

San Juan, Puerto Rico

by Camille Pepe Sperrazza

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Isle Verde area:

The El San Juan - If you want to be where the action is, don't even consider staying any place else. This gorgeous, beachfront Spanish-themed resort is the most happening place in the area. On weekends the huge lobby/bar area is jumpin' with live Latin music. Join the fun on Saturday nights when it's packed with locals and guests, young and old, who literally dance the night away. It doesn't matter if you know the steps, because the locals take great pride in teaching you, and they keep everyone movin' on the dance floor. You'll make lots of new friends, as the atmosphere is friendly and oh-so-much fun. As the excitement takes place right in the lobby, there's no cover charge, and the action goes on until the wee hours. The fun spills over into the casino and the lobby bar, turning this place into one big party.

The pool area continues the classic Spanish-themed feel, but the lovely and spacious lead category rooms are decorated classy white on white, emphasizing and reminding you that you are at a beach resort. Go all out and get one of the Jacuzzi suite rooms.

Stay here, and you won't have to go anyplace else because there's restaurants and shopping, right on the premises. There are two Starbucks, and an Italian restaurant - La Piccola Fontana - that rivals whatever your favorite Italian happens to be. We loved it so much, we ate there twice. Other dining options include sushi, hibachi, and authentic Puerto Rican cuisine, just to name a few of the possibilities. On the rooftop, Jimmy's barbecue joint overlooks the ocean. You can go there for drinks at night, and enjoy the San Juan skyline.

Intercontinental - Steps from the El San Juan is the Intercontinental, also a beachfront property. It's a classic resort, offering guests a level of sophistication. Here, too, there's a casino, and some live music on Saturday evenings, but on a much quieter scale. Concierge rooms have king size beds and offer access to a lounge where breakfast is included, and snacks are offered in the late afternoon. A one-bedroom concierge suite features a Spanish-themed living room and a separate bedroom. There's an Italian restaurant, a Ruth's Chris steakhouse, and a Japanese, right on the premises. The pool area is pretty, with waterfalls, and a beach bar/restaurant.

The Water Club Beach Hotel - This boutique property - a hop, skip, and jump from the two resorts mentioned above - features 80 rooms, with an ultra modern feel. There's something that captures your eye at every turn. In the lobby and breakfast area, there's billowing, strategically placed sheer white curtains, ultra modern white seating, striking purple pillows, and vibrant artwork. Even riding the elevator is an experience. There's a glass top, allowing you to watch the ascent up to your room, or to the rooftop where there's a small pool, bar area, and cushy seats, providing an incredible view of the area. Tapas are served

here, as are tropical drinks. On the way down, take note of the "waterfall" that runs through the back of the elevator. The designer has seemingly thought of everything to make this a unique experience. The hallways continue the ultra modern feel with back lights; bright, glowing numbered doors; and lovely tiled floors that feature an intriguing rock design. Listen and you'll hear the piped-in sound of the ocean. It's all beach front, and staff will occasionally bring you some fruit kebobs while you soak up the sun. There's a business center and meeting space. Complimentary WiFi is included in the resort fee.

The Ritz-Carlton - just a few blocks down and around a corner from the above resorts is a Ritz-Carlton. If you crave high end luxury, this is the place. Everything about it is lovely, including the rest rooms in the lobby which feature individual sink stations and almond-scented liquid soap. The pool area is a beauty, and the casino sees plenty of action. There's an Il Mulino Restaurant on the premises. Also located on the beach. You can't go wrong when you stay at a Ritz-Carlton.

Condado Beach area:

Marriott in San Juan, on Condado Beach - Located beachfront, and walking distance to hotels, shopping, and restaurants, this lively resort is a beauty. The lobby bar is jumpin', and often features live entertainment. The casino is a busy place, with lots of action. The beach bar, with its fabulous ocean views, is another happening place. Good restaurants. Fresh seafood. Located in the Condado Beach area.

La Concha Resort - The Condado area reminds me of a miniature Las Vegas, as it features one hotel after the next, each with casinos, restaurants and bars sprinkled among them. But there's no desert here. Instead, stunning ocean views assure us we are in a tropical paradise. The beautiful La Concha lies in the midst of it all, stylish, hip, and happening.

The Doubletree by Hilton - If you're staying in San Juan before or after a cruise, or if you are on a modest budget, you can't go wrong at the Doubletree by Hilton. It's a modern facility, that offers complimentary WiFi and fresh cookies, upon check-in. Rooms are lovely, and bathrooms are all new, with modern glass features. The hotel is conveniently located across the street from a supermarket where you can pick up food, beverages, snacks, and even wine. There's an attractive pool, gym, and lobby, with a pretty seating area and large screen television. Many guests like to sit outdoors -- chairs and tables are provided in front of the hotel and in the pool area -- and guests enjoy beverages they've purchased at the supermarket or at the hotel's lobby bar. The hotel does have a restaurant as well as a fancy high-end chocolate shop on the premises. It's located in Condado, just a few blocks from the beach and casinos. If you're a walker, you can walk to the Marriott mentioned above. If not, it's a short taxi ride. But you can also opt to spend your days poolside, right here, and be content.

Sheraton Puerto Rico Convention Center - Located near the cruise ship terminal, this is the largest convention center in the Caribbean. It is state-of-the-art, and beautiful. Stay at a club room and get access to the Club Lounge with its stunning views, evening wines, and

snacks. Suites are spacious, and bedding is very inviting.

Caribe Hilton - situated between Condado and San Juan, this hotel is a wonderful choice. The main tower rooms are beautiful with incredible views of Condado. There are restaurants in the hotel's lobby as well as a lively bar and a Starbucks. At the villa section of the resort are two-bedroom suites that can accommodate up to 8 people, and come with a small kitchen. Great for groups and families. I attended a Friday night beach party where we danced on a "disco deck" built on the water. A quick cab ride away from old San Juan.



For more information or to book a trip, [contact](#) "Commodore" Camille today.

This article was accurate when it was written, but everything in life changes. Enjoy the journey!