

Do you have questions about Puerto Rico Study Abroad '09?

1. What kind of food will we eat?

At El Verde in the Rain Forest, we will do our own cooking (and cleaning up). Everyone will be asked to list their food preferences. We will shop for foods that all will eat. We will probably have cereal, eggs, bacon, juice & toast for breakfast. Soup & sandwiches with chips & cookies for lunch. Spaghetti, tacos, chicken, hamburgers, stir-fry, chili, & pizza with salads for dinner.

You will have a chance to stop at a grocery store to purchase sodas and snacks for yourself. These will not be included in the program fee. There are no vending machines at El Verde.

In Mayaguez, your breakfast is included in the price of the hotel room. You will eat across the street in a bakery. Your breakfast choices are hot cereal or eggs & ham sandwich. You will eat lunch on campus at the Student Center that serves dishes that you would see here at home in addition to rice & beans, a Puerto Rican staple. There are plenty of restaurants around our hotel for your evening meal: Subway, Quiznos, Chinese, Italian, and Mexican as well as traditional Puerto Rican. You will be given a per diem – an allowance for purchasing meals.

2. What will we do at night?

At El Verde, we will have some scheduled activities (see the syllabus). We may also have a movie night or two, so bring your favorite DVD's. Mayaguez is a major city with many activities. You will get to meet students at the University of Puerto Rico. They will be sure to show you the sights!

3. Where will we live?

At El Verde, you will live in dormitories/ apartments on the Field Station. The dormitories have a men's bathroom and a women's bathroom. The apartments have 2 bedrooms each – 3 beds in each bedroom for a total of 6 beds for 6 students per apartment. Each bedroom has one bathroom. The apartments also have a sitting/eating area and a kitchen.

In Mayaguez we will live in a converted monastery run by Howard Johnson. Each room has 2 beds and one bathroom for 2 students. The hotel has an outdoor swimming pool.

4. What is the temperature?

Warm to hot. At El Verde, you will want to wear long pants to do field work, but in the evening, you may want to change into shorts. In Mayaguez, you will want shorts.

5. Do I have to know Spanish?

No, most Puerto Ricans speak English. But it is good to be able to say “Gracias” “Hola” and a few other phrases. We will give you a list of common Spanish words you may encounter (like the word for “bathroom” (bano). Lectures will be in English.

6. What kind of money do they use?

Puerto Rico is a territory of the USA. They use dollars. Their banking system is the same as ours. Laws that we have here also apply in Puerto Rico.

7. Do we need a passport?

No. Puerto Rico is a territory of the USA. You will not be leaving the USA.

8. What should we bring?

We will provide a list this fall. El Verde will provide sheets, pillows, pillow cases and blankets, but you will need your own towels, soap, and shampoo. Plan to buy laundry soap and bring plenty of quarters for the machines. The Field Station has no hair dryers.

You will need shoes with a good non-slip tread for the field work. And lots of socks and at least 2 sets of field pants & shirts.

An umbrella will come in handy in Mayaguez!

9. Will my cell phone work?

I have AT&T and can find spots at the Field Station where I can get a signal. My husband has Verizon and was not able to get a signal in El Verde. There are no phones at the station. Your family can call the campus office in San Juan during office hours on weekdays. They will radio the Station Director with messages. Your family can leave messages on my cell phone also. It is easier to communicate through e-mail while at the Field Station.

In Mayaguez I had no problem using my cell.

10. What about internet?

No problem. The Field Station has 7 computers hard wired into the web. The Station is also wireless, so you can bring your laptop – but you don’t have to. The hotel in Mayaguez is also wireless. We will have access to computer labs at the University of Puerto Rico. If you don’t bring a laptop, bring a memory stick.

11. Is it safe?

There are no poisonous snakes in Puerto Rico. There are no bears or wild cats in the Rain Forest – nothing that can hurt humans. There are plants that can give you a rash or that have thorns. I will point these out to you. The Station has a locked gate at the entrance (we will have a key). In Mayaguez our hotel has a guard on duty from 6pm to 6am daily. The hotel also has an entrance gate. There are police on almost every street corner in Mayaguez and the University has guards on patrol. When we arrive in Mayaguez, we will have a talk from Campus Security about city life.

12. Will we get into a town?

We have 2 off-site field trips while in the Rain forest. We will go to El Yunque and spend time at the Interpretive Center. They have a snack bar and gift shop there. On another day we will go to Las Cabezas de San Juan to tour the mangrove swamp. On both trips we will drive through towns and stop at a grocery so you can stock up on sodas and snacks to take back to the Field Station.

In Mayaguez, you will be in the center of a major city with restaurants, drug stores, grocery stores and museums.

13. What is the restaurant food like?

Inexpensive, tasty, and plentiful. Some restaurants are similar to ours – Italian, Mexican, and Chinese. Others are identical – Subway & Quiznos. Others are Puerto Rican. Be sure to try the mofongo.

14. Will we meet Puerto Rican students?

Yes, we are planning a welcome reception when we arrive in Mayaguez. You will meet students from the University of Puerto Rico who will take you out on the town later and show you which parts of town are student hangouts & which parts are not.

15. What about laundry?

The station has a laundry room. Plan to buy soap and bring lots of quarters with you. The hotel in Mayaguez has one washer & dryer. There are Laundromats on the edge of campus.

16. Does the Field Station have indoor plumbing?

Yes

17. Is the water safe to drink?

The water at the Field Station comes from a local stream that is run through a purification plant at the Station. The water in Mayaguez is city water. It is safe to drink.

18. What kind of electricity do they use?

Electricity is the same as ours. All of your electrical items will work.

19. Do I have to have shots?

No, but make sure your tetanus shots are up to date since we will be doing field work. Puerto Rico does not have malaria or yellow fever.

20. What airport will we use?

We will fly out of the Philadelphia airport on American Airlines flight 1985 on January 5, 2009. We will land in San Juan. We will leave from the San Juan airport on AA flight 1738 on February 5, 2009.