



Theresa Mazza
Director of Educational Travel
Notch Above Tours

Tel: + 1 (802) - 881- 0661 x-3
theresa@notchabovetours.com
<https://www.notchabovetours.com/>



Puerto Rico - 5 Days/4 Nights

Puerto Rico Culture & Paradise

Immerse yourself in Puerto Rico's vibrant culture and stunning landscapes on this enriching journey. Explore Loíza's Afro-Puerto Rican heritage with a Bomba dance lesson, meet local artists, and discover Old San Juan's colonial history. Experience sustainable farming in Adjuntas and learn about Puerto Rico's economic and environmental challenges. Enjoy nature walks, hike through El Yunque rainforest, and kayak in the famous Bioluminescent Bay. Participate in a "Leave No Trace" service experience with SOAR, gaining skills to protect Puerto Rico's natural beauty.

Day 1



Departure

From BTV, Boston or Montreal



¡Bienvenidos a Puerto Rico!

¡Bienvenidos a la Isla del Encanto!

Arrive at San Juan Airport where your Group Leader will meet and escort you to your lodging to check in.



CHECK-IN 6:00 PM - 30 min -

Check in at Dreams Miramar (or similar)

Location

Comfortable rooms, all with AC, and within walking distance of Distrito T-Mobile, San Juan's modern dining and entertainment complex with restaurants, shops, and live events. It's also just one mile from Old San Juan, the city's historic colonial district filled with colorful architecture, cobblestone streets, and cultural landmarks.



- 2 hr -

Activity for the Afternoon

After lunch, head out on a guided walking tour of Santurce, one of San Juan's most vibrant neighborhoods.

Santurce is one of the most vibrant and creative neighborhoods in **San Juan**, known as the cultural and artistic heart of the city. Famous for its colorful street murals, galleries, music, and lively plazas, the area blends historic Caribbean culture with a modern arts scene.

For visitors, Santurce offers a chance to experience Puerto Rico's contemporary culture through local food, music, public art, and neighborhoods filled with energy and creativity.



DINNER ON YOUR OWN

Your guides will provide suggestion of what and where to eat or, you can select from many of the places suggested in the Information and Documents section of the itinerary.

Day 2



Breakfast at the hotel



Transfer to Loíza

Spend the day immersing yourself in the diverse cultural influences of Puerto Rico.

Begin by taking the bus to Loíza, renowned as "La Capital de la Tradición," celebrated for its vibrant contributions to dance, music, and cuisine blending traditional Taíno and African customs.



Cueva Maria

First, explore the the Maria De La Cruz Cave where our knowledgeable guide will lead you through its depths. Learn about the rich history and ties to the Taíno culture as you explore the significant site.



Beach Time!

Take some time to enjoy the beautiful beach of Loíza.



LUNCH INCLUDED

Lunch at [Villa Pesquera](#)

Villa Pesquera Herrera offers students an authentic taste of Puerto Rican coastal culture in a small fishing village in Loíza. Known for its fresh seafood and traditional island recipes, the restaurant provides a relaxed setting where students can practice Spanish, interact with locals, and experience the flavors and rhythms of everyday life in Puerto Rico. Dining here gives the group a meaningful opportunity to connect food, culture, and community.



Bomba Dance and Music Workshop

Participate in a traditional **Bomba dance lesson**, immersing yourself in the rhythmic beats and history of this Afro-Puerto Rican art form.

Bomba is one of Puerto Rico's oldest and most important traditional music and dance forms. It originated over 400 years ago among enslaved Africans working on Spanish sugar plantations, particularly in coastal communities like Loíza, and became a powerful way for people to express identity, resistance, and community.

What makes Bomba unique is the **conversation between the dancer and the drummer**. The lead dancer moves first, and the main drummer (playing a barrel drum called a *barril*) responds instantly to the dancer's movements, almost like a musical dialogue. The dancer leads the rhythm, challenging the drummer with steps, spins, and dramatic gestures.

Key elements of Bomba include:

- **Barril drums** made from rum barrels and animal skins
- **Call-and-response singing** between a lead singer and chorus
- **Improvised dancing**, often with large flowing skirts for women
- **Community participation**, where people gather in a circle and take turns dancing

Today, Bomba is both a **celebration of Afro-Puerto Rican heritage and a living cultural tradition** performed at festivals, community gatherings, and cultural events.

For students visiting Puerto Rico, experiencing Bomba is more than a performance—it's a way to see how music, language, and history come together to tell the story of the island's African roots and cultural resilience.



Carolina Museum of History and Art

Next, visit the Carolina Museum of History and Art for a hands-on experience with the plastic artist Celestino Ortiz. The experience focuses on the paintings of Cecilia Orta, the town's painter and one of the first black painters in PR. The class is held at the [Carolina Museum of History and Art](#).



Transfer to Dreams Miramar



DINNER ON YOUR OWN

Your experienced guides will provide suggestions of what and where to eat.

Day 3



Breakfast

Breakfast is provided at the hotel.



Transfer to Old San Juan and Walking Tour

After breakfast, set off on a guided walking tour of Old San Juan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its colorful colonial architecture, impressive fortresses, and lively plazas.

Your guide will share stories of the island's history, from Taíno roots to Spanish colonization to modern-day Puerto Rico. Along the way, stop at local shops and cafés for small tastings, giving you a flavorful introduction to Puerto Rican cuisine.



Old San Juan



Castillo San Felipe del Morro

Visiting **Castillo San Felipe del Morro** is like stepping into a real-life history book—right on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. This massive 16th-century Spanish fortress was built to protect Puerto Rico from invading ships, and as you explore its tunnels, towers, and lookout points, you'll see how soldiers defended the island hundreds of years ago.

Walk along the thick stone walls, peek out from cannon openings, and imagine what life was like for the people who lived and worked there. With incredible ocean views, wide open grassy fields, and plenty of spots to explore, El Morro is not just a historic site—it's an interactive experience that brings Puerto Rico's past to life.



FREE TIME TO EXPLORE AND GET LUNCH

In the afternoon, enjoy free time for lunch and to explore at your own pace, wander through artisan markets, browse boutiques, or relax with a coffee or tea in Plaza de Armas.



Transfer to Dreams Miramar



DINNER ON YOUR OWN

Your experienced guides will provide suggestions of what and where to eat.



Salsa Dance Instruction

Later, gather for a Salsa dance class led by professional instructors. You'll learn the basic steps and rhythms that define Puerto Rico's most famous dance style, and by the end you'll be moving confidently to the beat. The class doubles as a cultural immersion, connecting you with the music and energy that permeates the island's nightlife.

Salsa is one of the most recognizable music and dance styles of Puerto Rico and an important expression of Caribbean culture. Rooted in Afro-Caribbean rhythms, Cuban son, jazz, and Puerto Rican musical traditions, salsa developed in the mid-20th century and became internationally popular through Puerto Rican musicians and communities in New York and the Caribbean.

Salsa music is energetic and rhythmic, typically featuring **percussion (congas, bongos, timbales), piano, bass, and a vibrant brass section**. The dance is just as lively, with partners moving in coordinated steps, spins, and turns that follow the music's rhythm and structure.

In Puerto Rico, salsa is more than just music—it is a **social tradition and source of national pride**. Locals gather in clubs, plazas, and festivals to dance, and many of the genre's most influential artists, such as Héctor Lavoe, Willie Colón, and Marc Anthony, have roots on the island.

For students visiting Puerto Rico, experiencing salsa offers a lively way to **connect with the island's language, rhythm, and social culture**, whether watching a live band, learning basic dance steps, or joining locals on the dance floor.



Evening Out

Continue practicing what you learned with your dance lessons with an evening out in an appropriate space with your PR tour guides.

Day 4



8:00 AM - 1 hr -

Breakfast at the hotel



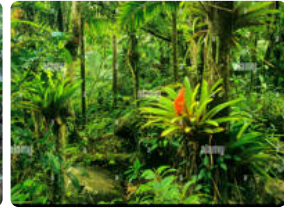
9:00 AM - 2 hr -

Transfer to EL Yunque

Today's adventure sees us hiking into the Yunque rainforest to visit a beautiful waterfall swimming hole. You can try out the natural rock slides and enjoy the refreshing river.

El Yunque National Forest is the only tropical rainforest in the U.S. National Forest system and one of Puerto Rico's most extraordinary natural treasures. Known for its lush green mountains, waterfalls, and incredible biodiversity, it is home to hundreds of plant species, colorful birds, and the famous **coqui frog**, whose distinctive nighttime call is a symbol of the island.

For visitors, El Yunque offers a chance to experience Puerto Rico's natural beauty through rainforest hikes, scenic viewpoints, and the sounds and smells of a vibrant tropical ecosystem.



2:00 PM -

Beach Time in Fajardo

Optional Activity - Snorkeling

This will require you to bring or rent equipment for an additional cost of approximately \$34



LATE LUNCH ON OWN

Note that there will be snacks and food provided for students prior to this late lunch.



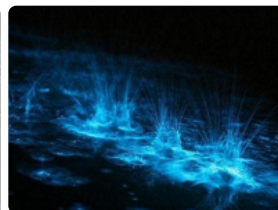
6:00 PM - 3 hr 30 min -

Transfer to Kayak Village and Bioluminescent Bay

In the afternoon, we head to the beach to take kayaks out into Puerto Rico's famous Bioluminescent Bay. This mangrove-circled bay is one of the world's best places to experience the bioluminescent plankton that give this place its name.

A **bioluminescent bay** in Puerto Rico is a rare natural phenomenon where the water glows bright blue at night when it is disturbed. This glow is caused by tiny microorganisms called **dinoflagellates** that emit light as a defense mechanism when the water moves, creating sparkling trails around paddles, fish, or even a hand in the water.

Puerto Rico is home to three of the world's best bioluminescent bays—most famously **Mosquito Bay in Vieques**, considered the brightest on Earth—making a nighttime kayak through the glowing water a truly unforgettable experience.



9:30 PM - 1 hr 30 min -

Transfer back to the Hotel with a Stop for Dinner

Day 5

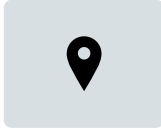


7:00 AM - 1 hr - Atlantic Standard Time

Breakfast at the hotel



Check out from Dreams Miramar



Dreams Miramar

635 Avenida Fernandez Juncos, San Juan, Puerto Rico



7:30 AM - Atlantic Standard Time

¡Buen Viaje!

We'll say goodbye to this Island paradise and head to the airport to fly home. We hope you enjoyed your stay in Puerto Rico!



Welcome Home!

Information & Documents



Your Package

Your Package Includes:

- Round-trip airfare (departure airport TBD)
- 4 nights hotel accommodation - double occupancy
- Breakfast daily
- 1 Lunch
- 2 full-time tour leaders throughout
- All activities in the itinerary
- All transportation in PR including airport transfers
- Airfare w/carry-on bag
- Taxes, service fees and gratuities
- Secure online payment portal for each student
- A single point of contact for schools and families before and during travel
- Travel Insurance

Not Included:

- Personal spending money, snacks, and souvenirs
- Transportation to and from departure airport if not BTV
- Meals not stated above
- Checked bag

Customization Note:

Hotels, dining venues, and included experiences are flexible and may be adjusted based on availability. Itineraries can be customized with additional nights, activities, and inclusions to best match the interests and goals of your group. Programs are available year-round and can be adapted for any season.