

Puerto Rico Fast Facts!

DID YOU KNOW?

CULTURE AND GEOGRAPHY

- Founded in 1521, San Juan Puerto Rico is the [oldest city](#) under U.S. jurisdiction.
- Puerto Rico is home to El Yunque, the only tropical rainforest that is part of the U.S. Forest Service. (Source: [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#))
- Puerto Rico is about the size of the state of Connecticut and has 272 miles of beautiful coastline, and [300 beaches](#). (Source: [USA Today](#))
- Puerto Ricans often use the word “boricua” [Bo-REE-ku-wah] as a self-description. The name comes from the indigenous Taíno word Boriken, which was the native population’s name for the island. (Source: [Welcome.toPuertoRico.org](#))
- In 2019, the New York Times named Puerto Rico the [No. 1 Place to Visit](#).
- Puerto Rico’s beaches have been perennially featured as some of the best in the [Caribbean](#), the United States, and the [world](#). Here’s a [video](#) showing some of the things you can discover in Puerto Rico.

“ **Is the best restaurant in the U.S. in Puerto Rico? The BBC thinks [so](#).** ”

- The first Hispanic Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor, and the first Hispanic U.S. Surgeon General, Antonia Coello Novello, are both Puerto Rican. (Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Encyclopedia Britannica](#))
- Puerto Rico has competed individually in the Olympics since 1948 and has won nine medals including a gold medal for tennis and another recent gold for track and field. (Source: [International Olympic Committee](#))
- In 1971, Roberto Clemente of the Pittsburgh Pirates became the first Hispanic to reach 3,000 hits, and the first Puerto Rican and Latin American to be enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

- The Puerto Rico Trench is the deepest submarine depression in the North Atlantic Ocean. It is about 1,090 miles (1,750 km) long and 60 miles (100 km) wide. The deepest point in the Atlantic Ocean, the “[Milwaukee Depth](#),” lies within the Puerto Rico Trench. (Source: [National Geographic](#))
- Puerto Ricans have served in the U.S. military since 1899 and have been soldiers in every major American military engagement since then. As of 2017, the Veterans Affairs Department listed the number of veterans living in Puerto Rico at 79,322. (Source: [U.S. Veterans Affairs Dept.](#))

MUSIC AND FOOD

- One of Puerto Rico’s most notable exports is its music, which is widely acclaimed and played all over the world. Salsa is the most recognized Puerto Rican musical genre. However, Bomba and Plena (musical forms rooted in African and Taíno sounds and traditions) are considered by Puerto Ricans to be the most popular form of folk music on the island.
- Today, Reggaeton (a musical genre influenced by hip hop and Caribbean music) might be arguably the most popular dance music coming out of Puerto Rico, [with Bad Bunny as its most recognizable standard bearer](#). In 2022, for two straight years, Bad Bunny became the most streamed artist on [Spotify](#) and has broken world records for [concert attendance](#) and downloaded songs. He also recently became the first [non-English](#) artist to win the Video Music Award for artist of the year.
- Acclaimed Puerto Rican performer Rita Moreno is the only Latina, and only one of four women out of a total of twelve artists, to be an EGOT winner after receiving all four major annual American entertainment awards: an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and a Tony. (Source: [Billboard](#))
- Ricky Martin, Benicio del Toro, Marc Anthony, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Daddy Yankee, Ozuna, Bad Bunny, and Jennifer López are among the group of celebrities that are household names in the U.S.
- Jose Feliciano’s ‘[Feliz Navidad](#)’ is considered a Christmas staple both in Puerto Rico and in the U.S.

- Puerto Rico has a rich culinary scene influenced by a variety of cultures. Mofongo (fried green plantains with garlic and pork cracklings) is widely considered to be Puerto Rico's most popular dish -- a meal with strong roots in Western Africa, and Spanish and Taíno ingredients. (Source: [Washington Post](#))
- Puerto Rico imports nearly [85% of its food](#), a situation made worse by the [Jones Act](#). Puerto Rico is [heavily dependent](#) on imported goods to meet local food and beverage demand. (In 2019, food and beverage imports from the U.S. [totaled over \\$6.5 billion](#), surpassed in imports only by Mexico and Canada in most categories.)
- Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens by birth. More than 3.2 million Puerto Ricans live on the island and almost twice as many, 5.3 million live on the U.S. mainland, making eligibility to vote in federal elections dependent on where a Puerto Rican happens to live. (Sources: [Newsweek](#), [Pew Research Center](#))
- 43.4% [of the Puerto Rican Population lives under the federal poverty line](#), which is almost four times higher than the [U.S. national average of 12.8%](#).

“ The median income in Puerto Rico is \$21,058. That is less than half of the median income in the poorest U.S. state, Mississippi, which is \$46,511. ”

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

- The island's system of government is called a Commonwealth. It is a republican form of government (3 branches) with the highest elected office being the Governor who is elected to a four-year term. This system was formed in 1952 after Puerto Rico voters approved a constitutional convention, a constitution and amendments to it requested by Congress and finally ratified by Congress and the people (Source: [Welcome.toPuertoRico.org](#)).
- There have been at least 10 Members of Congress of Puerto Rican descent and 20 [Resident Commissioners](#) elected to Congress. The first Puerto Rican elected to serve as a Member of Congress was Hernán Badillo, who represented New York from 1971 to 1977. This list includes: Charles Rangel, Robert García, José Serrano, Luis Gutiérrez, Nydia Velázquez, Raúl Labrador, Darren Soto, Ritchie Torres and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortés. (Source: [Library of Congress](#)) Resident Commissioners are non-voting members of Congress.
- In 2016, Congress passed the PROMESA federal law, which gave the island a debt restructuring mechanism not available to the states. The law also imposed an unelected Financial Oversight and Management Board (FOMB) that has the final say over all laws, contracts, regulations, and financial and fiscal matters; even over the wishes of the island's elected officials. This puts into question the "republican form of government" Congress approved and the people of Puerto Rico voted for in 1952.
- Puerto Rico imports 85% of its food leading to higher prices and dependency on imports. (Source: [NBC](#))
- Puerto Rico has its own tax system and revenues go to the Commonwealth and its municipalities. But Puerto Ricans also pay U.S. payroll taxes (Social Security, Medicare, etc.) on any income source they receive from the mainland, but do not receive the same level of federal benefits received by those living on the mainland. (Source: [Vox](#))
- Between 80% and 90% of houses were damaged by Hurricane Maria. (Source: [PBS](#))
- It took nearly two weeks for President Trump to visit the island. The five hours he spent there were marked by him [tossing paper towels](#), jump-shot style, into a crowd of residents as opposed to doing a substantive review of the damage or the needs of the island. In comparison, both [President Obama](#) and [President Bush](#) visited the areas affected by Hurricane Sandy and Hurricane Katrina just two days after they made landfall. (Source: [TIME](#))
- In a tweet, [Trump denied that nearly 3,000 people died](#) in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. He expressed skepticism about the death toll, suggesting that individuals who died of other causes were included in the hurricane count.
- A [devastating internal report by FEMA](#) featured in [The New York Times](#) underscores how unprepared the agency was for the hurricane response.

AFTER MARIA - DID YOU KNOW?

(For more information about the Federal Response to Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria go [here](#).)