



ROAD TRAVEL REPORT: PUERTO RICO



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO...

- Many travelers choose to drive due to inadequate public transportation.
- Drive cautiously; Puerto Rico drivers tend to drive irresponsibly.
- Driving rules may be confusing.



ROAD REALITIES

DRIVER BEHAVIORS

- Drivers tend to drive irresponsibly. Many cars are dented.
- Drivers commonly stop briefly at red lights after 10:00 pm to avoid being robbed.

GENERAL ROAD CONDITIONS

- About 70 to 80 percent of Puerto Rico is hilly or mountainous.
- A modern coastal highway system almost completely encircles the island, connecting the majority of larger coastal towns and cities. Highway system is incomplete between Guayama and Ponce.
- Roads in the interior:
 - Tend to be winding and mountainous.
 - Some are too narrow for automobiles.
 - Tend to be poorly paved and maintained.
 - Cliffslides or landslides commonly occur.
- Be alert for speed bumps (lomas/“sleeping policemen”).
- Sudden downpours occur frequently, making road conditions hazardous.
- Major and minor roads are often blocked by landslides or cliffslides.
 - Landslides are common in all areas of Puerto Rico; cliffslides occur in mountainous areas.
 - More serious slides are most common in the Upland and Northern Karst provinces. Most slides occur with little warning and involve rapid flow of rocks and soil.

- Danger of slides is greater on mountains roads with steep gradients and sheer cliffs.
- Heavy rains increase landslide risk but do not affect the occurrence of cliffslides.
- Coastal Plains province has less destructive, localized slides.
- Roads are most congested from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. and from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.
- Older coastal highways are frequently congested.
- A good set of maps is essential. There are few road signs, but route numbers are frequently posted.
- International road signs are used, but are in Spanish.
- Speed limits are seldom posted. When posted, speed limits are given in miles per hour, while distances are generally posted in kilometers
- Some common traffic signs:
 - Calle sin salida—Dead-end street
 - Carril exclusivo—Exclusive (bus) lane
 - Ceda (adelante)—Yield (ahead)
 - Curva peligrosa—Dangerous bend
 - Despacio—Slow
 - Envejecientes (cruzando)—Senior citizens (crossing)
 - Excavación profunda—Deep trench
 - No cruce—Do not cross
 - No entre—Do not enter
 - No estacione—Do not park
 - No pare—Do not stop



- No vire con luz roja—Do not turn right on red light
- Pavimento termina—Pavement ends
- Peatón, peatones—Pedestrian (s)
- Peligro (adelante) —Danger (ahead)
- Posibilidad de ganado en el rodaje—Cattle may invade the roadway
- Puente estrecho—Narrow bridge
- Resbala mojado—Slippery when wet
- Salida (adelante) —Exit (ahead)
- Semáforo (adelante) —Traffic light (ahead)

- A large portion of the interior of Puerto Rico consists of extinct volcanoes, the highest of which is Cerro de Punta located in the Cordillera Central region.

URBAN TRAVEL

- San Juan, Ponce, Mayaguez, Arecibo and most other larger cities are located on flat or gently sloping coastal areas. May encounter more hilly/mountainous roads in newer areas of these cities due to urban expansion into higher elevations.
- Cycling can be risky on congested urban streets.

CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
SAN JUAN	<p>Avoid driving in the San Juan metropolitan area; traffic is severely congested.</p> <p>Many streets in some sections of the city are one-way; traffic signs are posted to indicate those that are two-way.</p> <p>Avoid using the bus-only lanes on Ponce de León, Muñoz Rivera, and Fernández Juncos Avenues.</p>	<p>San Juan is divided into an old and a new quarter. Bus service in the metropolitan area is fairly efficient. Metrobus operates buses in the city center, Old San Juan through the Condado sector, Hato Rey and Rio Piedras; may be the fastest means of transport during rush hour.</p> <p>The Metropolitan Bus Authority provides service to some sections of San Juan as well as Cataño, Bayamón, Carolina, and some sections of Guaynabo. Phone: 787/250-6064.</p> <p>Taxis service is readily available, efficient; fares are reasonable.</p> <p>Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport, on the eastern fringe of the city, is not convenient to most hotels, except those at Isla Verde.</p> <p>Transport to the city: Taxis, rental cars, and limousines are available. Arrange rental cars and limos ahead of time.</p> <p>Minivans tend to charge lower fares. Rental cars and limousine services are available; arrange ahead of time.</p> <p>Use buses only if you have little luggage.</p>
OLD SAN JUAN	<p>Driving is not recommended; streets are narrow; hills are steep; many streets are one-way; parking is hard to find.</p>	<p>Walk or use public transportation.</p> <p>Free trolleys available; can be boarded anywhere along the route.</p>

RURAL TRAVEL

- Condition and maintenance of roads in the interior is generally poor.
- Mountainous roads are common. Many are narrow and winding.



- Landslides may occur on major or minor roads. Cliffslides may be a problem in more mountainous regions.

NIGHT TRAVEL

- Avoid traveling at night. If unavoidable, keep vehicle doors locked.

SEASONAL TRAVEL

- Hurricane season runs between June and December.
- The rainy season runs from July to October.
- Southern Puerto Rico
 - Receives less rainfall than northern Puerto Rico.
 - Many rivers, running toward the southern coast are generally dry; these rivers may flood during heavy rains

**ROAD REGULATIONS**

- Driving is on the right.
 - A valid U.S. license is accepted for 120 days. After that, visitors 18 years old or older may pay a fee and get a Puerto Rican driver's license.
 - Legal blood alcohol level is 0.08. Penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol are severe.
 - Seat belt regulations:
 - Seat belts are required.
 - Children under twelve years of age must ride in the back seat.
 - Children under four years of age must be in a child safety seat.
 - Bus-only lanes are indicated by white diamonds painted on the extreme left lane. Bus traffic in these lanes runs opposite of traffic flow in remaining lanes. Using a bus-only lane poses the risk of a head-on collision with a bus.
 - Speed limits:
 - 30 mph in residential areas (Signs are seldom posted.)
 - 25 mph in urban areas and school zones
 - 45 mph in rural zones
 - 70 mph on the San Juan-Ponce expressway
 - Traffic is always more congested on important holidays including:
 - June 24th—one of the most important holidays; begins the afternoon of the 23rd. Many businesses close.
 - July 25th—the Día de la Constitución. Expect especially heavy traffic if this holiday is on a weekend.
 - Late May—the Carnival in Mayagüez.
- POLICE ENFORCEMENT**
- Speed limits often are strictly enforced, especially on holiday weekends.
 - Traffic lights:
 - Right turn on red is permitted after coming to a full stop, unless prohibited by a traffic sign.
 - From midnight to 6:00am, drivers may drive through a red light after coming to a full stop to lower the chance of being robbed or carjacked. Proceed with caution after coming to a full stop.
 - If involved in a road crash
 - Exchange information with any other drivers involved.
 - Notify the state police within four hours if damage is in excess of \$100.
 - Provide transport to the nearest hospital for any victims you are certain can be moved without harm.



ROAD WATCH

SOME SAFER ROADS IN PUERTO RICO

NAME	CONDITIONS & USEFUL INFORMATION
HIGHWAY 3	Runs from San Juan to southeastern Puerto Rico.
HIGHWAY 2	Runs from San Juan to Ponce around the western coast of Puerto Rico.
HIGHWAY 52, THE LUIS A FERRE EXPRESSWAY	North-south toll road linking San Juan and Ponce.
HIGHWAY 53	Toll road (autopista) running from Fajardo to Humacao.
HIGHWAY 22, DE DIEGO HIGHWAY	An older toll road; runs west of San Juan along the northern coast.



ROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

BUSES

- Bus service is available throughout the island.
- Public transport may not be easy to use; service may end at 10:00PM.
- Large signs or yellow posts, which say “Paraada” indicate a bus stop.

TAXIS

- Types of taxis include
 - Conventional taxis, turisticos: Generally are painted black and white and have an official logo painted on the doors. They are privately owned and usually better maintained than the cheaper públicos. They charge a set fee to major tourist locations. Can be hailed or taken from hotels.
- Públicos/shared taxis: (Look under Líneas de Carros in the phone book.)
 - Have license plates, ending in “P” or “PD,” have fixed fares, provide transport on specific routes between cities.
 - May pick up or drop off passengers where requested.
 - Are very uncomfortable; may be inconvenient, due to limited hours of operation.

- Can generally be picked up a town’s central square.
- Service is slow; stops, frequent; routing may vary.
- For público routes between San Juan and Mayagüez. Phone: 787/765-9377. For routes between San Juan and Ponce, phone: 787/764-0540.
- Call the Public Service Commission at 787-756-1919 with any questions or to report any problems.

BICYCLES & MOTORCYCLES

- Requirements for bicycles include a working horn, a white light in front; red light or reflector on the rear fender.
- It is illegal for cyclists to:
 - Ride on sidewalks or other pedestrian paths.
 - Ride on main highways, especially limited access highways, unless otherwise posted.
 - Ride tandem, especially dangerous on narrow rural roads.
 - Carry more passengers than number of seats available.
- Favorable cycling conditions are available on:
 - Paseo Piñones Recreational Trail, running just east of Isla Verde.



- Secondary roads, linking Guánica, Cabo Rojo and Sabana Grande on the southern coast.
- All motorcycles must have a Dept. of Transportation and Public Works permit to be driven on main highways.
- Motorcycles with an engine smaller than 360 cc are not permit on main highways.
- The driver and any passengers must wear approved head protecting helmets.
- If the motorcycle lacks a windshield, the driver must wear glasses or goggles when riding.

RENTAL VEHICLES

- Rental cars are readily available.
- Advantages of renting from an international rental company include
 - Local rental agencies generally do not provide roadside assistance.
 - Local rental agencies may not take credit cards and may want cash payment in advance.
 - Travelers may have difficulty resolving insurance claims when renting from local firms.



EMERGENCY INFORMATION

TOURIST ASSISTANCE

- Emergency numbers:
 - Police, emergency phone: 911 (for life-threatening emergencies only).
 - Fire, phone: 787-343-2330.
 - Police, non-emergency phone: (787) 343-2020.
 - Ambulance (non-life threatening emergencies) phone: 787-754-2550 / 343-2550.
 - American Red Cross phone: (787) 759-7979.
- Roadside assistance:
 - There is no national emergency number to call for roadside assistance.
 - Service stations with tow trucks are available in all major towns and cities.
 - If driving a rental vehicle, call the rental company first.
- The Puerto Rico Tourism Company, 2 La Princesa Boulevard, San Juan 00901, Puerto Rico. Mailing address is PO Box 9023960, San Juan 00902-3960,

- The minimum age required to rent a car varies from 21 to 25. Some companies rent to younger drivers for a surcharge.
- Consider purchasing a collision damage waiver (CDW)—additional insurance, which eliminates most or all of the cost if you are involved in an accident. Ask your insurance agent if you have adequate collision and damage coverage for locations outside the U.S. Charging rental fees on some credit cards provides collision and damage coverage; check with your credit card company.

CRIME & SECURITY

- Car theft is a major problem, especially in the San Juan area. If renting a car, use the security devices.
- All of San Juan can be dangerous after dark.
- National guard troops are assisting police in San Juan, Ponce, and the suburbs of Carolina and Bayamon in efforts to reduce crime rates.
- Avoid hiking on the mainland beaches, especially if alone.
- La Perla and Calle Tanca are areas of San Juan that are best avoided.

Puerto Rico. Phone: 721 2400, fax: 722 1093, email: travel@hillandknowlton.com; website: www.prtourism.com.

- U.S. office of Puerto Rico Tourism Company, 666 Fifth Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10103. Phone: (212) 586 6262 or (1 800) 223 6530 (toll free; USA only); fax: (212) 586 1212.
- For good maps contact ITMB at 345 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC Canada V5Y 1P8. Phone: 604-879-3621. Request the ITM Traveler's Reference Map, Scale 1:190,000. Their maps are also distributed by Rand McNally in the U.S.
- Gasoline is easily obtained in main cities and along major routes. In more remote areas, keep tank reasonably full, especially on Sunday.
- Disabled travelers:
 - Wheelchair accessible vans are available to rent.
 - Wheelchair accessible transport from airports and cruise ships is available.



MEDICAL CARE

- Health services are good but expensive.
- At a minimum, every town has a primary care medical facility and ambulance service.
- Doctors and medical institutions must meet the same standards as in the continental United States.
- While most doctors speak English, paramedics, nurses, and hospital staff may not.
- Many medical plans are honored in Puerto Rico.
- Take an adequate supply of any required prescription medications and a prescription for each of them, specifying the generic name of the drug. Most brand name drugs are normally available. Take any other required over-the-counter medications or supplies.
- U.S. medical insurance is not always valid in other countries. Medicare and Medicaid do not cover medical expenses rendered outside the U.S. Medigap policies (plans C through J) cover 80 percent of what Medicare would cover in the U.S. for the first 60 days of each trip; a \$250 deductible applies. Maximum lifetime limit of \$50,000. Medicare Advantage may offer coverage for

care abroad. Phone: 800-633-4227; website: www.medicare.gov/publications/pubs/pdf/11037.pdf.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact:
Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT)
11769 Gainsborough Road, Potomac MD 20854, USA
Telephone: (301) 983-5252
Fax: (301) 983-3663
Website: <http://www.asirt.org>
E-mail: asirt@asirt.org



LANGUAGE TIPS

Please slow down.

Por favor reduzca la velocidad.
Por-fah-vor ray-DUZ-ca la ve-lo-see-DAD.

Please stop. I need to get out now.

Pare por favor. Necesito bajarme ahora.
PAH-ray por fah-vor. Ne-se-SEE-tow ba-HAR-may a-ORa.

Let me off at the next stop.

Permítame bajar en la próxima parada.
Per-MEE-tamay sa-LEER en la PROX-eema pa-RAda.

*Does this taxi (this car) have seat belts?**

Tiene este taxi/vehículo cinturones de seguridad?
Tee-enay estay taxi/vay-EE-kulow sintu-ROW-nays day segur-eeDAD?

Call for help!

Pida ayuda por favor!
Pee-dah eye-YOU-da por fah-vor!

Is it safe to travel by road at night?

Es seguro viajar por la carretera de noche?
Ays-se-GUro via-HAR por la car-ay-TAYra day Nochay?

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company road crash on the roads of Turkey. © ASIRT 2005

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