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# PUERTO RICO BEACHES

*From the Tour-and-Vacations Planning Department of Paradise Villas & Vacations*

*[NOTE: Please see the “Paradise Villas Guest Resource Guide” in your villa – it has tons of great information about what to do and places to visit.]*

**White sandy beaches are what put  
Puerto Rico on tourist maps in the first place.**

## **Close by Cerro Gordo Beach:**



Cerro Gordo Beach, a long and wide crescent-shaped, picturesque beach in the town of Vega Alta – is ranked among the best on the north coast of Puerto Rico for its facilities and beauty. Palm trees and an uncrowded scene during weekdays, afford a more relaxing, peaceful beach experience. Many of the beaches on the north coast facing the Atlantic Ocean can be too rough for swimming, but Cerro Gordo’s east end has a beautiful rock wall which serves as a natural barrier to strong waves. Behind you are lush green rolling hills – while the water itself is clear and clean ... with gorgeous blue and turquoise tones. The beach has light, golden sand – and the many trees offer shaded spots for afternoon naps.

### **Best for Singles (Straight & Gay):**

Sandwiched between the Condado and Isla Verde along San Juan's coast, Ocean Park beach attracts more adults and less of the family trade. The wide beach, lined with palm and sea grape trees, fronts a residential neighborhood of beautiful homes, free of the high-rise condos that line other San Juan beaches. A favorite for swimming, paddle tennis, and kite surfing, the beach is also a favorite spot for young and beautiful sanjuaneros to congregate, especially on weekends. Knowledgeable tourists also seek out Ocean Park, which has several guesthouses catering to young urban professionals from the East Coast, both gay and straight. There definitely is a South Beach-Río vibe here, with more than a fair share of well-stuffed bikinis, but it's more low-key and Caribbean. It's a good spot for tourists and locals to mix. There are a few beachfront bar/restaurants housed in the guesthouses, good for a snack or lunch or soft drink.

### **Best Beach for Families:**

Luquillo Beach, 30 miles east of San Juan, has better sands and clearer waters than most. The vast sandy beach opens onto a crescent-shaped bay edged by a coconut grove. Coral reefs protect the crystal-clear lagoon from the often rough Atlantic waters – making Luquillo a good place for young children to swim. Much photographed because of its white sands, Luquillo also has picnic areas with changing rooms, lockers, and showers.

### **Best for Swimming:**

Pine Grove Beach, which stretches between the Ritz-Carlton and the Marriott Courtyard at the end of Isla Verde near the airport, is a crescent, white-sand beach, whose tranquil, blue waters are protected by an offshore reef from the often rough Atlantic current. The water is sheltered, and a long sandbar means shallow water stretches a long way offshore. There's more of a surf to the east – popular for surfing, boogie boarding, and body surfing. Waves are well formed but never too big, which makes it a perfect spot to learn to surf. Local surfers give lessons and rent boards from this beach, which is also a favorite for small sail boats and catamarans. There are no public facilities here, but it's a short walk to restaurants in the Isla Verde district. Both hotels on the beach have restaurants, bars and restroom facilities. The beach also connects to the Carolina Public Beach, which has lockers, outdoor showers and restrooms, and is immediately adjacent to the east. If you are driving here, parking at the public beach may be your best bet. It's right off Rte. 187 on the road to Piñones. Outside San Juan, the best beaches for swimming are probably Guánica's Playa Santa and Caña Gorda beaches in southwest Puerto Rico. The water is extremely warm and absolutely calm year round, and both spots boast wide, white-sand beaches with vistas of nothing but Caribbean Sea and hilly coastline.

### **Best for Scenery:**

In the southwestern corner of Puerto Rico, Boquerón Beach and its neighboring area brings to mind a tropical Cape Cod. The beach town of Boquerón itself, filled with colorful scenery, stands along the coast just beside the beach running along a 3-mile (4.8km) bay, with palm-fringed white sand curving away on both sides. The water is always tranquil, making it perfect for families and swimming. There's fine snorkeling, sailing and fishing as well. The beach here is also one of the Puerto Rico's state-run public beaches, with lifeguards, lockers, bathrooms, showers, a cafeteria and sundries shop, and picnic tables and barbecue pits. The village is a ramshackle collection of open-air establishments along the coast selling seafood and drinks. Fresh oysters are shucked on the spot and doused with Tabasco. Try the fried fritters filled with freshly caught fish or Caribbean lobster. There are plenty of interesting photo ops at this beach and its adjacent town.

### **Best for Surfing:**

The winter surf along Puerto Rico's northwest coast is the best in the region. Generally regarded as one of the best surf spots across the globe, it draws surfers from around the world. Rincón is the center of the island surf scene, but it extends to neighboring Isabela and Aguadilla. Dubbed the "Caribbean Pipeline," winter waves here can approach 20 feet (6.1m) in height, equaling the force of the surf on Oahu's north shore. Rincón became a renowned surfing destination when it hosted the 1968 world surfing championships. Famed surfing beaches in town include Puntas, Domes, Tres Palmas, and Steps. In Aguadilla, surfers head to Gas Chambers, Crash Boat, or Wilderness; in Isabela, spots include Jobos and Middles. The best time to surf is from November through April, but summer storms can also kick up the surf. In the summer season when the waves diminish, these northwest beaches double as spots for windsurfing and snorkeling. Calm waters filled with coral reefs and marine life.

### **Best for Windsurfing:**

Puerto Rico is filled with places for windsurfing and, increasingly, kite surfing. San Juan itself is a windsurfer's haven, and you'll see them off the coast from Pine Grove beach near the airport all the way west to where Ocean Park runs into Condado at Parque del Indio. Punta Las Marías, between Ocean Park and Isla Verde, is a center of activity. The Condado Lagoon is also popular for windsurfing. (It's increasingly popular with kayakers too.) The northwest, from Rincón to Isabela, is another center for windsurfing, with strong winds throughout the year.

### **Best Beaches for Being Alone:**

Puerto Rico is filled with isolated sandy coves and virgin white beaches accessible only by dirt roads that only the locals seem to know about. The best stretch between Cabo Rojo (the southwesterly tip of Puerto Rico) all the way east to Ponce. Guánica has several, including Las Paldas and La Jungla, which are empty except during holiday weekends. In Fajardo, a 2-mile hike from the Seven Seas Public Beach will reward you with the breathtaking El Convento Beach, along the miles-long undeveloped coastline stretching between Fajardo and Luquillo. There is almost nothing but white-sand beach and pristine aquamarine waters. The area is a nesting site for endangered sea turtles, and there is excellent snorkeling just offshore, where the water is rife with unspoiled coral reefs and marine life. Because access to many of these is limited due to poor roads, it is necessary to bring supplies, including fresh drinking water.

### **Best for Snorkeling:**

See the "Resource Guide" in your Villa – but the southwest, from Guánica through Boquerón, has excellent snorkeling with plenty of reefs and marine life right offshore. In the summer, once the big surf quiets down, several beaches in the northwest, from Rincón to Isabela, also boast good snorkeling. Steps is one of the best spots.

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