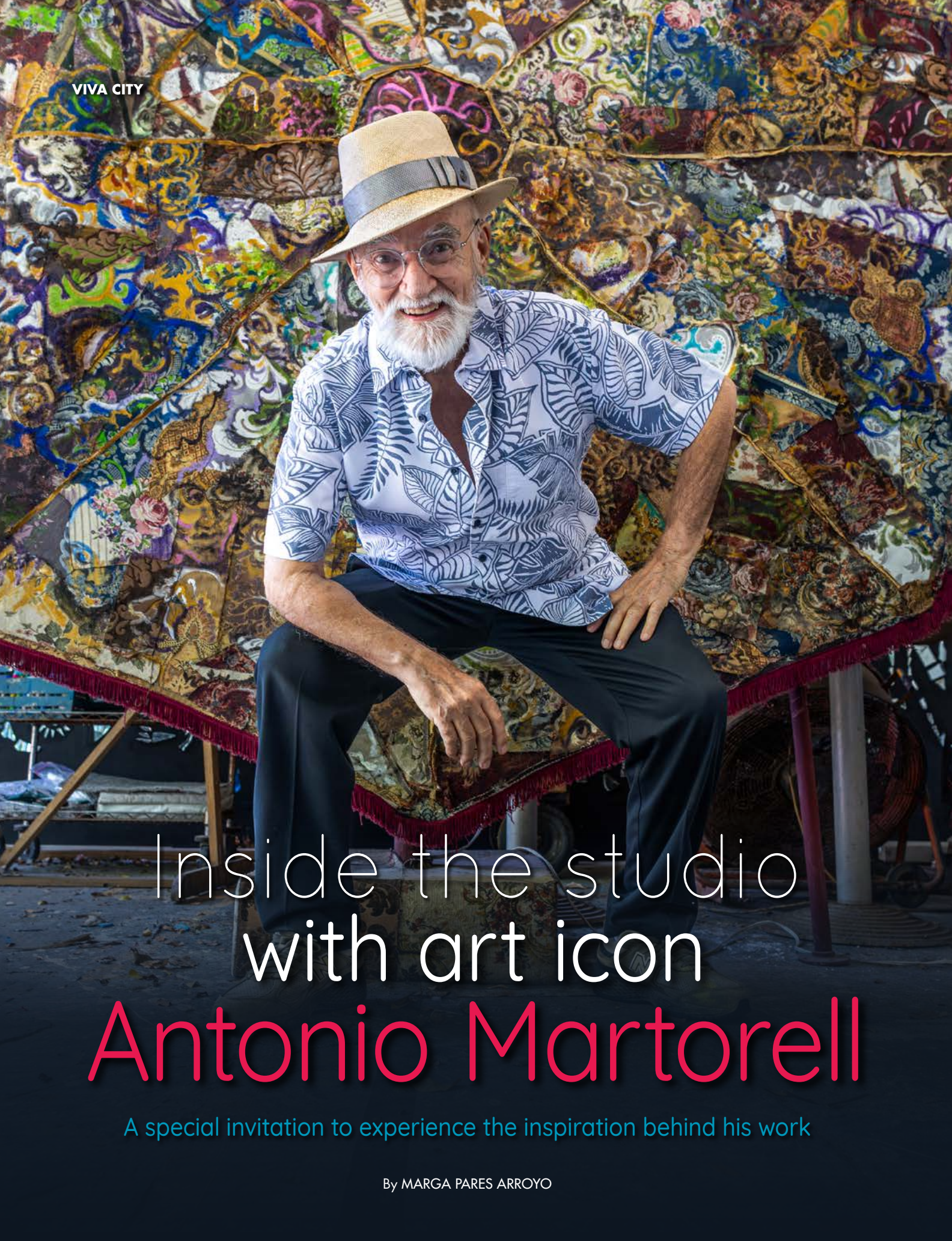
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A photograph of Antonio Martorell, an elderly man with a white beard and glasses, wearing a straw hat and a blue and white patterned shirt. He is sitting on a large, colorful, and intricate tapestry that covers the wall behind him. The tapestry features various patterns, including floral, geometric, and abstract designs in a wide range of colors. The man is smiling and looking towards the camera. The overall atmosphere is artistic and vibrant.

VIVA CITY

Inside the studio
with art icon
Antonio Martorell

A special invitation to experience the inspiration behind his work

By MARGA PARES ARROYO



One of Puerto Rico's most significant and colorful art icons is Antonio Martorell, a multifaceted artist who has excelled in various artistic expressions, as well as in the world of literature and journalism, among other avenues of art and communication.

Famous for his extensive collection of wide-brimmed and side-swept hats combined with colorful and elegant attire, Martorell has received numerous prestigious awards, both locally and internationally.

The "maestro," as many refer to him enjoys mentoring and educating

others. He always practices it, multiplying his art through the many projects he undertakes. Martorell has not finished one artistic venture before starting several others.

In Ponce, Martorell nourishes his artistic roots in his studio where a group of aspiring artists gather daily, eager to develop their talent under his expert guide. He not only mentors them, but they, in return inspire him with other perceptions to continue learning, exploring new techniques and artistic expressions. Even though he is always focused on his next creation with a fresh project, Puerto Rico is always present in Martorell's work.

"All children are artists. I was lucky that one of my aunts saw me draw and thought I had talent," said Martorell. "I took lessons from a drawing teacher in the neighborhood and was so excited that I told my mother I wanted to be an artist, and she freaked out. She told me I would die of hunger."

Martorell's mother reaction scared him away from art for over ten years. However, he decided that art was what truly brought him joy.



Stepping into his studio called Taller de la Playa de Ponce situated on the southern coast of the island, it feels almost like a spiritual experience.

Located on Calle Salmon, just steps from the beach in Ponce, his workspace and residence welcome anyone eager to step inside and learn more about his work. Martorell gives guided tours and talks about his inspirations, creative process, and what is next on his agenda, which is always focused around his love for Puerto Rico.





"What annoys us, also makes us experience joy and pain," Martorell said. In his art pieces, he also includes landscapes and writing. He also shares that one of his mentors, Lorenzo Homar taught him about the beauty of letters, which are more than carriers of ideas.

The sense of community that can be sensed at Playa de Ponce reminds him of Santurce, the place where he was born and raised.

Though the town of Cayey was his home for 25 years. He lived there as a resident artist of the University of Puerto Rico. But a fire in 2006 destroyed his work.

An exhibition at the Museo de Ponce brought him to this specific town, he was looking for a space to store a large piece of work and that's how he arrived to the Taller de La Playa de Ponce, a place that has become his studio and home ever since.

Surrounded by paintings, engravings, books, sculptures, and other forms of art, visitors who enter Martorell's world that begins with the Jardin Secreto, a place where nature blends with his creations that include scul-

artists possess a valuable tool to express themselves.

"Once you start, it is very easy to cross the boundaries between one art form and another. I began

The sense of community that can be sensed at Playa de Ponce reminds him of Santurce, the place where he was born and raised.

tures of arms, hands, and diverse artistic forms; are in for a delightful and enriching cultural experience.

With the experience of eight decades of life experiences, Martorell's journey is shaped by his likes and dislikes. He does not just paint, he voices things he agrees with and enjoys, as well as those he opposes. For this reason, Martorell believes

making posters and book illustrations. I also worked in journalism for years. I think it is a great way to shed light on what others are doing. In a country like ours, which desperately needs a respectable image, that is what artists are good for," Martorell added.

Martorell's common element is the human figure.



"I am grateful to have made the decision to come to Ponce with everything—studio, storage, space, exhibition, and housing. It is a spacious place, with amazing light and a great neighborhood, just like Santurce when I was growing up, in the 1940's and 1950's. The people are very welcoming and the sense of community is unique," said Martorell.

Martorell welcomes children and adults from schools, senior centers, and universities as well as friends and tourists.

"We are making a series of documentaries for television and YouTube called Antonio Martorell, the story of Playa de Ponce, and Art through the Knowledge and Learning of Life. There are already four episodes online and we are working on the fifth," said Martorell. In total there will be 10 episodes.

Mapas is one of his most recent



projects. This exhibition is at Galeria Petrus as a bold attempt to portray the world from Martorell's perspective, blending geography and cartography.

Nydia Velazquez, which now hangs in the United States Congress. It was the first of its kind by an artist from Puerto Rico.

The official portrait of Velazquez was unveiled on September 2024. It was a painting very different from the official framework, the unique piece blend Velazquez's two backgrounds: her Puerto Rican identity as well as professional and political development in New York.

Also, the University of La Habana awarded Martorell an honorary doctorate. His recognition in Cuba was in November of last year, on the context of the 15 Bienal de La Habana.



Additionally, Martorell alongside Dr. Daniel Colon Ramos from the University of Yale is developing an endeavor that merges neuroscience and art.

Also, Martorell was part of the Jornada del Grabado Puertorriqueño with an exhibition at the Museo de San Juan that brought together print art from some of the best local artists, including his own works. Additionally, Galeria Vista Alegre opened "La Playa en Vista Alegre: An Exhibition of Antonio Martorell and his Friends."

Martorell had the opportunity to make a portrait of Congresswoman

"It was a heartfelt tribute because it was also the place where Lola Rodriguez de Tio received her doctorate degree," Martorell said.

Another important recognition in his career was when President Joe Biden honored Martorell with the National Medal of Arts on March 21, 2023. This is the highest award given to artists and arts patrons by the federal government, in his case for transcending generation and genre through art, exposing hard truths with whimsy and color that help the people remember and grow as a nation.

Back on the island, a photovoltaic

VIVA CITY

system was installed at his studio in collaboration with Casa Pueblo, a community-based organization focused on sustainable development and environmental protection. Previously, the artist had created portraits of the co-founder of the organization, Tinti Deya Diaz, and her son Ariel Massol Deya, among other artistic collaborations.

Within the many places that Martorell's work can be seen is at El Conquistador Resort in Fajardo with an engraving from his Catalog of Interior Plants, made in 1980. In

addition, his permanent work "El Arbol de la Vida" can be found at the Performing Arts Center in Caguas. And there are many other pieces that the public can discover both on the island and abroad.

"In Puerto Rico there is a strong sense of belonging between the artist and the community, and vice versa. I enjoy the widespread recognition, it's very gratifying because one realizes that what we do communicates, it is not just decoration," said Martorell. "It reflects the joys and sorrows of our people."

Martorell acknowledges that there is a promising future for artists on the island. He pointed out that Puerto Rico is home to several art schools and many museums, which help and encourage the formation of art.

Among his many contributions, Martorell has published five books, combining images and words. He also noted that he has four more in drawers, already fully written but with an uncertain publication date. The most recent one (Prendas de Vestir y Desvestir), he said, was published a year ago, but it had been 30 years in the making.

"I am very methodical. I walk along the boardwalk by the beach, do some exercises, come back, have breakfast, shower, and work. The team arrives at 9 a.m. and stays until 5 p.m. They leave, and sometimes I continue working. We always have lunch together; it is a tradition. Those who work here know there is a sense of community. Art is an exercise of freedom and will," Martorell said.

For those who wish to visit his studio, you must write to antoniomartorellpr@gmail.com as visits are by appointment only. 



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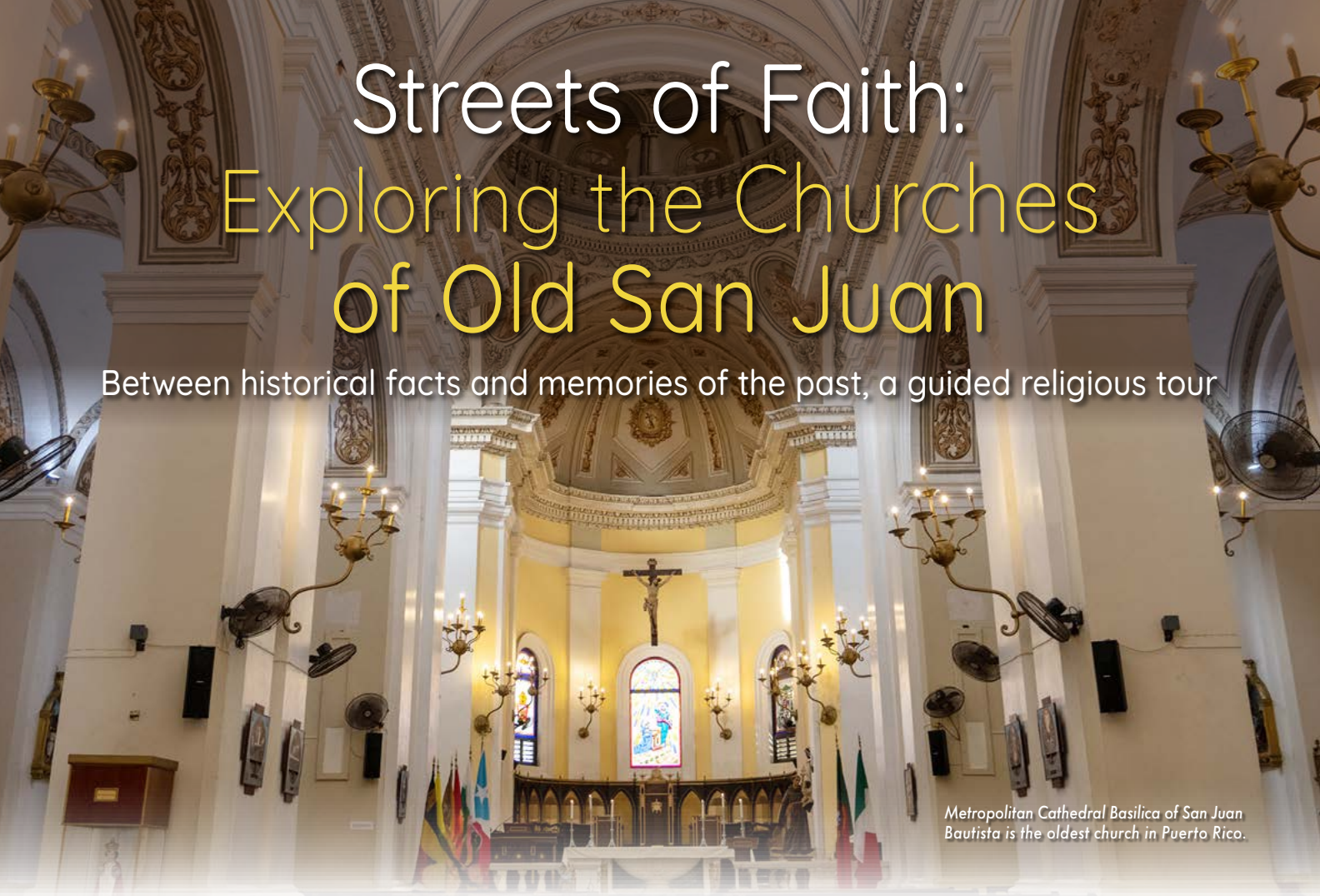
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Streets of Faith: Exploring the Churches of Old San Juan

Between historical facts and memories of the past, a guided religious tour



Metropolitan Cathedral Basilica of San Juan Bautista is the oldest church in Puerto Rico.

By MARGA PARES ARROYO

Walking on the cobblestone streets of Old San Juan can be a religious experience, especially if the route includes visiting altars, pausing to observe the rich architecture, and daring to uncover the hidden stories behind the various churches the walled city offers.

Certainly, its ancient history invites to reflect on its past. Centuries of faith and culture are embodied in the different temples and chapels that create a labyrinth worth exploring. Regardless of whether you are a local or overseas visitor, there are always secrets to reveal if you venture, not only to appreciate their

structures, but also to learn about the past and present of San Juan's religious world.

Let us begin with the Metropolitan Cathedral Basilica of San Juan Bautista. The base of the Archdiocese

of San Juan, is located on Calle del Cristo. It was originally built in 1521, but after being destroyed by a storm it was rebuilt in 1529. It contains the remains of the conqueror Juan Ponce de Leon and the martyr Saint Pius. It also houses relics such as ornaments and vestments worn by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Puerto Rico in 1984. It is the sanctuary of the patroness of Puerto Rico, the Virgin of Divine Providence. It is also distinguished as the oldest church on the island and the second oldest in the Americas, after the Cathedral of Santa María la Menor in Santo Domingo.



The Church of San Jose was the second church built on the island.



Metropolitan Cathedral Basilica of San Juan Bautista.

Among its most recent constructions is the Altar of the Fatherland, inaugurated in 2011.

On the same Calle del Cristo, right next to Parque de las Palomas, stands the Chapel of Santo Cristo de la Salud. It is a religious, cultural, and architectural heritage. Its construction is based on a supposed miracle. According to legend, around the year 1750, two men were riding horses during a race when one of them was surprised by his inability to brake and fell over a cliff. The man survived, and the miraculous event led to the construction of the sanctuary in memory of the Santo Cristo de la Salud. The building is

made of masonry and brick and stands as a small monument with an eye-catching silver embossed altar, and several paintings by the artist Jose Campeche in the room.

The Parish of San Francisco de Asis is located on the same street, San Francisco. In 1756, the Secular Franciscans built a chapel that became the Church of San Francisco de Asis. Despite several transformations, its original brick and masonry structure is still appreciated. It is also known for its crypt (an underground place where the dead were buried). Legend has it that at one point, the remains of the famous painter Francisco Oller were buried there.

Capilla del Cristo was built on top of the historic stone walls of the Old City.



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The Church of San Jose's original construction in limestone and brick dates back to 1532.

The Church of San Jose stands out as the second church built on the island. The land where it is located was donated by the Spanish conqueror Juan Ponce de Leon. Its original construction in limestone and brick dates back to 1532. It was devastated twice during the conquest wars (1598 and 1625). Hurricanes, earthquakes, plagues, humidity, termites, and carpenter ants also contributed to its deterioration. Over the years, it has undergone several improvements,

including one led by Cardinal Luis Aponte Martinez between 1978 and 1982. However, the most recent renovation lasted 20 years (2001-2021), interrupted by several events, including Hurricane Maria and the COVID-19 pandemic. This last rehabilitation cost around \$11 million. In addition to a convent, it housed the first higher education school on the island, the General Studies of the Dominicans. Its chapel was dedicated to the Virgin of the Rosary. It was also a pantheon for the island's governors, including Juan Ponce de Leon, under its five crypts. It is recognized as one of the most important Gothic-Renaissance temples in the Antilles.

Over at Puerta de Tierra is the Parish of San Agustin. It was established in the 1880s by the Redemptorist Fathers to serve the residents of the area. Originally, a small wooden chapel was built. After acquiring a 4,400 square meter plot of land, construction began on a school, church, and rectory. These buildings were inaugurated in December 1915. Built with concrete, it was one of the first structures of its kind on the island and incorporated stained-glass

windows, which broke with the traditional dark, gloomy interiors. Its architecture is Romanesque and Gothic. For many years, it was one of the few Catholic churches offering services in English.

The Chapel of San Conrado is in La Perla, one of the most central areas of Old San Juan. Its hours are limited, typically opening only on Saturday afternoons. It stands out as a simple one-story structure built with concrete and wood.

The Chapel of Santa Ana is located on Calle Tetuan. It was constructed between 1847 and 1849. Its façade is painted pink and it adjoins the old Convento Santa Ana. It is part of the National Register of Historic Properties, and due to its cultural and historical value, it is one of several structures chosen to be restored with funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

On the outskirts of the historic center of San Juan in the Miramar area is the Chapel of Nuestra Señora de Lourdes stands out as an eye-catching neo-Gothic building. It was

designed by the famous Czech architect Antonin Nechodoma. It was inaugurated in 1908 and was the first temple of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Puerto Rico. It later became part of the Union Church of Puerto Rico and since 1959, has been a Catholic Church. The structure is made of reinforced concrete with a rustic finish that resembles stone. It has a bell tower and gargoyles that function as drains. In 1984, it was added to the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Convent and House of Health of the Servants of Mary is located right next to La Fortaleza. It is made up of a group of religious women who dedicate themselves to the care and well-being of women recovering from hospitalization. The first eight founding nuns arrived in San Juan in January 1887. They initially took over the Women's Hospital, which had already existed. Today, it serves as a House of Health for women in recovery.

Follow the chain of history and faith and you will not regret it! 



The Parish of San Francisco de Asis is located on San Francisco Street.

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A journey through rum, history and adventure

at Casa BACARDI

By MARGA PARES ARROYO

The sun was shining brilliantly casting a warm glow across the San Juan Harbor. It was one of those perfect sunny mornings, the kind that makes you feel like adventure is just around the corner.

As I wandered around Pier 2 at Old San Juan there was an interactive booth with signs promoting several

tours at Casa BACARDI, including a mixology class that seemed to be exciting and unique. An employee of the Port Authority mentioned that the booth was a recent addition, and that it had already sparked great interest, especially from tourists eager to explore new experiences. You can reserve any of the four tours and pay for transportation at the stand.

Certainly, the idea of discovering something new added to the excitement of what was to come! My friend and I met at the port to catch the ferry at 11:30 a.m., just half hour before we traveled across the bay from Old San Juan to Cataño. Soon, the waiting area filled up with a diverse group of people, all eagerly anticipating their own adventures. As we boarded

the ferry, we made our way to the rooftop of the boat and could not resist taking a short video of the ocean and sharing it with my friends on social media.

Once we crossed the bay and arrived, we made our way to the shuttle bus that would take us to the next leg of our exciting journey. The driver set the mood with a popular



rock song, while the air conditioning system refreshed us from the hot temperatures.

The first thing that grabbed my attention was the efficient organization of the Casa BACARDI tours and what it offered to both local and international visitors. Everyone checked in and confirmed their pre-booked tour. A friendly employee welcomed us and placed a wristband in a color that matched our chosen tour. Along with the check-in, everyone is given a token for a complimentary cocktail at the BACARDI Bar, a highlight of the main area where guests are received. There are four cocktails to choose from, each one as visually appealing as delicious. My friend chose the Guanabana Glow, inspired on the popular soursop fruit, while I opted for a more traditional Piña Colada. Both selections provided a small taste of the house rum.

About every 15 minutes, the speakers at Casa BACARDI announced the different tours scheduled. It was our turn at 1:30 p.m. We boarded the trolley, and were welcomed by the tour guide. The excursion began with historical insights about the company with humor and intriguing facts. The BACARDI rum factory is the largest rum distillery in the world. While the trolley takes the group around the beautiful grounds of Casa BACARDI, the tour guide keeps the guests entertained while teaching an interesting class, with historical data about the company.

The history of BACARDI in Puerto Rico dates to 1936, when the company began producing rum on the island. But the origins of this historic company date back to Cuba, where Don Facundo Bacardi Massó, a Spaniard, emigrated in 1830 and created a unique method of distilling rum. By



1862 he bought a small distillery in Santiago de Cuba and revolutionized the rum production process with Ron Bacardi Superior Carta Blanca, made from blue cane molasses. Bacardi Massó's family

emigrated from Cuba to Puerto Rico and settled in Cataño, where they acquired 137 acres of land. Today, 163 years later, the rum distillation empire that they built continues with great success.

SCENE AND BE SEEN

At almost 2 p.m. the trolley stopped in front of a building where the group was going to take the mixology class. "DO WHAT MOVES YOU" is BACARDI'S campaign slogan, one that was appropriate to the atmosphere that prevailed in the class. The first thing was to know and become familiar with the instruments that we would use in class. A measurer, a large tong, a mixer, a shaker and two glasses were some of them. Among our ingredients there was also a small taste of Casa BACARDI Special Reserve, aged between eight and twelve years. The first cocktail we made was a Mojito, followed by a Jungle Bird cocktail. "Pa'rriba, pa'bajo, pa'l centro, pa'dentro. Salud", said the tour guide in reference to a popular phrase to toast.

After the class, the group was guided to the BACARDI store, where, among other things, Casa BACARDI Special Reserve was available. "You can make your own reserve bottle. You bottle it and put the label on it", said Dwayne Johnson, who was visiting the island from Nashville, Texas, with his wife, Lunell Johnson. After the guided tour, the group disperses. Some stay in the store, others walk to the central area of the premises, where all the activities originate. My friend and I waited patiently for the shuttle bus. The driver, again, set the mood with a popular salsa song, one that not many in the group recognized but all equally enjoyed. Back at the port, we waited for the arrival of the ferry. The 15-minute trip back to Old San Juan immersed us in a relaxed and happy atmosphere. It was almost 5:00 p.m. when we arrived to San Juan.

The excursion took us out of the daily routine and into a getaway that invited us to return with family, friends, and loved ones. For more experiences and adventures. Cheers! 



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Sector Sixty6: Endless Entertainment Awaits!

By BIENVENIDOS STAFF

If you are a thrill seeker and looking for the next great adventure, once you step into Sector Sixty6, Puerto Rico's largest indoor theme park, you know you're about to make great memories.

With two prime locations—Canovanas and Caguas—Sector Sixty6 is a paradise for adrenaline junkies, gamers, and families looking to spend a day packed with energy and laughter - simply a good time.

I started my day at the Caguas location, and let me just say—this place is massive! Over 40,000 square feet of non-stop fun, and the first thing that caught my attention was the K1 Speed indoor go-kart track. Sleek, all-electric karts ziping through a two-story racetrack, yes, please. I felt like a professional racer (even if my lap time said otherwise), and the rush was worth every second. The track is professionally designed for maximum overtaking opportunities and features PROTEX barriers to maintain safety.





Next up: Arcade Mania. Think retro favorites like Pac-Man and Super Mario Kart, paired with today's gaming marvels like Halo and Virtual Rabbids. Oh—and did I mention the full virtual reality room. Let's just say I got a serious workout fending off virtual zombies.

Craving something more physical? The Fun Box rope course can have you climbing, balancing, and cheering like if you were in a real-life adventure movie. Suspended 18 feet in the air, it is a challenge that pushes you in all the right ways—and makes the Sky Rail ride at the end feel like a well-earned victory lap.

Of course, I had to try my aim at

axe throwing in the Axe Zone at Canovanas. I was not sure what to expect, but the axe masters guided me like a champ. Ten minutes in, I was hooked—and a little too proud of that bullseye. Visiting with family, friends, or just love a good game of bowling, Sector Sixtyó's bowling lanes are a can't-miss stop. It is a timeless favorite with mesmerizing lights, futuristic glow in the dark bowling alley with its large screens and interactive scoring that make every frame even more exhilarating and makes hanging out as a family extremely fun again.

Now, no adventure is complete without a great meal, and all locations at Sector Sixtyó deliver. I sipped on a great selection of



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draft beers and enjoyed one of its international dishes for lunch at Karma's Wine & Beer Garden in Canovanas. For dinner travelled to Caguas for a delicious endless buffet at Golden Corral and then visited the stylish Pilatus Lounge for

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ready to make
your gathering
next-level.

drinks and tapas. Whether you are in the mood for appetizers or a hearty meal, there is something to satisfy every craving.

At Sector Sixty6, the Racing Simulators create a realistic racecar driving experience and



leading-edge visual. Drivers can feel what it is like to drive a robotic car.

And if you're planning a birthday, family celebration, or even a corporate event - Sector Sixty6 has private rooms and event packages ready to make your gathering next-level.

So, here is my travel tip: whether you are exploring Puerto Rico solo, with friends, or as a family, don't miss Sector Sixty6. It is more than just an attraction—it is an all-in-one adventure. For corporate events or group event packages, the staff can offer visitors reserved times so they won't have to wait, private racing, teambuilding, as well as a

professional-style racing format that is exclusive to the event packages.

Find Sector Sixty6 at The Outlet 66 in Canovanas (Exit 14 on Route 66) or at Shops at Caguas (Exit 19 on Highway 52). And don't forget to follow them on Instagram @sectorsixty6 and Facebook for updates. 



Unplug and recharge at La Marquesa Forest Park

A hidden gem in the heart of the metropolitan area

By DARIEN RIVERS

Up for an escape to re-energize your soul and reconnect with the essence of nature? Look no further than La Marquesa Forest Park, a lush tropical rainforest reserve soaring above the metropolitan area that breathes new life into the heart, body and mind.

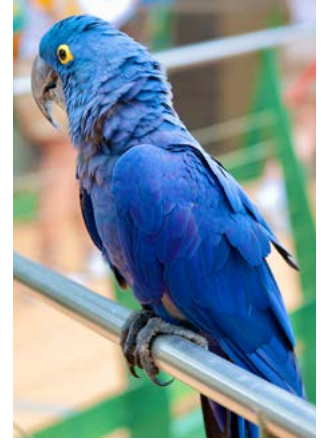
La Marquesa straddles the highest reaches of Guaynabo, a cosmopolitan town within quick reach of the major San Juan tourism zones that is known for its upscale shopping and eateries. Sitting at more than 1,600 feet above sea level, this emerald oasis provides a plethora of opportunities for both adventure and reflection for visitors of all ages.

La Marquesa packs an elemental punch over its 600-plus acres of verdant mountain terrain. Trekking through this living laboratory of biodiversity is to step into an unspoiled realm where a feast for the senses awaits. Breathtaking views. A symphony of birdsongs. The swoosh and sway of flora. And there are multiple ways to soak it all in.

Hop aboard an open-air train for a breezy tour that hits the many highlights including a cascading waterfall below the observation tower that crowns La Marquesa, providing a panoramic vantage point over mist-shrouded mountains across the breadth of the metropolitan area to the sea. Stunning in its natural state, the park is also home to added



SCENE AND BE SEEN



attractions including a butterfly garden, an aviary and arboretum all within a short distance of a mountain-top restaurant. Shaded playgrounds provide another source of diversion for the young ones and a welcome chance for the rest of the crew to sit back and kick up their feet.

All of these must-see areas are also accessible on foot along the well-marked and well-maintained trails and walkways that wind through the rocky crags and myriad of greens that color the forest, providing an

intimate connection for those who choose to pass this way. Keep your eyes open for the wildlife that calls La Marquesa home including an array of birds, lizards and even mongoose.

While hiking may be well known for its grounding effects, no visit to La Marquesa is complete without a trip - or several - up and down the flanks of the park in the modern cable cars that traverse well above the dense forest canopy. The runs take less than 10 minutes in each direction so you may just find yourself

hopping on for multiple passes. And for good reason. It is rare air up there. Catch a glimpse down on parrots perched high on treetops and scan the horizon for sweeping views into the neighboring mountains and over urban areas in the distance on the march to the Atlantic Ocean. Just remember to keep your camera at the ready.

Managed by the municipal government of Guaynabo, La Marquesa evidences Puerto Rico's recovery from the devastation of Hurricane Maria,

which slashed across the island as a powerful Category 5 cyclone in September 2017. As the forest healed itself, plans were put in motion to rebuild and reopen La Marquesa Forest Park to the public. After years of work, the park is back and better than ever with clean, secure and well-run facilities with courteous and informed staff. Reasonably priced entrance passes can be purchased online in advance via La Marquesa's website <https://boletos.marquesa.pr.com/tickets/eventList> or onsite at the park's entrance.

After years of work, the park is back and better than ever with clean, secure and well-run facilities with courteous and informed staff.





A roughly 20 minute drive from San Juan's tourism hubs ends in an ample, guarded parking lot that serves as the base for shuttle buses that make continual runs along the short route to and from the park proper. The frequent shuttle service means you can stay as long, or as little, as you like. The park is open Wednesday through Sunday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. It is closed Monday and Tuesday for maintenance and it is clear that those to off days are put to good use as the facilities and the grounds are very well kept.

Exploration is encouraged at La Marquesa as is participation in conservation-minded initiatives. The tropical forest averages



72 inches of rainfall per year, which is roughly a foot above the lower-lying surrounding areas. The average temperature is 77 degrees Fahrenheit and the park is generally cooler than the lows measured in nearby San Juan. The park's three drainage basins, or quebradas in Spanish, are Limones Creek, Damiana Creek and Central Creek. The geologic makeup includes Santa Olaya lava dating to the cretaceous period, quartz diorite dating to the Paleogene and Neogene periods and formations from the Pleistocene epoch. 



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Bayamon's Parque de las Ciencias

delivers on its mission to mix learning and diversion for the whole family

By DARIEN RIVERS

Puerto Rico's endless array of beautiful beaches offer up a tried and true way to spend a great day. But the island has so much more on tap than simple fun in the sun. A case in point is Parque de las Ciencias, or the Science Park, an educational, recreational and interactive space offering a wide variety of exhibits and activities for all ages.

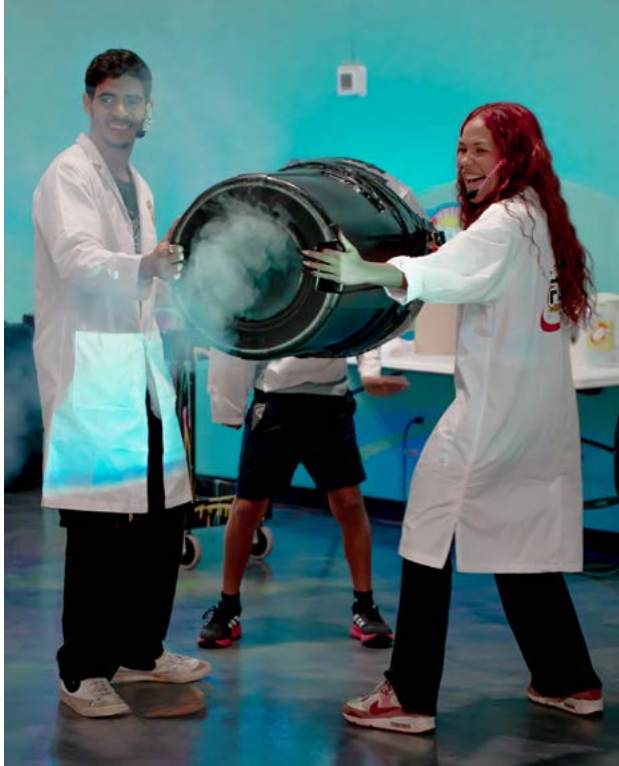
Located in the city of Bayamon, Parque de las Ciencias sits within easy reach of the metropolitan tourism hotspots including Old San Juan, Condado, Ocean Park and Isla Verde as well as the resort hubs of Dorado to the west and the Rio Grande, Fajardo and Luquillo area to the east. After sitting idle for some time in the wake of Hurricane Maria in 2017, the long beloved

park is back and better than ever after undergoing a sweeping and thoughtful overhaul marked by the addition of many new attractions. If you haven't visited the revamped park, it is a great time to do so.

Parque de Ciencias is packed with features across its mix of outdoor areas and themed pavilions that put an illuminating spin on topics including astronomy, technology, biology and the history of Puerto Rico. Heady stuff for sure. But always delivered in creative and engaging ways that put a premium on interactive fun.

The can't miss, must-see and need to do elements of the park include a planetarium, rocket park, animal sanctuary, the Caribbean's only 3D movie screen and a series of





state-of-the-art exhibits that spur knowledge in a fun way. Parque de las Ciencias is at its core a plug and play space that feeds the mind and the body. Oh, and the belly, too. The themed El Yunque Restaurant and Hacienda Angelina, along with various kiosks around the property, serve up food and drink for all tastes.

The reborn Parque de las Ciencias is a stellar example of coming back stronger and with a fresh vision. But the facility is not resting on its revamp. Multiple temporary

exhibitions are featured throughout the year providing new attractions for repeat visitors.

Parque de Ciencias is publicly owned but is operated by Toro Verde, the company behind two wildly popular adventure parks on the island. Their flagship Toro Verde Puerto Rico Park crisscrosses the highest reaches of the mountain town of Orocovis and boasts La Bestia, or The Beast, the longest and fastest zipline in the Caribbean. Toro Verde Urban Park provides a truly unique experience winding



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up and down and in and out of the heart of the San Juan Convention Center District. Toro Verde has proven it can deliver pure adrenaline. While the cerebral side gets

or at the onsite box office. The park is located within a 15-minute drive from the metropolitan tourism hubs and can be reached by the Urban Train mass transit rail line with a short shuttle from

Parque de Ciencias more than makes good on its mission to provide for all members of the family within an educational and stimulating environment.



more attention at Parque de Ciencias there is no shortage of good times to be had there as well.

Parque de Ciencias more than makes good on its mission to provide for all members of the family within an educational and stimulating environment that encourages learning about the arts and sciences through alternative teaching methods and raise awareness of the importance of environmental conservation.

the Bayamon station to the facility. The park includes rentable spaces for corporate team-building and family and friends activities ranging from birthdays to baby showers.

Try to make time for a stroll through the Bayamon Museum of Art, a separate facility located on the grounds of the Parque de Ciencias that is focused on Puerto Rican artists across seven galleries for the permanent collection, a temporary exhibition gallery and a sculpture garden. The museum hosts culture activities and educational programs including workshops for artists at heart of all ages. 

Entrance passes to Parque de las Ciencias can be purchased online <https://parquedelascienciaspr.com/>



Making herstory

Women chefs cooking up success in the island's kitchens

By LUIS DIAZ LOPEZ

While many men have uttered the misogynistic saying that “a woman’s place is in the kitchen,” throughout culinary history men have managed to dismiss women from the role of master or executive chef. But women have forged ahead and opened inroads around the world in the kitchens of restaurants, making their mark as head chefs, whether these are stand-alone establishments or are in hotels. And Puerto Rico is no ex-

ception. Many women chefs are currently making or have already made a name for themselves in Puerto Rico’s kitchens, in charge of everything from developing new dishes to the hectic and challenging task that involves administrating it.

different positions, one of these being head chefs,” said Natalia Rivera, executive chef at La Concha Renaissance San Juan Resort located right in the middle of Condado’s bustling tourism district. “We have persevered and won.”

Chef Rivera explained that she has always wanted to be a chef. “It is a vocation,” said Rivera.

Chef Rivera explained that she has always wanted to be a chef. “It is a vocation,” said Rivera.

ception. Many women chefs are currently making or have already made a name for themselves in Puerto Rico’s kitchens, in charge of everything from developing new dishes to the hectic and challenging task that involves administrating it.

“It’s true that men have been prevalent as chefs but in the last 10 years or so women have opened a path, and now it is more common to see us in the kitchens of restaurants in

comes from a family where cuisine was always a constant presence. For starters, her father had a food truck, while her aunts engaged in the business of food catering. Still her positions as executive chef comes with other responsibilities that go beyond making new dishes. Especially for someone in Chef Rivera’s position, where she oversees all culinary offers at the resort, ranging from restaurants to in-room dining.



Chef Natalia Rivera

"The great challenge for someone who is a chef is to be constantly learning, discovering new things, because the art of cuisine is always evolving and changing," said Chef Rivera. "I find that women chefs are very daring and open to new discoveries in the cuisine."

Meanwhile, in the seaside town of Fajardo, on the northeastern tip of the island, Chef Myrta Perez, heads one of Puerto Rico's most renowned restaurants, Pasion por el Fogon, whose name could be translated as "passion for the stove." But in this case, it refers to the traditional and rudimentary firewood cooking method of days past in Puerto Rico.

"It is definitely a passion," said Chef Myrta who opened the restaurant in 2001. The restaurant has become one of the most award-winning eateries in Puerto Rico. While by

her own admission Chef Myrta has lived quite the eclectic and interesting life, both personally and professionally, from being a former nun and an accountant.

"The key is consistency," said Chef Myrta. "You must have consistency in everything from the quality of service, the professionalism of your staff, to the quality of the products you use, while always coming up with new dishes."

Chef Myrta went on to stress that besides consistency, coming up with new dishes is very important in the success of a restaurant.

"The wheel has already been invented," said Chef Myrta, who has made Pasion por el Fogon famous for her stuffed fish and lobster dishes. "Then you not only have something new to offer clients, but it is also essential if



Chef Myrta Perez



Chef Marta Pascual

you have a loyal and captive clientele, like we do; you have to be able to offer a different experience so that they don't get bored."

In Puerto Rico, women chefs are not only making their mark in restaurants. Take private chef Marta Pascual, for example, she transports her culinary delights and experience to wherever the diners are.

Chef Pascual will cook up her dishes, in the case of visiting clients, wherever they are staying, and if they are locals, wherever their place of residence may be. While she had worked in restaurants in Rincon, the seaside town on the northwestern tip of Puerto Rico, she went on to open a food truck that made its name by serving hot dogs with a different twist. Then the pandemic happened and she had to close shop.

"I had to do something, and while I was apprehensive about it at first, I

decided to give being a private chef a try," said Chef Pascual. Her first clients were a tourist couple who were staying at a guest house in Rincon, and since then she has never looked back. "I truly love going to where my clients are and providing them with a special culinary experience, preparing meals and serving them, and even if they might ask for local dishes, I always aim at giving them a special twist to surprise them."

Meanwhile, Chef Nasha Fondeur, executive pastry chef at The Condado Collection and the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel, has been hitting the sweet spot to both tourists and locals alike.

Not what she expected when she arrived at La Concha Renaissance San Juan Resort back in 2008.

"I originally applied for a cleaning position, but they saw that my resume included experience in cake

decoration and suggested that I join the team in the kitchen and give it a try," said Chef Fondeur, who oversees all things pastry, from room service at the properties' restaurants to special events and banquets. "Now I can't truly see myself doing anything else!"

Chef Fondeur explained that while she might be the executive chef when it comes to pastries, she is backed by what she calls a first-rate team.

"It's been a great journey and now I am committed to pay it forward by teaching and delegating the people in my team, because I don't do this by myself and I want them to be as good or even better than me," said Chef Fondeur.

The creation of the pastry offerings is seasonal, according to Chef Fondeur, and is a blend of mixing trends at an international level, with local ingredients such as the tropical fruits that grow in Puerto Rico.

"Pastry is like fashion, there is always new techniques and dishes," said Chef Fondeur, adding that Europe is at the vanguard of pastry innovation. "Then it is about how to incorporate and build on those trends at a local level, make something new and creative, never copying but being inspired and always innovating."

Chef Fondeur said that pastry runs in the family, and cited that the banana cake recipe she learned from her great-grandmother as a little girl is still used at Restaurant 1919, at the Condado Vanderbilt. As for herself, Chef Fondeur said she is classic when it comes to her favorite pastry or dessert.

"A tiramisu or a good ice cream does it for me," said Fondeur.

For Chef Maria Franco, proprietor of La Cocina de Maria Franco, by the age of nine she was already cooking.

"When I was nine, I used to sneak and grab rice and beans and cook them myself," said Chef Franco, whose restaurant offers original dishes that reflect fusion of Spanish and international cuisines. "We might add a local, creole touch, but my aim is to give diners a culinary experience that they think they might have only in Europe, but right here in Puerto Rico."

This experience, said Chef Franco, involve both creativity in the dishes developed for the menu, as well as using only top ingredients and products. For example, in the case of fish, the restaurant works with distributing companies that bring the best catch from places such as Spain, Greece, Japan and the United States. Also, a



Chef Nasha Fondeur



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CULINARY GUSTO



Chef Maria Franco

key ingredient for the success at La Cocina de Maria Franco is the hands-on approach of Chef Franco, not only in the makings of dishes, but also on the experience of diners.

"I never stay always in the kitchen," said Chef Franco. "I go out on the floor and talk to the clients to make sure they are having a great experience. For me that personal touch is always essential."

When it comes to accomplished women chefs in Puerto Rico Marisoll Hernandez is on that list. Chef Marisoll was the first female to be appointed a hotel Executive Chef in Puerto Rico back in 1991 when she worked at the Condado Plaza.

She was also a finalist in the 2024 James Beard Awards in the Best Chef:

Caribbean category which marked a significant recognition of her culinary talent and the Puerto Rican culinary scene.

But this recognition with the James Beard organization was not her first, she also was invited in 2011 by the James Beard Foundation in New York alongside 24 worldwide culinary master chefs to cook at The Ultimate Melting Pot Gala at Lincoln Center.

"I create original and innovative menus that make something ordinary extraordinary," said Chef Marisoll, who currently runs Chef Marisoll Catering since 2007 that specializes in private and corporate events. "My culinary creations are unique and influenced by seasonal produce and complex flavors." 



Chef Marisoll Hernandez

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San Juan Cruise Port:

Reimagining Puerto Rico's Gateway to the Caribbean

Strategic Investment Aligns with a Surge in Cruise Tourism Growth

In the heart of the Caribbean, Puerto Rico is reclaiming its place as the region's premier cruise destination. Leading this resurgence is San Juan Cruise Port (SJCP), now operating under the leadership of Global Ports Holding (GPH), the world's largest cruise port operator.

In just one year, SJCP has begun transforming the port passenger experience by modernizing

infrastructure, enhancing passenger services, and laying the foundation for long-term economic growth. The timing is no coincidence—cruise tourism is rebounding, and this strategic transformation positions Puerto Rico to seize the opportunity.

A Growing Economic Engine

Cruise tourism already generates an estimated \$140 million annually for Puerto Rico, through

spending by transit passengers, homeport guests, and crew. In 2024, the port welcomed 1.4 million passengers; that number is expected to rise to 1.7 million in 2025.

As passenger volumes grow, so does economic activity—from local retail and transport to dining and shore excursions. Construction of two new berths and a state-of-the-art homeport terminal at Piers

11 and 12 are also anticipated as project targets are achieved. This phase will be instrumental in scaling San Juan's capacity for growth.

Over the course of the 30-year concession, cruise volumes are projected to exceed 5 million passengers annually—nearly triple pre-pandemic figures. The port's transformation is both timely and necessary to meet this demand.



Building a World-Class Port

Phase One of the Capital Improvement Program is in progress. This includes structural upgrades at Pan American Piers I and II, repairs at Pier 4, and improved pedestrian infrastructure for enhanced flow and accessibility. Below the surface, vital marine works are being completed

to ensure long-term safety, functionality, and readiness for today's larger vessels.

These investments aren't just about capacity—they're about resilience, operational efficiency, and improving every stage of the passenger journey. Once Piers 11 and 12 are added,

San Juan will be even more competitive as a homeport, with increased opportunities for extended stays, hotel bookings, and airline traffic.

A Global Network with Local Impact

As part of GPH's network of 33 ports in 21 countries, SJCP benefits

from global systems, standards, and marketing reach. These tools help deliver a seamless cruise experience while empowering local staff with enhanced training and best practices.

This synergy of local insight and global scale ensures San Juan isn't simply keeping up—it's leading regional innovation in the cruise sector.

San Juan offers a unique value proposition:
a U.S. destination with strong airlift, rich culture,
and an urban core just steps from the pier.

Economic Ripple Effects Across the Island

Port revitalization translates to broader economic uplift. Increased ship calls bring more business to Old San Juan merchants, local artisans, tour operators, and transportation providers. The impact radiates far beyond the harbor.

SJCP is committed to building inclusive partnerships with government agencies, tourism entities, and local businesses. The goal is a more integrated, sustainable tourism ecosystem—one that drives year-round benefits, honors Puerto Rico's heritage, and safeguards its future.

An Unmatched Competitive Edge

San Juan offers a unique value proposition: a U.S. destination with strong airlift, rich culture, and an urban core just steps from the pier. Add in the natural beauty of the island—from rainforests to beaches—and Puerto Rico emerges as both an ideal homeport and a compelling cruise destination.

Charting the Course Forward

San Juan Cruise Port's revitalization is more than an infrastructure upgrade—it's a bold investment in Puerto Rico's long-term growth. As the ships come in and the port welcomes the world, San Juan is ready—not just to receive visitors, but to lead the next chapter of Caribbean cruise tourism. 



The Mall of San Juan:

Puerto Rico's Premier Destination for Luxury Jewelry



Lido Jewelers showcase unique pieces from globally renowned designers.

A World-Class Collection of Iconic Brands and Timeless Craftsmanship

By MARGA PARES ARROYO

Imagine gathering a select group of world renowned jewelry houses, some of the most iconic names in fine jewelry, under one elegant roof. A destination where elegance meets legacy, and every piece tells a story. Look no more. The Mall of San Juan is the place, a sophisticated space that offers a one of a kind experience for those seeking the world's most exquisite fine jewelry. This luxury shopping destination brings together the most iconic names, a showcase of exceptional jewelry collections.

This retail haven is the epicenter of beautifully crafted jewelry pieces that will transcend trends and seasons, becoming treasured heirlooms. A place where every visitor feels at home, while discovering a curated selection of unique timeless adornments for every occasion. Whether you're drawn to simplicity or bold statement designs, each collection



At the Mall of San Juan, Cartier offers a variety of exclusive collections.

reflects individual taste, all with the signature touch that only a space devoted to exclusive jewelry can offer.

Blending global prestige with local excellence, The Mall of San Juan brings together an exceptional mix of fine jewelry brands. International icons like Cartier, OMEGA, Pandora, Tiffany & Co., Tous and Bvlgari

share the spotlight with Puerto Rico's own celebrated jewelers -BARED, Lido, and Letrán-whose impeccable craftsmanship and trusted reputations have stood the test of time. These local names also feature exclusive pieces by world-renowned designers, offering visitors a truly refined and diverse shopping experience. With pieces to suit a variety of

tastes and budgets, this high-end destination stands out for its diverse offerings and renowned brands, delivered in a luxurious setting with personalized, expert service.

Let's take a closer look at what these renowned jewelry houses offer to discerning shoppers who embark on the journey of finding the perfect piece, whether to elevate their own collection or to gift something truly special, unique, and full of character. Along the way, we'll also explore a bit of the history behind each brand, celebrating the legacy and artistry that define these iconic names in fine jewelry.

Cartier's Panther finds a new home

This prestigious jeweler opened its location in the Mall of San Juan this past October, bringing elegance and craftsmanship to a 250-square-foot space. There, the refined and

enduring style of this exquisite line blends seamlessly with the island's rich cultural and historical heritage.

A work of art featuring Cartier's Panthère emerging from a garita and strolling along one of Old San Juan's historic fortification walls serves as one of the visual highlights of the boutique. The cotorra, coquí, flor de maga and flamboyán are also showcased in this piece, created by French artist Cédric Peletier, who since 2021 has been designing monumental paintings for Cartier, retracing the Odyssey of the Panther for various of their boutiques across the globe. The panther is Cartier's emblematic animal, representing elegance untamed since its first appearance in 1914.

Beautifully designed, this boutique honors the natural beauty of Puerto Rico. Its vibrant flora, stunning beaches and historical charm are reflected throughout a space that celebrates the island's allure. The luxurious VIP lounge draws inspiration in the impressive El Yunque, offering a serene and elevated escape. The island's history is emphasized, with a wooden floor designed to recall the iconic cobblestone streets of Old San Juan. In addition to a setting that creatively reveals its exquisite pieces, it features an elegant bridal area where those ready to take the next step and formalize their commitment can find the jewelry that will symbolize their eternal bond.

Founded in 1847 by Parisian watchmaker Louis-François Cartier, this renowned brand continues to build on its rich legacy, leaving its mark with each boutique it opens around the world. Every new location offers more individuals the opportunity to experience and acquire its signature creations—pieces that are as refined, distinctive, and timeless as the Maison itself.

At the Mall of San Juan, Cartier offers a variety of exclusive collections, such as Grain de Café, along with personalized services that will make your experience in the store one-of-a-kind.



Bared Jewelers provides an unparalleled experience blending tradition with exclusivity.

A Legacy of Excellence: Bared Jewelers

With roots tracing back to 1880 in Cuba, the Bared family's journey in fine jewelry is built across four generations of expertise, passion, and commitment to craftsmanship. For over thirty years, Jorge Bared has led this legacy in Puerto Rico, being recognized as one of the island's most trusted and refined jewelers.

At The Mall of San Juan, Bared Jewelers continues to elevate its heritage, offering clients an unparalleled experience that blends tradition with exclusivity. This strategic move was, as they say, "the cherry on top" since they considered it to be the perfect next step in strengthening their enduring presence in the island.

At the heart of this jewelry emporium is D'Collection, a line of exclusive, Italian-crafted jewels designed especially for the brand. Every piece, 14k or 18k gold, is embellished with brilliant diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds or semi-precious stones. And they proudly affirm that the selection reflects Jorge Bared's refined taste and eye for timeless design.

Unlike designer-driven boutiques, Bared assures that they curate its selection with intention. International names like Chimento, Veneroso, Doves by Paloma, and Stella Milano are chosen not simply for their prestige, but for their alignment with the store's elegant aesthetic and commitment to quality. For men, BARAKA stands out as a leader in refined jewelry and accessories, exclusively represented by Bared in Puerto Rico.

The boutique also features a thoughtfully crafted selection of timepieces from respected Swiss and international brands, including Baume & Mercier, Longines, Rado, Raymond Weil, Michele, Tissot, Bulova, Charriol, and Maurice Lacroix.

What they believe truly sets Bared apart is the loyalty and trust this famous jeweler has cultivated across generations. With 95% of its clientele being local, many customers have grown up with Bared as a household name, a symbol of taste, elegance, and outstanding service. Visitors from abroad often find their way to Bared thanks to past experiences at the luxury hotels the brand once partnered with. Whether locals or travelers, clients seem to be drawn by the boutique's handpicked selection and legacy of excellence.



Tiffany focuses on connecting with younger generations.



More than a store, Bared Jewelers confidently claims to be a testament to heritage, artistry, and devotion to personalized service. In a world of global luxury brands, Bared stands out as a proudly Puerto Rican jeweler with a story deeply rooted in loyalty, tradition, and timeless elegance.

Tiffany: Jewels that speak the language of love

Charles Lewis Tiffany opened the doors to the world of luxury in 1837. Now, this brand stands out by its craftsmanship, commitment, and quality. "Love has been a driving force since our founding, and we carry a legacy of creating symbols that represent it," the brand affirms.

At The Mall of San Juan, Tiffany & Co. blends fine jewelry with elevated service and elegance.

"Every client is unique, and every visit is a chance to discover new dimensions of love," the team explains. Their inspiration stems from all forms of love: romantic, familial, platonic, self-love, even for places and memories. "Each visit becomes a meaningful experience, whether it's for a grand celebration or a moment of inspiration", they add.

Their ICONS collection is a favorite, with Tiffany Lock (enduring



protection); Tiffany HardWear (transformative power of love); Tiffany T (infinite potential) and Tiffany Knot (unbreakable bonds). Each also reflects the vibrant spirit and architecture of New York City. Tiffany & Co. works primarily with yellow gold, white gold, rose gold, and diamonds. "Our artisans refine their skills for months—often years—to reach the level of excellence required to bring each design to life. This dedication, paired with the quality of our diamonds and the heritage of our designers, is what sets us apart on the global stage," they explain.

One of the newest additions to their universe is Tiffany Titan by Pharrell Williams, which adds a bold artistic flair, introducing freshwater and Tahitian pearls.

Jean Schlumberger, Elsa Peretti, and Paloma Picasso are behind Tiffany's design legacy.

The Tiffany client, they say, doesn't fit one mold, and that makes the brand special. "We welcome everyone, regardless of their journey or life stage. There's a piece and a collection for every person," they add. This inclusive approach, with Tiffany's emotional connection to love and quality design, is what draws clients loyalty, they assure.

Tiffany focuses now on connecting with younger generations, embracing new ways to celebrate and express love. A notable trend among today's clients is stacking or layering bracelets or necklaces to create personalized expressions of style.

They recognize their presence at The Mall of San Juan, alongside other icons of fine jewelry, creates an enriching and luxurious environment for shoppers. "Each brand brings its own vision and craftsmanship, allowing clients to explore different



aesthetics in one elevated setting. For the brands, it's an opportunity to shine in a refined space and enhance the collective luxury experience," they shared.

Redefining Fine Jewelry: Lido's Global Collection

Born from a deep passion for fine jewelry and a desire to offer exclusive pieces from top international designers, Lido Jewelers has become a destination for those seeking elegance, originality, and craftsmanship. At the Mall of San Juan, they embrace a more personalized shopping experience, with a refined selection of luxury brands and innovative designs under one roof.

They showcase unique pieces from globally renowned designers, including Antonini, Mattioli, and Ippolita (Italy); SHY Creation and Campbell + Charlotte (United States); and modern, minimalist creators such as RainbowK and RedLine (Paris). Collections by Mattia Cielo and Giovanni Ferraris introduce cutting-edge sophistication, while EvaNueva infuses every piece with distinctive identity and flair.

Their jewelry spans a range of tones in gold, set with diamonds and vibrant gemstones. Designers like Terzihan and ARA Collection (Turkey) work on masterful hammered gold techniques and bold use of color.

Meanwhile, Michael Good and TYPE (U.S.) offer sculptural, contemporary takes on precious metals.

"Each designer brings their own vision and technique," the team shares. For instance, Mattioli is known for intricate enamel work, while Mattia Cielo fuses Italian tradition with advanced technology for flexible, wearable pieces. And Eden Presley stands out for its handmade, customizable jewelry, with an artistic edge.

Among the boutique's collections, Antonini is noted for its refined elegance, and SHY Creation luxury with a modern twist. Recent additions like J.J. Milano follow contemporary Italian style, while Siena offers versatility and quiet sophistication.

"Our clients are drawn to exclusive pieces, whether for a special event or everyday elegance. They value quality, intentional design, and personalized service, and appreciate discovering brands rarely seen elsewhere," they explain proudly.

Looking ahead, Lido aims to continue attracting clients searching one-of-a-kind creations. The delicate red-thread-and-diamond designs from RedLine, for example, are popular among younger clients seeking understated luxury.

Minimalist yet refined collections like RainbowK, personalized designs by Eden Presley, and architecturally inspired pieces from Mattia Cielo are among the top trends. Puerto Rican women, meanwhile, often gravitate toward bold rings and delicate necklaces.

While local clientele forms a strong base, international visitors seek out exclusive pieces unavailable in their countries. "They come looking for quality, rarity, and pieces with a story behind them," the team explains.



Pandora aims to attract consumers who value accessible luxury.



At The Mall of San Juan, customers can enjoy the convenience of comparing and experiencing highend products in one location.

Their presence at The Mall of San Juan allows customers to explore first hand a range of luxury jewelers in one elegant setting. "For us, it's the perfect stage to showcase our curated selection to a wider audience that appreciates craftsmanship and elevated design," they conclude.

Pandora's Personalized Elegance

With a strong presence in the Caribbean, the Pandora franchise (operated by The Borchardt Group) has become a symbol of lasting elegance and meaningful craftsmanship. This year, the brand celebrates the tenth anniversary of its store at The Mall of San Juan, under a mission to provide a personalized and memorable shopping experience in a welcoming environment. Each visitor is invited to discover jewelry that tells a unique story, with the essence of their personal style and life's most meaningful moments. The brand stresses on the concept of personalization, with charms, bracelets, and rings that help reflect individual journeys and emotional milestones.

Pandora's collections are rooted in four pillars: love, nature, emotional connection, and self-expression. With every design, customers can express their personal style and cherished memories through jewelry.

Their creations are crafted from premium materials, including 925 sterling silver, 14k and 18k gold, Pandora Rose™ (a unique blend of metals with a rose gold finish), Pandora Shine™ (18k gold-plated silver), and lab-grown diamonds.

With hand-applied enamel, intricate engravings, and precision stone settings, the modular design concept allows each accessory to be personalized to reflect the wearer's journey. Among their most iconic lines are: Pandora Moments (signature line of customizable charms and bracelets),

Pandora ME (bold and expressive collection for younger audiences), Diamonds by Pandora (elegant, lab-grown diamonds for luxury consumers) and Disney x Pandora (pieces inspired by Disney characters and stories). Their latest addition, the Pandora Essence Collection, embraces minimalist forms and refined materials.



All collections are designed by Pandora's in-house creative team in Copenhagen, Denmark. Their customers, meanwhile, continue to seek jewelry with meaning—pieces that capture emotions, celebrate memories, and reflect their individuality.

Looking ahead, the franchise aims to attract a new generation of consumers who value accessible luxury. Popular trends include necklace and bracelet layering for a personalized look, as well as stackable rings that offer versatility with a minimalist touch. Men, on the other hand, lean toward leather bracelets, silver chains, and subtly detailed rings. Beyond the island, their store at The Mall of San Juan welcomes visitors from the United States, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Mexico, and other parts of the Caribbean.

"Customers are looking for exclusive designs, culturally inspired charms, access to the latest collections, and gift-ready packaging," the team shared. Being the Mall of San Juan a fine jewelry destination, offers the convenience of finding so many options in one place. "For brands, it

creates a competitive environment that drives innovation, exceptional customer service, and excellence in design," they highlighted.

Eight years of Tous magic

Founded in Spain in 1920, TOUS has been present in Puerto Rico since 2000. Its boutique at The Mall of San Juan opened in May 2017 and this May they celebrate eight years of bringing its signature blend of elegance and creativity to local clientele and visitors from around the world.

With over 700 locations across more than 40 countries, TOUS stands as a global leader in jewelry design—but only a select number of boutiques carry the exclusive Atelier Collection, and San Juan is among them. This prestigious high-jewelry line, crafted in 18K gold, titanium, and platinum, was created by TOUS Creative Director Rosa Oriol. The collection reflects the brand's philosophy of accessible luxury, with each creation backed by a two-year warranty and lifetime repair service—underscoring TOUS' commitment to quality and care.

Nature serves as the primary inspiration behind TOUS collections, brought to life using premium materials such as 925 sterling silver, 18K gold, and gold-plated silver. The Spanish-rooted brand is also recognized for its distinctive craftsmanship, employing specialized techniques like electroforming, which allows for lightweight, voluminous designs with minimal soldering, and micro-casting, a process that uses wax molds and molten metals to create highly detailed pieces in gold and silver.

Two standout offerings in Puerto Rico include the Bold Bear Collection—a contemporary, three-dimensional take on TOUS' iconic teddy bear—and a series of exclusive local designs inspired by the island's natural beauty, featuring motifs like the

Flor de Maga, El Yunque, and the Yagrumo tree.

The brand's latest release, Daisy, part of the TOUS Garden Collection, celebrates botanical themes with bold silhouettes, two-tone finishes, and the inclusion of pearls, one of the brand's most beloved gemstones. These versatile pieces are ideal for everyday wear—something increasingly sought after by TOUS customers.

Designed in Spain, TOUS jewelry appeals to women aged 25 to 55 who view jewelry as an expression of identity and a gift to themselves. The brand also aims to engage younger audiences with fresh, wearable designs. Puerto Rican clients favor pieces that transition easily from work to social settings, while men typically lean toward bracelets, watches, and TOUS fragrances. The San Juan boutique also attracts international shoppers, including visitors from Saudi Arabia, who show particular interest in TOUS' signature crossbody handbags.

"For jewelry lovers, The Mall of San Juan offers the luxury of variety, all under one roof," the TOUS team notes.



OMEGA: Precision in time

Omega's distinguished legacy dates back to 1848. Founded by

Louis Brandt in Biel/Bienne, Switzerland, this luxury brand has become a global icon of watchmaking, known for its precision, innovation, and timeless design. With over 175 years of heritage, this high end line has been at the forefront of horological achievement—from being the first watch on the moon to serving as the official timekeeper of the Olympic Games.

Since 2017, the Omega boutique at The Mall of San Juan has brought that legacy to Puerto Rico, offering a refined, immersive shopping experience for both local enthusiasts and international visitors. Designed to reflect the elegance of the brand itself, the boutique offers exclusive access to Omega's rich history, technical innovation, and personalized customer service.

Omega's timepieces are the result of Swiss watchmaking excellence, blending traditional craftsmanship with cutting-edge technology. The brand uses only the finest materials—18K gold, stainless steel, titanium, ceramic, and sapphire crystal—to create watches that are as durable as sophisticated. Proprietary innovations like Sedna™ Gold, a unique rose gold alloy, and Ceragold™, which fuses gold into ceramic, give certain models an exclusive finish.

A signature feature of Omega's innovation is the Co-Axial escapement, a revolutionary technology that enhances accuracy and longevity by reducing friction. This patented mechanism is a standout element that distinguishes Omega from other luxury brands.

Among its legendary collections stands out the Speedmaster, known as the "Moonwatch," famously worn during NASA's Apollo missions. The Seamaster is also greatly admired for its maritime heritage and cinematic ties to James Bond. And the

Constellation is recognized for its timeless beauty and uncompromising precision.

Recent introductions, such as the Seamaster Diver 300M with a ceramic bezel and the Speedmaster Super Racing, highlight Omega's commitment to combining performance with elegant design.

Omega clients are individuals who value craftsmanship, heritage, and authenticity. In Puerto Rico, men often gravitate toward bold, sport-inspired models, while women are drawn to the grace and precision of the Constellation collection. The boutique also attracts international shoppers. Many looking for limited edition or special collections, not easily found elsewhere.

At The Mall of San Juan, customers can enjoy the convenience of comparing and experiencing high-end products in one location, the Omega's team stated.

"For brands, it provides increased visibility and the opportunity to connect with a diverse and affluent clientele", they added.

The Luxury Jewelry Experience Continues

The fine jewelry offerings at The Mall of San Juan continue to expand with brilliance and distinction. Bvlgari and Letrán Joyeros are also high-end retailers enriching its exclusive portfolio. Founded in Rome in 1884, Bvlgari is a global icon of Italian excellence, celebrated as the master of colored gemstones and renowned for its bold, sophisticated creations.

Letrán Joyeros, a family-owned business established in 1963 on Fortaleza Street in Old San Juan, blends tradition and glamour, offering

exceptional customer service and a curated selection of exquisite jewelry.

Joining the mall's luxury roster soon are Little Switzerland, a premier retailer of high-end timepieces and fine accessories, and TAG Heuer, the iconic Swiss watchmaker known for its precision and performance.

With this dynamic mix of prestigious brands, The Mall of San Juan has solidified its position as Puerto Rico's ultimate destination for luxury jewelry—a

650,000-square-foot oasis where world-class craftsmanship meets unparalleled variety. From timeless classics to modern statements, this curated selection offers something for every taste and occasion, paired with personalized service that elevates every purchase into a meaningful experience. 

Bvlgari is renowned for its bold and sophisticated creations.



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Talla de santos, tradition in every cut

A look at the history, tradition, and
spirit behind one of Puerto Rico's
most emblematic folk arts

By MARGA PARES ARROYO



*Tattooed
Christs are
among the
most popular
pieces.*

The "talla de santos" is one of the main expressions of Puerto Rican art. It dates back to the colonial era, when Spanish colonizers introduced religious imagery to Borikén. According to history, since there were few churches and located far from the people living in the interior of the island, home altars with religious images carved in wood began to emerge.

The religious sculptures and images that arrived in Puerto Rico during the evangelization period served as inspiration for this artistic tradition. At first, it developed as a rustic craft, but over time, the craftsmanship and detail carved by the artisans into their pieces gained value—eventually being recognized today as a national symbol.

"It was around the 1500's when the story of the santos began. The

Jesuits (religious order of clerics) were the most scholarly people. They founded schools and were the ones who brought them. But unlike in Spain, Puerto Rico does not have large wooden saints in churches. Instead, it has small household santos, used in home worship, usually measuring just seven to eight inches", said Ibsen Peralta, one of the most renowned talladores de santos in Puerto Rico.

At that time, he said, the roads to the churches were remote, the routes were in poor condition, and people often walked barefoot, and felt ashamed to attend church that way. So the handcrafted figures began to emerge, as santeros sold their works throughout the island for use in home worship.

San Antonio, San Francisco, San Jose, San Juan Nepomuceno and San Ramon Nonato are some of

the devotional saints that, since that time, have been represented in artistically carved wooden figures. Also, the Virgen de Monserrate — considered by many the true patroness of Puerto Rico, although, according to history, the Virgen de la Providencia was later established as the island's official patroness.

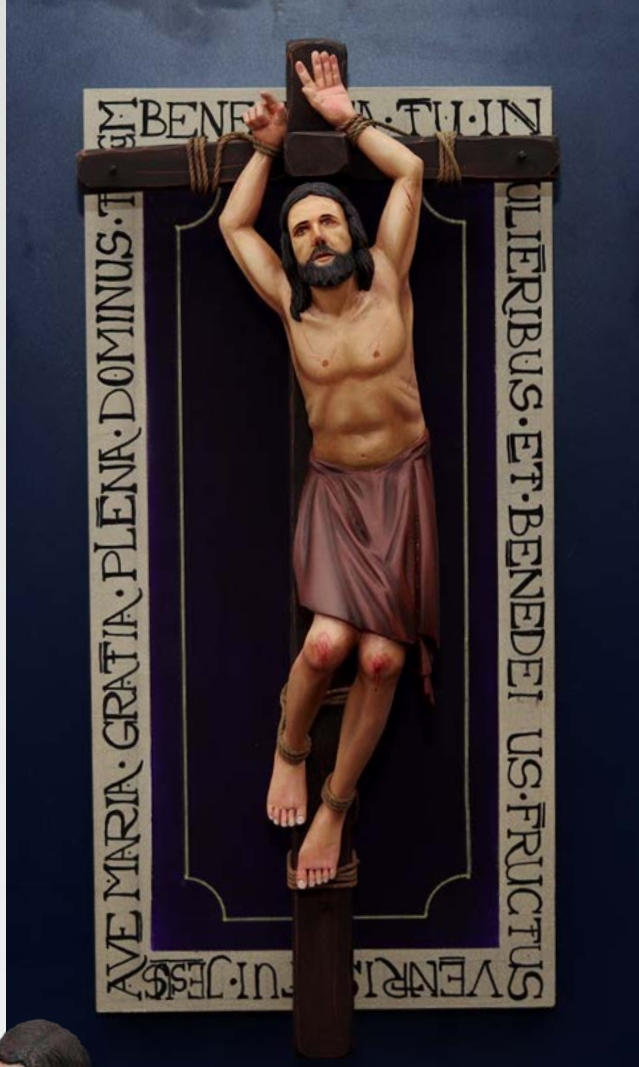
"There was an apparition of the Virgen de Monserrate in Hormigueros. In the chapel there, they have a silver frame made from melted ex-votos or religious offerings from people asking for miracles. For example, someone with arthritis



might offer a representation of a small hand, or crutches if they were unable to walk", explained Peralta.

"The (talla de) santos were carved by local artisans. Cedar was used, as it's a softer wood. They would look at what was brought from Spain and try to replicate it", he added.

As he recalls, around the 1950s, Puerto Rico became industrialized and society began to change, with more professionals emerging. People started to forget about the little santitos, as plaster saint figures began to arrive and were being blessed by priests. It was also around



time that the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP) was established.

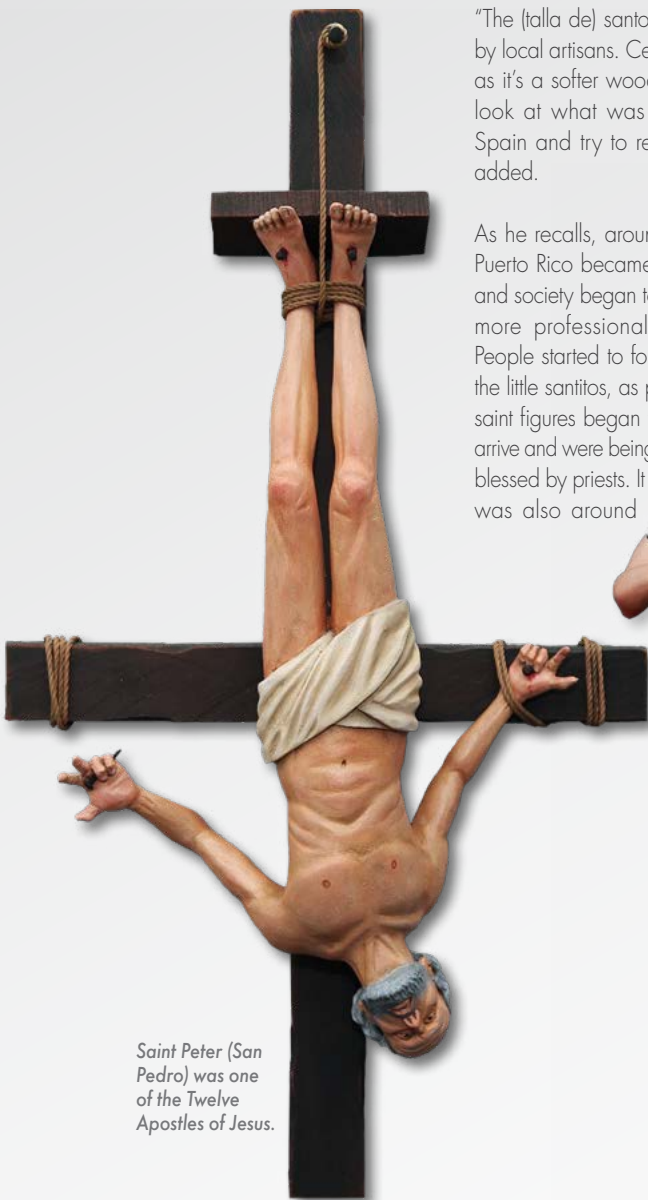
Lorenzo Homar (1913-2004), Rafael Tufiño (1922-2008) and Jack Delano (1914-1997).

With Luis Muñoz Marín as governor, and Ricardo Alegria and Teodoro Vidal on the board of the Institute, efforts began to promote the rescue and preservation of Puerto Rico's artistic legacy — including the tradition of talla de santos. Alegria, he recalls, used to say that the culture was going to be lost, everything, even how to make a güiro. And the ICP was created with other important figures, such as

"There were only four or five talladores de santos left, and Ricardo Alegria began to promote and encourage the tradition. And the numbers began to grow. Today, there may be around 150", Peralta stated.

Peralta explains that there is no formal school in Puerto Rico where talla de santos is taught, but if you're interested and motivated, all you have to say is, "I want to learn."

The Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company (PRIDCO) has a craft development division that connects interested individuals with a master artisan, depending on where they live. The artisan is supposed to be paid for the teaching workshop.



Saint Peter (San Pedro) was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus.



"First, you get certified as an artisan, and then in the specific category you specialize in. After that, you're invited to fairs and added to a talent registry. From there, it's all about selling the pieces you create", he said.

Peralta also shared that the ICP is responsible for supporting and promoting artisans. Meanwhile, many people seek out this type of art directly at exhibitions or businesses that showcase it. And although there is a registry of workshops, the actual number of active ones remains uncertain.

Antonio Aviles, he says, is one of the leading figures in talla de santos, having learned the craft from his father, Don Celestino Aviles. And as a master in this art, Antonio has even offered courses at the Taller de Bellos Oficios at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus. Meanwhile, his father is credited with reviving this art form during the 1980's. Don Celestino created the Encuentro Nacional de Santeros, a festival held in Orocovis that brings together woodcarving artisans from across the island, more than 100. Today, the municipality of Orocovis is the driving force that keeps this historic festival alive.

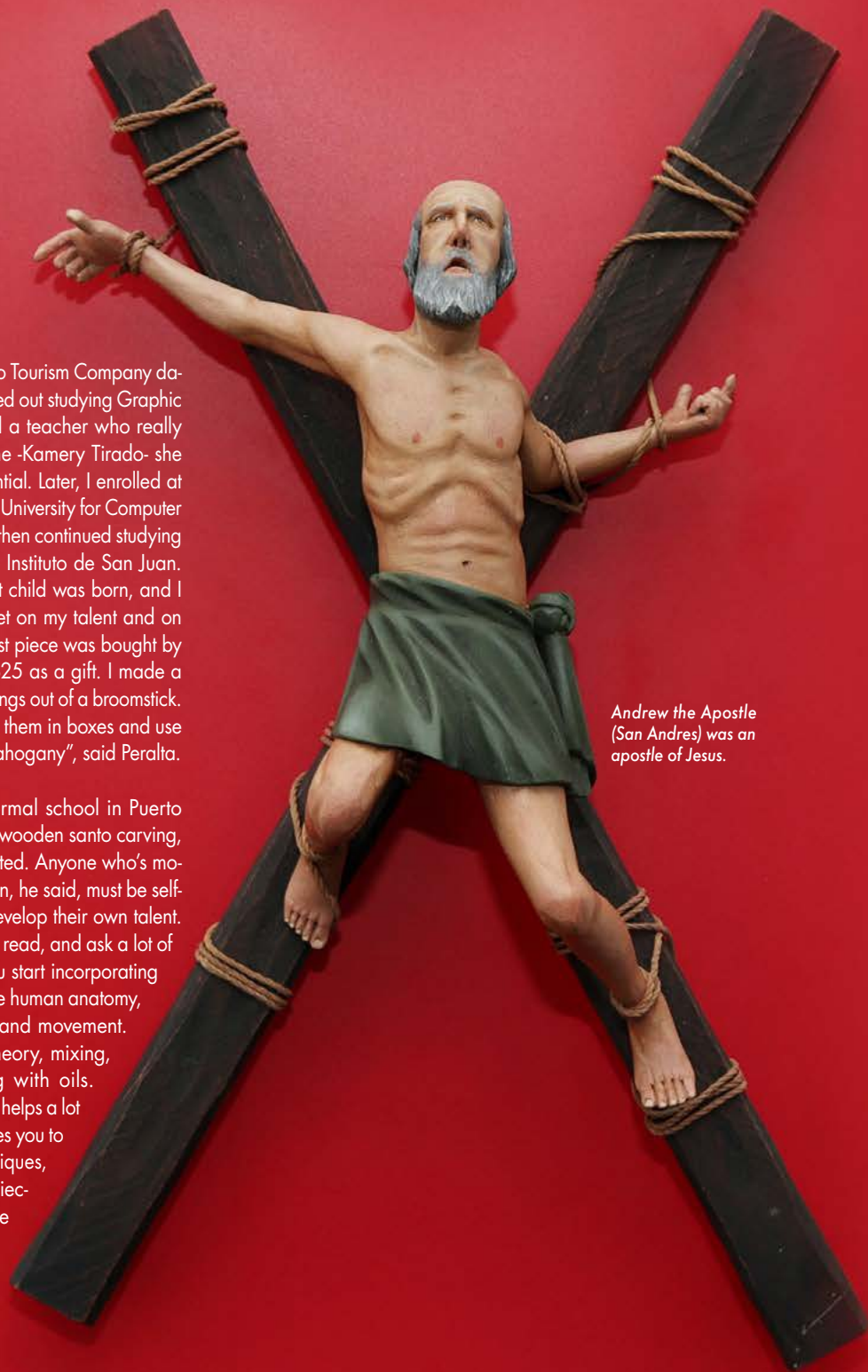
Meanwhile, the private sector and shopping centers like Plaza Las Americas and San Patricio Plaza continue to support and sponsor talla de santos exhibitions. For years, Casa Bacardi stood out for organizing a craft fair that was considered the Olympics for carvers and lovers of this art form.

Peralta was invited to participate several times in this event, even being honored as Artisan of the Year.

"In my case, I got certified through PRIDCO, in the Department of Artisan Development, and also through the Instituto de Cultura. I'm also in

the Puerto Rico Tourism Company database. I started out studying Graphic Design. I had a teacher who really believed in me -Kamery Tirado- she saw my potential. Later, I enrolled at Interamerican University for Computer Science, and then continued studying Design at the Instituto de San Juan. At 21, my first child was born, and I decided to bet on my talent and on myself. My first piece was bought by my aunt for \$25 as a gift. I made a set of Three Kings out of a broomstick. Now I deliver them in boxes and use cedar and mahogany", said Peralta.

There's no formal school in Puerto Rico to teach wooden santo carving, Peralta lamented. Anyone who's motivated to learn, he said, must be self-taught and develop their own talent. You research, read, and ask a lot of questions. You start incorporating techniques like human anatomy, proportions, and movement. Also, color theory, mixing, and working with oils. Traveling also helps a lot since it exposes you to different techniques, colors, and pieces. And above all: ask, ask, ask.



Andrew the Apostle (San Andres) was an apostle of Jesus.

Ibsen Peralta got certified through PRIDCO, in the Department of Artisan Development, and also through the Instituto de Cultura.

"I take custom orders, but I don't have much time. I usually focus on creating the pieces and then exhibiting them. Here in Puerto Rico, people love art and consume it a lot. The talla de santos are mostly purchased by Puerto Rican collectors — it's an emotional connection.

The best-selling figures are the Reyes Magos and the Virgen de Monserrate. For Puerto Ricans living abroad, the figure of the Reyes Magos represents their homeland. It's a symbol of resistance", he explained.

The religious aspect is deeply rooted in this type of art, he emphasized. Some, like himself, also explore other areas — such as a recent piece he created of a Christ figure painted in colorful patterns.

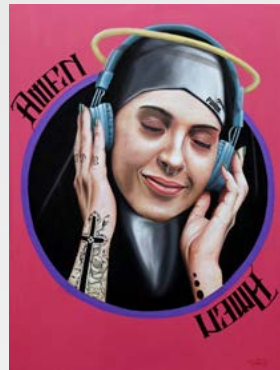
"I like to break away from the typical. Recently, I made some tattooed Christs, and they've been among the most popular (of my pieces)" he said.

"I use cedar. Others use different types of fine woods. Cedar's grain helps with carving — it cuts more smoothly. It's the preferred wood to work with. Its price has gone up. You get it at sawmills, and it has to be cut during a specific moon phase. It's a whole process, a science, so the piece lasts a lifetime and doesn't get damaged by woodworms", he added.

The prices of these pieces range



The Monk.

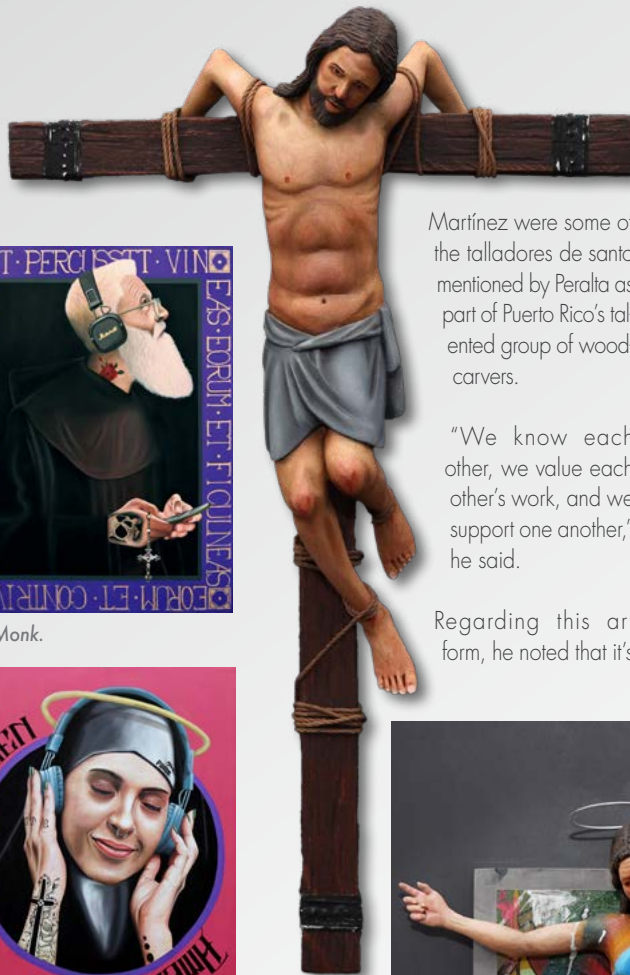


The Nun.

from \$60 to \$15,000, depending on the artist. Some people buy them to collect, others out of devotion, he noted.

His second and most recent exhibition is titled *Cruciatos*, and it was shown at the San Patricio Gallery between April and May.

Eric Saunders Malave, Jesus and Emmanuel Nieves Dorta, Xavier Colon, Los Millan and Felix



Martínez were some of the talladores de santo mentioned by Peralta as part of Puerto Rico's talented group of wood-carvers.

"We know each other, we value each other's work, and we support one another," he said.

Regarding this art form, he noted that it's

currently experiencing a rise in popularity, especially among older adults who are now retired from their jobs.

"The talla de santos is one of the artistic expressions that most strongly defines us. That's why, if you want to buy something truly Puerto Rican, it should be a carved piece, especially the Reyes Magos. It's a good purchase, you're taking home a piece that represents who we are", he concluded. B



Graffiti Christ.



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ARECIBO

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INSIDE LA ISLA



Arecibo Lighthouse

By ANGEL JOSE DE LEON

Arecibo, the beautiful Villa of Captain Correa, was known for its famous observatory since it was the world's largest radio telescope, a place of important discoveries and investigations as well as a Hollywood movie set.

The observatory attracted thousands of visitors annually but since

its collapse in December 2020, Arecibo lost what many believed was its only attraction. How wrong they were!

Today, Arecibo continues to be a favorite tourism destination for locals and tourists alike, due to its natural beauty like the *Cueva del Indio* situated in front of the grand sea or the *Cueva Ventana*, in the mountainous

region. Visitors are also attracted to the important sports events held in the town and above all, for its outstanding culinary routes and *chinchorroes* by the beach.

The coast of Arecibo is home to the annual world surfing tournament. Last year, surfers from 55 countries participated and this upcoming November it is expected to surpass

that number. Carlos Tito Ramirez, the mayor of Arecibo, convinced the Puerto Rico Surfing Federation to make it a municipal event. Ramirez understands that sports are fundamental in attracting visitors. Having said that, the municipality of Arecibo is moving towards repeating successful sports events like a beach tennis tournament and the International Championship of Paso Fino.

Also, the town will be hosting fishing tournaments such as the Blue Marlin (September 4-6) and the Sailfish (November 28-30). The Arecibo Nautical Club has been hosting the Blue Marlin tournament for the past 56 years and the Sailfish tournament for 46 years.

Another site with tradition in Arecibo is the iconic ice cream parlor Rex Cream situated on #113 Gonzalo Marin Street.

The record for catching the heaviest blue marlin exceeding 950 pounds in the Atlantic was established in Arecibo. Over 54 boats with more than 200 participants form part of this tournament that takes eight hours to trek the coast from Camuy to Barceloneta to try to land the largest fish to win a \$25,000 prize. During the evenings, the Arecibo Nautical Club opens its doors to the public with music, food, and festive ambiance.

Another site with tradition in Arecibo is the iconic ice cream parlor Rex Cream situated on #113 Gonzalo Marin Street. This parlor opened its doors in April 1964 and was the first Chinese ice cream shop in Arecibo, that rapidly became a favorite spot for residents to enjoy sweet flavors. Today the daughter of the original owners of Rex Cream



Cueva del Indio

continues the tradition elaborating delicious ice creams from natural fruits that have delighted generations for years.

From its location at town square.



Cueva Ventana



Visitors can opt for a cup, cone or shake and savor passionfruit, acerola, soursop, mango, guayaba, pineapple, pistachio or tamarind ice cream. Other flavors include the most solicited coconut, nougat, and corn with cinnamon. And can't be missed flavors are vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, coffee and during the holiday season *Coquito*, a Puerto Rican Christmas staple similar to eggnog. Obviously, a visit to Arecibo would not be complete without a taste of sweetness that you can only find at this specialty ice cream shop.

In the center of the town at #109 Gonzalo Marin Street is Arasibo Steakhouse, this elegant restaurant is known for its excellence and exceptional cuts of meat. It opens Wednesdays and Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays from noon to 10 p.m., and Sundays from noon to 9 p.m.



Arbore Gastrobar

Neighboring is La Panzeria on #156 San Felipe Street, a new venue that opened early this year with an outstanding wine list, Serralles rums and a place where visitors can savor la Panzetta, a pizza on Ciabatta bread with veggies and filet mignon. The restaurant is decorated with local art that is on sale and opens from Tuesday to Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Fridays from 11 a.m. to



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Whiskey lovers also have an intimate place at VV Bar and Restaurant in Arecibo to relish this thirst-quencher with lots of history. It's located at #307 De Diego Avenue and this warm and friendly venue houses over 300 labels from Ireland, Scotland, Japan, United States and other countries. Besides drinking whiskey and excellent cocktails, guests can enjoy Asian cuisine with Peruvian fusion. VV Bar and Restaurant opens Mondays through Saturdays from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Visitors can enjoy a culinary coastal journey full of flavor driving down from the town of Barceloneta on road PR 681 to Arecibo where there are infinite places to satisfy your palate from fresh fish to fried fritters such as *pastellitos*, corn fritters (*sorullitos*) or tapas.

One place is El Clandestino with its oceanfront terrace on Km. 13.8 and further down is Playa Brava on Km. 12.2 where guests can taste lionfish or other exquisite dishes. Following that same route, is the Colon statue on Km 9.8 and the *Cueva del Indio*.

In the area of the Arecibo Lighthouse is Islote Beach Restaurant, steps from the La Poza del Obispo beach and the Arecibo Lighthouse theme park.

The mood at night pulsates with the variety of establishments in La Puntilla sector, the oldest city in the area right next to the river mouth of Rio Grande

in Arecibo. There are more than 10 venues to host visitors with live music, trendy concoctions, and great food with stimulating fusions from appetizers like cod fish fritters, alcapurrias and stuffed mofongo. The bars and restaurants in the area are La Distileria, El Callejon del Beso, Amapola, Limón y Sal and Romeo, which specializes in Italian cuisine and creative cocktails. On the same street is La Buena Vida and Frida's Mexican restaurant.

Outside of the city of Arecibo on the way to the town of Lares there is a pleasant surprise called Arbore Gastrobar (road PR-129, Km. 6.3). This restaurant surrounded by greenery and mountains specializes in creative criollo cuisine with international fusion. Visitors can begin their meal with cod fish fritters and spicy crab as appetizers followed by rice and chicken in tempura batter of French toast with tomato chimichurri or possibly mofongo made from sweet bananas with skirt steak and shrimp in cream sauce.

At Arbore Gastrobar they prepare 12 varieties of mojitos (coconut, lavender, mango, melon among others). The restaurant opens Wednesday through Saturday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 8 p.m.

If you prefer a rooftop bar with ocean views then Black Mamba (#24 Maria Cadilla Street) is the place to go. With a 180 panoramic view, visitors can appreciate the Atlantic Ocean while enjoying Japanese-Peruvian-Criollo fusions.

This restaurant is owned by local basketball player Jonathan Rodríguez and it opens Wednesdays and Thursdays from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. and Sundays

from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m.

These places deserve a visit to fulfill your senses, not just with food and cocktails flavors, but ambiance and nature. 📍

Arecibo...

- Located in the north coast, about a 50-minute car ride from San Juan.
- With 26 square kilometers, it's the largest municipality in Puerto Rico.
- Founded in 1515. Became a city in 1616.
- The land was dominated by the Cacique Arasibo.
- Troops commanded by Captain Antonio Correa defended the city from a British attack in 1702.
- The cathedral San Felipe Apostol was constructed in 1787 and is the second largest in Puerto Rico, only overcome by the cathedral in San Juan.
- Oliver Theater, currently being remodeled, is an architectural jewel that was constructed in 1876. Antonio Paoli and Carlos Gardel performed there. It was one of the important hubs of theater along with Tapia Theater in San Juan and La Perla Theater in Ponce.
- The radio telescope of Arecibo was one of the largest in the world with the plate measuring 1,000 feet (305 m) in diameter.
- The Arecibo Captains men's basketball team have won eight BSN championships: 1959, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2016, 2018 and 2021.
- In Arecibo there's the Autocine Santana, the only drive in Puerto Rico (Rd. PR-662, kilometer 0.5).



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Freefall



to experience the thrill of your life

Your adrenaline adventure begins with skydiving in Puerto Rico

By ANGEL JOSE DE LEON

Explore Arecibo, enjoy its gorgeous scenery and savoring its bars and restaurants is entertaining but not all the fun of this coastal town is on land.

If you are looking for a dose of adrenaline rush that you can't feel in water sports activities, then you should include in your travel itinerary, skydiving.

The city of Arecibo can offer the opportunity to achieve that goal of the thrill of freefalling while hearing the roar and feeling the intense wind on your face and the acceleration of your heart beat while



seeing the beauty of the island with its green and blue hues of the ocean and mountains as you soar in the air.

SkyDive Puerto Rico is a skydiving school founded in 2016 and situated at the Antonio 'Nery' Juarbe regional airport (PR-2 km 69.5). From there your adventure begins.

You board a small Caravan plane that accommodates up to 14 passengers and you jump into the sky and land softly either on the airport runway or edge of the beach thanks to a parachute. You get to choose where to land!

Before you jump, the instructors give a talk, present a video, and answer questions. There are 10 instructors. The jumps are scheduled from Wednesdays to Sundays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and there are up to 20 daily flights. In fact, their record is catering to 100 clients a day.

At SkyDive they specialize in tandem skydive jumps, where you and another person share a parachute. The jump from 10,000 feet has a 30-second freefall while a jump from 14,000 feet has a freefall time of one minute. Those who dare to jump from 18,000 feet have a freefall time of a 1.5 minutes. Once the parachute opens, the soft descent lasts about six minutes and the most requested jump is from 14,000 feet.

There are few limitations. The person should be 18 years or older (there have been clients as old as 86 that

have jumped). You should not weigh more than 250 pounds, should not have undergone a recent surgery or have existing back problems. Otherwise, even paraplegic clients have jumped at SkyDive as well as marriage proposals have been celebrated and there have been nudist jumps. Everything is possible, just ask.

The price for a jump fluctuates between \$200 to \$600, depending on the height, location, as well as photo and video options elected.

According to Ernesto Diaz Zambrana, owner of SkyDive Puerto Rico, 30% of those clients who jump repeat the experience less than a year and 60% repeat on another occasion.

"For those who have their doubts on doing it, I highly recommend to jump. You will see it is an incredible



The Skydiving Castaway Festival will take place in February 2026.

experience. It will eliminate your fears and surpass expectations and goals," Diaz Zambrana said.

The Skydiving Castaway Festival will take place in February 2026 where a group of over 400 professional skydivers from SkyDive Chicago will participate. There will be opportunities for the public. This successful event took place in 2024 and three national records were

achieved while the public enjoyed the formations realized in the sky.

Besides jumps, SkyDive offers training in the sport for people interested in practicing it regularly and celebrates camps, workshops, and conferences with international recognized skydivers.

For information visit: www.SkyDive-PuertoRico.com.

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Out There

Eco-tours and adventure excursions offer unforgettable immersive experiences around the Emerald Isle

Tanama River is located in Arecibo and flows through Utuado and Adjuntas.

By DARIEN RIVERS

Whether you are visiting on business or pleasure, we hope you get to let things unfold on island time, that cadence that speaks to possibilities unrushed. It could be as simple as posting up poolside at your hotel for a few hours with a book in hand and a refreshing drink within reach as plans slowly take shape to eat at that celebrated restaurant or otherwise dive into the nightlife.

Sounds good. But Puerto Rico is packed with places to see and things to do, you may also hear a call to get out there and have a good look around. Heed that call. It may just lead to unmatched experiences and indelible memories.

An ever-growing range of eco-tour and adventure excursions provide a great way for visitors to explore the island at a deeper level and immerse themselves in the Emerald Isle's natural splendors.

Getting off the beaten path and into new experiences has never been easier given the wide variety of

offerings for adventure seekers that put a premium on revealing new facets of the gem that is Puerto Rico in a safe, organized manner. If by land or by sea, these guided trips offer fresh avenues to develop an essential understanding of the array of landscapes that shape Puerto Rico and its people. Topping out at the highest reaches of verdant mountains, trekking through caves, traversing along a cascading stream or diving into crystalline waters replete with life capped by a nighttime paddle across a glowing bioluminescent bay are just a few of the activities on tap.

Puerto Rico has truly emerged as a top-flight destination for ecotourism and sustainable travel through outfitters - many marked by a focus on conservation of nature and culture - that are well prepared to help you soak in the island's landscapes.

The offerings outlined below are far from a full accounting of the available options but provide a glimpse of the thrills that await travelers thirsting for adventure and rare experiences.

Tanama River Adventures

Winding its way down the limestone mountains and outcroppings of the karst region straddling the towns of Utuado, Arecibo and Adjuntas, the Tanama River opens a window into Puerto Rico's unspoiled natural state. The cascading river is both a step back in time and timeless.

Tanama River Adventures helps you see the way with varied guided tours that can include outdoor adventure activities such as hiking, tubing, rappelling, caving, canyoneering and cliff jumping. You won't regret getting wet on this beautiful adventure.

Hike through farm fields of coffee,

banana, plantain and orange crops and learn about the area's history and culture from local expert guides along a river route marked by caverns, cliffs and waterfalls created by mountain rains as well as Taino petroglyphs carved into the rocks by the Tainos, who were the first people to inhabit the island.

The guided options range in intensity but all require a reasonable level of fitness. The Mukaro Cave Tour entails hilly hiking, cave and cavern exploration, easy rock climbing and time in the river wading, body rafting or swimming. Add in some optional free jumps in the water and call it a great day.



Step it up a notch with the Butterfly Tour or the Tarzan Tour, which add rappelling to the river and caving experience. The Butterfly Tour involves a 120-foot cavern rappel while the Tarzan Tour involves a 250-foot rappel that is billed as the longest in Puerto Rico. Buckle up.

Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve

Combine a night time paddle on Laguna Grande with a daytime trek around Las Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve.

The reserve, the name of which reflects the shape of the three rocky headlands that jut out into the Atlantic, is capped by an iconic lighthouse towering over unspoiled ecosystems including the bioluminescent bay, coral reefs, dry forest, mangroves and beaches both sandy and boulder strewn.

Guided hiking, biking, kayaking and trolley tours are offered with specialized staff at the ready to impart their deep knowledge of the history of the area, its varied landscapes and the wildlife within. Las Cabezas is a candy store for birdwatchers.

The popular visitors center is not to be missed. In addition to guided tours year-round, Las Cabezas hosts seasonal events, workshops, volunteer activities.



Toro Verde

Toro Verde operates two wildly popular adventure parks on the island, with the operative word being wild. Their flagship Toro Verde Puerto Rico Park crisscrosses the highest reaches of the rural mountain town of Orocovis.



Toro Verde Zipline and suspension bridge.



Panoramic views, birds eye views, views seemingly forever. Beauty as far as the eye can see. But there is also a Beast, or rather La Bestia, a zipline that can hold its own with any in the world. Strap into a secure harness and soar over the emerald forest canopy for nearly a mile at speeds approaching 60 miles per hour. Ok, so you conquered the Beast. Get ready



Carabali's ATV rides.

to tangle with the Monster, which Toro Verde proudly calls the "scariest attraction" on the island. Buckle up and brace for speeds of up to 90 mph along a 1.57-mile zipline flight.

The mountain park also boasts seven other "tamer" adventure, each with arrival and departure platforms and small walks across multiple platforms. There are also multiple climbing towers of varying height and difficulties. Try the Toro Roller, which blends zipline and rollercoaster thrills. Add in golf-carts, bikes, play areas and some mighty fine food. In short, there

Hacienda Carabali

Saddle up at Hacienda Carabali Rainforest Adventure Park, a sprawling 600-acre ranch serving up high-energy fun in the northeast coastal town of Luquillo a roughly 40-minute drive from San Juan. The well-trained staff provide safety orientation and have an eye for pairing riders with horses that are right for them.

Horseback tours include rides through foothills along the flanks of the towering El Yunque National Forest, the only tropical rainforest in the U.S. National Forest system. Take a dip in the cooling waters of the Mameyes River during a scheduled swimming and refreshment break in the two-hour tour. Another tour follows the river to an undeveloped stretch of beach for a ride in the sand along the Atlantic Ocean.

Feeling the need for a little more speed? Hacienda Carabali also offers ATV and UTV rides through rugged terrain across streams, over hills, along the coast and under the rainforest canopy. Or slow things down a bit with a tractor-pulled tropical hayride.

Back at the ranch house home-base there is a twisty and turny go-kart track and a restaurant serving up steaks and other hearty fare that is sure to please.

Las Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve in Fajardo.



We Take You Tours

Want a sure-fire way for a day of exploration without having to worry about logistics? Leave it to the professional tour operators from We Take You www.wetakeyou.com, which offers signature guided trips that put a premium on comfort and cultural emersion.

Most tours depart from the Convention Center District but free pick-up and drop-off is available in the Condado and Isla Verde areas. Getting on board with We Take You allows you to really soak in the sights and flavors at some of the island's most celebrated attractions with zero hassles. The only hard part is picking where to go. Why not Ponce? Known as "La Perla del Sur" or the "Pearl of the South," the island's second-largest city boasts its own unique charm. The ride alone is worth the trip as you climb up the verdant north flanks of the Cordillera Central and then descend toward Ponce along a drier and craggier coastal plain. Upon arrival, set out on a walking tour from Plaza las Delicias, the epicenter of Ponce's historic downtown area and home to the iconic Parque de Bombas, before heading up to the majestic Castillo Serrallés Museum.



Parque de Bombas in Ponce.



Loiza's vejigante masks.

Don't have all day? Do not worry. We Take You is ready to take you on half-day guided outings that include a jaunt through Old San Juan, its Spanish-colonial forts and nearby Condado or exploration of El Yunque National Forest and the nearby Luquillo kiosks. For a truly unique experience, tap into the rich history and cultural traditions of Loiza, a coastal town not far from the international airport where Puerto Rico's Afro-Caribbean and Taino roots are intertwined. Highlights include a visit to a sacred cave, a working art studio and a workshop where coconuts are transformed into colorful vejigante folkloric masks. This cultural dive is capped off by a participatory step



Sheila Osorio, a bomba dance teacher from Loiza.

into Loiza's thriving bomba tradition. Bomba can be characterized as the beating heart of an Afro-Caribbean culture that has survived myriad challenges and continues to thrive in the shadow of San Juan and beyond.

Kayak Tours

Kayaking provides a great platform to explore Puerto Rico's varied coastlines and waterways.

Rentals and day trips are readily accessible around the island. From the Condado Lagoon and Piñones in the metropolitan area to more far-flung areas including Cabo Rojo and the offshore island towns of Vieques and Culebra, there are kayak tour

operators well-equipped to get you in touch with a dizzying array of watery wonders.

High on the to-do list for most visitors should be a guided kayaking session on one of the island's unrivaled bioluminescent bays. Bioluminescence, caused by microscopic organisms in water that light up when disturbed, is not unique to Puerto Rico but the island has three lagoons — Mosquito Bay in Vieques, La Parguera in Lajas and Laguna Grande in Las Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve in Fajardo — with concentrations of the dinoflagellates that are not seen elsewhere.

Laguna Grande is off-limits to powerboats in order to protect the unique and pristine waters, meaning that kayaks are the only way to experience the glowing waters of the mangrove-lined lagoon at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. Kayaks are also the craft of choice at Mosquito Bay, where powerboats and large vessel tours are prohibited. Opt for a clear-bottom kayak and prepare to be mesmerized.

What should now be clear is that Puerto Rico packs a punch for adventure-minded travelers looking to plug into this special place. Get online, book your excursion, and get out there! 📍

Puerto Rico: An Emerging Hub for Medical Services



Dorado has a goal to establish continuity of medical care with locals who frequently travel between Orlando, Florida and Puerto Rico.

U.S. citizens seeking high-quality healthcare at lower costs

By MARGA PARES ARROYO

Not every vacation is all sun, sand, and relaxation. What if travelling abroad to Puerto Rico is your opportunity to finally do that medical procedure you have been considering. Or an unexpected health emergency while vacationing has led you to seek care at a local hospital or clinic.

Either way, you are in good hands.

Puerto Rico is emerging as a popular destination for medical tourism since it offers the advantages of no passport requirement for U.S. citizens, Joint Commission-accredited hospitals, and a strong English-speaking, highly trained medical community.

So, whether you are visiting by choice or circumstance, you can trust that your health is in expert hands.

Dental care on the go

Dr. Ignacio Baez from San Juan Dental Clinic has seen “a positive response” regarding the full range

of services he offers at his dental office in Santurce, where he has been practicing for the past year.

“We’ve been contacted by many tourists who arrive on the island and find themselves with a dental issue,” Baez explained. At his practice, he added, they cover “every branch of dentistry.”

Recently, he treated a tourist who had complications with her braces while vacationing in Puerto Rico. “We provided care and she left feeling pleased with how fast and easy it was to get help at our office,” he said.

His clinic, located on Juan Ponce de Leon Avenue in San Juan, has welcomed patients from the United States, Venezuela, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and other countries.

“Because these are emergency situations, tourist medical plans often don’t cover the cost of treatment,” he noted. “However, patients can pay out of pocket, and we provide a detailed

invoice with dental codes so they can file a claim with their insurance provider, if applicable,” Baez added.

The most common cases they treat, he said, involve vacationers who suffer falls that lead to dental fractures, often with nerve involvement.

“In those cases, we can perform a root canal and rebuild the tooth. We usually avoid long-term cosmetic procedures like crowns or ceramic work, since those require a dental lab and visitors typically do not stay long enough for that process,” he explained.

Laying the groundwork

Puerto Rico’s Medical Tourism Law dates to 2010. At that time, a public policy was established to promote and develop this industry on the island. The law created economic incentives for eligible businesses certified as part of the medical tourism sector.

According to the law patients residing in the United States do not need

a visa to travel to Puerto Rico for medical care and treatment. Similarly, some residents of European and Western countries are also exempt from visa requirements when seeking healthcare services on the island.

“Puerto Rico offers healthcare services that meet the same quality and compliance standards as those in the United States, but at a significantly lower cost, estimated to be between 50% and 70% less,” the statute emphasized.

More recently the Department of Economic Development and Commerce established in June 2023, the regulations for the Medical Tourism Office Program.

Lower costs compared to the U.S., state-of-the-art hospital facilities, bilingual licensed and certified healthcare professionals, and Puerto Rico’s strategic location were among the key factors identified as enablers of the island’s growing medical tourism industry.

MEDICAL TOURISM

This year three legislative bills - Senate Bills 539, 540 and 541 - were introduced to establish tax and economic benefits as well as a collaboration with the government for healthcare providers who treat international patients under the medical tourism framework.

A call for growth

Initially, more than a dozen hospitals across the island had expressed interest in incorporating medical tourism into their services, noted Jaime Pla, CEO of the Puerto Rico Hospital Association. However, the pandemic and certain requirements for implementation slowed down the momentum, he said.

Still, Pla pointed out that local orthopedic and dental services have successfully entered this global industry, among other clinical care. He also mentioned growing interest from the Dominican Republic in referring patients to Puerto Rico.

He encouraged tourists to call 9-1-1 in the event of a medical emergency or to follow the guidance of hotel staff or their hosts regarding where to seek medical care during their stay on the island.

Another hospital that has a goal to establish continuity of medical care with locals who frequently travel between Orlando, Florida and Puerto Rico is the health system of Doctors' Center Hospital Orlando Health - Dorado.

Anyone visiting the Orlando-area from Puerto Rico can see a doctor with available same-day appointments.

Medical specialties and services at Doctors' Center Hospital Orlando Health - Dorado include, but are not limited to, cardiovascular health, endocrinology, orthopedics, gastroenterology, Hepato-Biliary Surgery, Hematology/Oncology, anesthesiology, plastic surgery, dermatology, among others. In October 2022, Orlando Health

■ If you find yourself in Puerto Rico and experience an accident or emergency that requires medical assistance, here are the steps you should consider taking.

1 Call 911:

If it's an emergency, dial 911 to request medical or police assistance.

2 Provide Information:

When calling 911, clearly state your location, the type of emergency, and the condition of the person involved.

3 Stay Calm:

Try to remain calm and give the information clearly and concisely.

4 Cooperate with Emergency Personnel:

Follow the instructions of medical and emergency response teams.

5 Notify Authorities:

If the incident involves others, inform law enforcement authorities about the situation.

■ Additional Considerations:

•Travel Insurance:

If you have health insurance, gather all related documentation, including checking whether it covers medical emergencies and accidents, and how to proceed in such cases.

•Documentation:

Carry a copy of your passport, visa (if applicable), and other important documents.

•Contact Information:

Keep local emergency numbers and the contact information for your insurer and embassy/consulate easily accessible.

6 Seek Medical Assistance:

Once at the hospital, inform the front desk that you are a tourist and that you will need assistance.

7 Check Your Travel Insurance:

If you have travel insurance, contact your provider to verify your coverage for the medical emergency or accident.

8 Contact Your Embassy or Consulate:

If you're a foreign visitor, reach out to your embassy or consulate for additional support.

9 Stay Informed:

Follow instructions from local authorities and stay updated through press releases and official announcements if, when on the island, there's a local or national emergency.

•Medical Assistance:

Seek care at a nearby health center or hospital, and make sure you know how to access it.

•Translation Support:

If you don't speak Spanish, ask for help translating information into English or your native language.

formed a partnership with Doctors' Center Hospital and then they formed an agreement to work on four more hospitals in Puerto Rico: Doctors' Center Hospital San Juan, Doctors' Center Hospital Bayamon, Doctors' Center Hospital Manati and Doctors' Center Hospital San Fernando de La Carolina.

More than 500 partnered physicians, representing 35 medical specialties, have privileges across the Doctors' Center Hospital Orlando Health system, which employs 2,500 team members.

Metro Pavia Health System is a network of hospitals in Puerto Rico that promotes itself as certified in medical tourism by the Medical Tourism Association and the Puerto Rico Medical Tourism Corporation. In addition, its facilities are accredited by the Joint Commission, a nonprofit organization that certifies hospitals and other

healthcare institutions in the United States, a certification also held by most healthcare facilities on the island, ensuring they are following established standards.

The concept of medical tourism in Puerto Rico has a lot to offer," said Dr. Natalio Debbs.

The plastic surgeon, known not only for his aesthetic and reconstructive procedures but also for his volunteer work helping children with facial deformities and burn injuries, acknowledged the island's strong potential in this growing industry.

Beyond the high-quality medical care available in Puerto Rico, he highlighted the shared language and cultural similarities with other Caribbean nations as key advantages in attracting international patients.

"We have the training, the skilled professionals, and a healthcare system on par with any in the United States. But we need to make sure we're offering these services at a fair value," he noted. "It's essential to integrate everyone involved: employees, pharmacies, labs, hospitals. There's still room to grow."

Dr. Carlos Diaz Velez, president of the Colegio de Medicos Cirujanos de Puerto Rico, agreed that one of the key appeals of medical tourism is the lower cost of healthcare services on the island compared to the U.S. mainland.

He also echoed the view that sharing a common language and cultural similarities with other Caribbean nations helps promote these services in Puerto Rico.

"It should be encouraged even more," he stated. ■

GUEST

HOTELS

METRO AREA

AC Hotel San Juan Condado	(787) 827-7280
Acacia Boutique Hotel	(787) 727-2023
Aloft San Juan	(787) 936-2500
At Wind Chimes Boutique Hotel	(787) 727-4153
Blue Horizon Boutique Resort	(787) 741-3318
Canario Boutique Hotel	(787) 725-0668
Canario Lagoon	(787) 722-5058
Caribe Hilton	(787) 721-0303
Casa Azul Boutique Hotel	(787) 727-2397
Casa Sol Bed and Breakfast	(787) 980-9700
Comfort Inn San Juan	(787) 721-0170
Condado Ocean Club	(787) 625-6000
Condado Vanderbilt Hotel	(787) 721-5500
Concurse Hotel	(787) 520-8855
Coqui Del Mar Guesthouse	(939) 428-9087
Coral Princess Hotel	(787) 977-7700
Courtyard By Marriott SJ Miramar	(787) 721-7400
Decanter Hotel	(787) 925-1490
Dorado Beach, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve	(787) 626-1100
Dos Aguas	(787) 585-7010
Dream Inn PR	(787) 640-9368
Dreams Hotel	(787) 688-5818
El San Geronimo Hotel	(787) 721-1515
Embassy Suites Dorado Del Mar Beach Resort	(787) 796-6125
Embassy Suites San Juan Hotel & Casino	(787) 791-0505
Fairmont El San Juan Hotel	(787) 791-1000
Hampton Inn & Suites San Juan	(787) 791-8777
Hilton Garden Inn	(787) 723-2000
Holiday Inn Express San Juan	(787) 724-4160
Hosteria del Mar	(787) 727-3302
Hyatt House San Juan	(787) 977-5000
Hyatt Place Bayamon & El Tropical Casino	(787) 779-5000
Hyatt Place San Juan City Center	(787) 721-3000
Numero Uno Beach House	(787) 726-5010
Olive Boutique Hotel	(787) 705-9994
Residence Inn by Marriott San Juan Isla Verde	(787) 961-1155
San Juan Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino	(787) 722-7000
Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel & Casino	(787) 993-3500
SOFO Hotels LLC / Hotel Casablanca	(787) 977-0770
The Condado Plaza Hotel	(787) 721-1000
The Ivy Hotel	(787) 289-9191
The Royal Sonesta San Juan	(787) 791-6100
The Tryst	(787) 965-5239
The Wave Hotel	(787) 721-9010

OUT OF METRO AREA

Aqua Marina Beach Club	(787) 823-2593
Caribe Hotel Ponce	(787) 841-1000
Club Seabourne	(787) 742-3169
Combate Beach Resort	(787) 254-2358

Coqui Cabana @ Sea Beach Village	(787) 379-2249
El Conquistador Resort	(787) 863-1000
Hacienda Margarita	(939) 484-2662
Hacienda Siesta Alegre B & B Inn	(787) 887-7500
Hacienda Tamarindo	(787) 741-8525
Hilton Ponce Golf & Casino Resort	(787) 259-7676
Holiday Inn Mayaguez & Tropical Casino	(787) 833-1100
Holiday Inn Ponce & Tropical Casino	(787) 844-1200
Hyatt Place Manati	(787) 854-1000
Hyatt Regency Grand Reserve Puerto Rico	(787) 657-1234
Las Casitas Village	(787) 863-1000
Luquillo Sunrise Beach Inn	(787) 889-1713
Parador Costa Del Mar	(787) 266-6276
Parador Palmas De Lucia	(787) 893-4423
Parador Guanica 1929	(787) 821-0099
Parador Maunacari	(787) 861-3330
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The Serene House Bed & Breakfast	(305) 979-9332
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Tres Sirenas Beach Inn	(787) 823-0558
Villa Cofresi Hotel	(787) 823-2450
Villa Coral Guesthouse	(787) 741-1967
Wyndham Grand Rio Mar Puerto Rico Golf & Beach Resort	(787) 888-6000
Wyndham Palmas Beach & Golf Resort	(787) 850-6000

CASINOS

METRO AREA

Casino del Mar @ La Concha Renaissance San Juan Resort	(787) 721-7500
Casino Metro @ Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel	(787) 993-3500
Foxwoods El San Juan Casino @ Fairmont El San Juan	(787) 936-7777
Oasis Casino @ Embassy Suites San Juan Hotel	(787) 791-0505 x.2901
Stellaris Casino @ San Juan Marriott Resort	(787) 722-7000
Tropical Casino @ Hyatt Place Bayamon	(787) 995-8300

OUT OF METRO AREA

Casino de la Plaza, Ponce	(787) 813-5050
Casino Hilton Ponce Golf & Casino Resort	(787) 259-7676
Tropical Casino @ Fairfield by Marriott Luquillo Beach	(787) 889-8600
Tropical Casino @ Holiday Inn Mayaguez	(787) 265-4200
Tropical Casino @ Holiday Inn Ponce	(787) 844-1200

RESTAURANTS

Aurora's Restaurant San Juan	(787) 783-2899
Barullo Taberna Española Distrito T-Mobile, Miramar	(939) 439-4584
Bistro Tartine Caguas	(787) 961-4044

Cerveceria Takabru Condado	(787) 418-3393
Donde Olga Bar & Restaurant Piñones	(787) 791-6900
Fogo de Chao Brazilian Steakhouse San Juan	(787) 727-5100
Holly's Café at Holiday Inn & Tropical Casino Mayaguez	(787) 833-1100 x.110
Pamela's Restaurant at Numero Uno San Juan	(787) 723-5010
Social Condado	(787) 625-6000
Toro Verde Restaurant Orocovis	(787) 867-6606

ALLIED MEMBERS

2Phito Control	(787) 608-8844
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Assa Abloy Hospitality Panama - Former "Vingcardelsafe"	(507) 390-7155
Avis Rent A Car System, Inc.	(787) 253-5903
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Ballester Hermanos, Inc.	(787) 788-4110
B. Fernandez Hnos.	(787) 288-7272
Budget Rent A Car	(787) 253-5903
Caguas, City of Promotion & Economic Development Department	(787) 653-8833 x.2915
Cape Air	(787) 645-1800
Caribbean Culinary Consulting	(787) 722-1459
Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association	(305) 443-3040
Carolina Autonomous Municipality Touristic Development Office	(787) 701-5137
Carrion Laffitte and Casellas Inc.	(787) 641-2738
Castillo Sightseeing Tours & Travel	(787) 728-2297
Catamaran Spread Eagle	(888) 523-4511
Charter Coach / Gray Line Puerto Rico	(787) 766-0789
Coliseo de Puerto Rico José Miguel Agrelot	(787) 777-0800
Cotton International	(939) 286-6190
Dave & Buster	(787) 422-1550
DDC Design & Decor Center Yanez Diaz	(787) 782-2040
Delta Air Lines	(939) 292-3067
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Destination Puerto Rico / Travel Services, Inc., a DMC Network Company	(787) 982-1200
Deya Elevators Service	(787) 268-8777
Distrito T-Mobile	(787) 796-5656
Dragon Fly Adventures DMC	(787) 889-7430
E-Vacations Travel	(407) 924-8854
East Island Excursions	(787) 860-3434
Escuela Hotelera de San Juan	(787) 766-0606
First Class Destination Solutions	(787) 296-5466
First Class Services	(787) 722-8536
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Friends of San Juan National Historic Site	(617) 275-1169

Fulcro Insurance, Inc.	(787) 725-5880	Lucerna Hospitality	(787) 462-1550	Red Sismica de Puerto Rico / UPR	(787) 833-8433
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