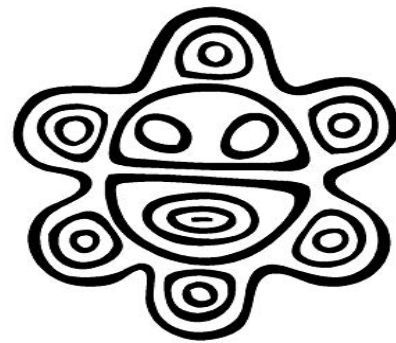


Welcome to Sector / Base San Juan!



Helpful Hints

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¹ Disclaimer: Mention of a commercial product or service does not constitute, and should not be mistaken for, official endorsement or rejection by the US Government or any element thereof.

¡BIENVENIDOS! WELCOME to Puerto Rico!

The moment you received or contemplated orders to Puerto Rico, you probably did a web search that pulled up images of sun-drenched white-sand beaches fringed by palm trees and happy, relaxed people with tanned faces sipping beverages out of coconuts.

Puerto Rico is a beautiful tropical island that many people seek out for a relaxing vacation. As members of the Coast Guard family, we are coming here under orders, to work, and live for a period of years. Over the last several years members and spouses have compiled the following information, much of it from “lessons learned,” to help future USCG members and families more easily transition to life in the Caribbean.

THINGS TO KNOW IMMEDIATELY UPON ARRIVAL

** If you have an emergency situation (fire, medical, police) where you are staying, CALL 911; this service works here just like in the states, bilingual operators should be available. If staying at RBH: if possible OR if you have problems with the 911 system, call RBH Security at 787-774-0054 so they can direct EMS to the appropriate unit. If you require further assistance, call the Sector Command Center 787-289-2041 or OOD at 787-501-6437.

* If you go to the emergency room or are admitted to the hospital: active duty must contact the Duty Health Services Technician (787-360-1613), dependents may contact the Duty Health Services Technician for advice and assistance.*

Please save these phone numbers in your home, car, and cell phone!!!

Units within the AOR

MSD St. Thomas-is a subordinate unit of Coast Guard Sector San Juan located in St. Thomas, USVI. The detachment's personnel maintain vigilance over the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. John, and Water Island. The USVI is considered “Americas Caribbean” and is one of the most popular cruise ship destinations in the world, with more than 600 cruise ships visiting each year.

Mailing Address:
3300 Veterans Drive
St. Thomas, VI 00802
340-776-3497

For more information visit:

[https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/sectorsanjuan/Prevention\(sp\)/MSDSTT/SitePages/Home.aspx](https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/sectorsanjuan/Prevention(sp)/MSDSTT/SitePages/Home.aspx)

RIO St. Croix- is a subordinate unit of Coast Guard San Juan located in St. Croix, USVI. They perform all marine safety related operational functions, vessel inspections, and aids in others mission areas/logistical support.

Air Station Borinquen- is an Air Station unit of Coast Guard Sector San Juan. It is located on the west side of Puerto Rico in the beautiful town of Aguadilla. They provide critical support to our multifaceted Coast Missions to include Search and Rescue, Drug Interdiction, and law enforcement.

Mailing Address:

260 Guard Road
Aguadilla, PR 00603
787-890-8400

For more information visit:

<https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/airstaborinquen/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Rio Bayamon Housing

RBH is a friendly community where on any given evening you'll find friends hanging out and grilling, chatting at the park while their children play, or meeting up at the sparkling pool to relax under the cabana. There are many activities and events (pool parties, fitness classes, volleyball pickup games, craft nights, etc.) sponsored by MWR, the Spouses Club, and community volunteers that you can participate in just by walking over (or driving in if you don't live at RBH)!

As of 2013, occupying Coast Guard government family housing is mandatory.³ Rio Bayamon Housing is located on 37.5 acres of CG-owned land in Bayamon, PR. There are 149 housing units, constructed in 1997. A renovation project is underway; non-renovated houses are being left vacant to ensure no one has to move out for a renovation; therefore, only the partially renovated or fully renovated houses are occupied. Each housing unit is equipped with energy-efficient central A/C, electric range with vented hood, 80-gallon water heater or equivalent tankless system, refrigerator, dishwasher, garbage disposal, washer and electric dryer hook-ups, carport, screened patio, and cable-ready access in the majority of the rooms. Cable TV and Internet setup is accomplished with the local service providers. Rio Bayamon housing is guarded 24 hours a day with security rounds to ensure the safety and the well-being of our community. Amenities include a pool, basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts. The community center includes weight room. Spinning

³ This means that if there is a vacancy, the CG must assign members to live in CG housing.

room, small library, on-site maintenance staff plus self-help options. We also have a few playgrounds, a dog park, and a Child Development Center. Free WiFi is provided at the community center and pool.

The pool at RBH is for all CG members and their families. It is open daily and a great place to relax and cool off. After-hours swim is reserved for adults who have passed a swim test with the Pool Manager and must be done with a buddy.

Fitness: along with the fitness gym in the community center, there's a 1 mile paved trail around housing which many residents walk/run/bike for exercise. There is usually some type of group activity (Exercise group, Yoga, etc.), just ask! Also, remember that CG members and dependents can also use the gym facility at Fort Buchanan.

MWR –check-in with MWR. MWR will provide information about accessing the gym, pool, etc. MWR sponsors MANY community events. MWR also rents some equipment out! For more information contact them at 787-774-0298 option 4 or see their internet website⁴ or CG Portal site.

Dog Park- available on the west side of RBH. This is a great fenced area for your dog to run around in.

CDC –The Child Development Center – is open weekdays for childcare: full-time, part-time and as available hourly spaces. The 'after-school' program is for children arriving on the bus when parents are not home yet. For more information contact them at 787-774-0468 or see their Portal site or internet site.

Getting there – directions are omitted from this document because it is posted to the internet. A map is provided in the [Reporting Aboard](#) section of the Sector San Juan's CG Portal site (CAC required for access). Your sponsor can tell you how to drive to RBH and show you on a map.

GPS & Address for RBH Gate – GPS Coordinates: (18.387N, 66.124W). Address: 500 Carr 177. Some mapping programs will not correctly plot the address.

Unaccompanied Personnel Housing (UPH)

Occupying Coast Guard government housing is mandatory for unaccompanied personnel if there is a vacancy. Typically supply and demand is such that non-rates and junior Petty Officers are not released from government housing. However, any member may choose to live in the UPH, and several Officers and Chiefs do so. Geo-bachelors may obtain a room in UPH and should contact your sponsor regarding your specific situation. Contact the UPH staff for the latest information, and see the Old San Juan section on the next page.

Living on the Economy

The Old San Juan Facility is located in Old San Juan, one of the premier destinations in Puerto Rico and a very popular tourism area for travelers and locals alike. Although housing is mandatory, there are more CG families assigned to San Juan than CG family housing units and UPH rooms. Therefore, some families will be released to live on the economy. Make sure to secure your release from government quarters before signing a lease on the economy. You should also check flood/storm surge/tsunami risk maps—for certain scenarios, the USCG or local authorities may require people in certain areas to evacuate. If you decide to live on the economy, here are different neighborhoods within the San Juan metropolitan area worth investigating (neighborhoods are listed in order of distance to Old San Juan).

Old San Juan

Old San Juan is the oldest western settlement within Puerto Rico and has been declared a National Historic Landmark District. The streets of Old San Juan feature wonderful colonial Spanish architecture with cobblestone streets, world-renowned restaurants, museums, open-air-cafes, and two historic forts (San Felipe del Morro and San Cristóbal). Throughout the year there are many festivals and events⁷ that draw hundreds of thousands of visitors. Here you'll find furnished and unfurnished apartments and condominium units, and the Old San Juan Facility is located within walking distance of anywhere in Old San Juan.

Condado

Condado is about three miles east of Old San Juan, and has a Miami Beach-type atmosphere with upscale restaurants, bars, and designer boutiques. There are several waterfront parks with beach access. In Condado, you'll primarily find apartment and condominium rentals with a limited number of stand-alone homes. A bus runs regularly between Condado and Old San Juan and some members commute via bicycle.

Isla Verde

Isla Verde is about eight miles east of Old San Juan and has one of the best beaches in all of the Caribbean. Its generally calm waters make it ideal for swimming,

⁷ Holidays are listed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_holidays_in_Puerto_Rico.

windsurfing, kite boarding, and kayaking. Like Condado, you'll primarily find apartments and condominiums.

Other popular areas

If you are looking to rent a house, the suburbs of metro San Juan are generally your best options. The towns of Carolina, Guaynabo, Trujillo Alto, Bayamón, and Dorado are within reasonable commuting distances of the Old San Juan Facility. Although Puerto Rico is relatively small (100 miles by 35 miles, roughly the size of Connecticut), it has the highest automobile density in the world (4,300 cars per mile of paved road), and as a result, commute times can be extremely long. Morning commute from RBH to BSJ takes about 20-25 minutes; late afternoon can be 30-45 minutes.

Things to consider when investigating living on the economy

Here are some helpful tips compiled by members that are currently living on the economy that can help with your planning and preparation:

- If you are able, one of the best things you can do to get an idea of different neighborhoods is to come down to Puerto Rico a couple of months before your PCS move. It is very difficult to find a home solely online, and spending some time here can allow you to avoid costly mistakes.⁸ MWR has several rental units both in housing and rooms at the Old San Juan Facility that you may rent while doing your search.
- Working with a realtor can be very helpful, particularly if you are not fluent in Spanish. Many realtors here speak English and will be able to show you different areas in a very efficient manner.
- Consider concentrating your search on gated communities with security and controlled access. Many gated communities also feature pools, fitness centers, and other amenities. Some apartment and condominiums also offer 24-hour security and controlled access parking for your vehicle.
- If you are interested in an apartment in Old San Juan, Condado, or Isla Verde, there are typically more furnished units available than unfurnished. You may want to consider non-temp storage (at government expense if you choose before shipping from INCONUS) for the bulk of your furniture/HHG to open up more housing possibilities without needing to pay for storage in PR.
- Utilities, in general, are not as reliable as they are in the United States. In your search, you'll often come across buildings/houses that have back-up generators

⁸ If you are not able to make an advance visit, consider coming a few days early to go house hunting after reporting in. The unit wants you settled as soon as possible and you probably want the same. You can stay on TLA for up to 60 days but will need to be diligent in your searching.

and cisterns to mitigate those interruptions. Electricity is expensive; discuss the utilities allowance with your YN.

- If you are not comfortable with the Spanish language, having someone (friend, co-worker, sponsor, etc.) who is bilingual can be of tremendous help with housing options and all aspects of moving and settling in (scouting different areas, dealing with movers, setting up utilities, landlords, etc.)
- Our Legal Assistance Attorney is an excellent resource during this process. The Legal Assistance Attorney will look over your lease and make any needed recommendations before signing.
- Electric bills can be quite high, so know what is included in the rent and discuss the utilities allowance with your San Juan YN; if you plan to cool your house via open windows, inspect the screens and security features carefully.
- You can look for places on www.clasificadosonline.com or other sites.

Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA):

OHA is the allowance for reimbursing those living on the economy for housing expenses. It works differently than BAH (the housing allowance paid INCONUS). If you plan to live on the economy (not in the UPH or RBH), contact your San Juan YN well before committing to a particular lease or purchase to ensure you fully understand how OHA works. They will provide you with all the requirements for OHA and the utilities allowance, which is calculated separately.⁹ If you have further questions on the differences between OHA and BAH, please contact your corresponding sponsor or YN.

Postal mail and packages

The U.S. Postal Service provides the same services as the States. We have a ZIP code, not an APO/FPO address. Parcel rates can be higher; many people find that the free shipping with Amazon Prime makes it worth the membership fee. We recommend you send the USPS change of address form¹⁰ a week before you lose access to your old mailbox. It may take 45 days to get your first slug of mail but then it becomes more regular. As with any other move, switching important business statements to paperless will increase the speed of delivery.

Once you move to the place you will reside, you must change your mailing address to that address. When you contact individual businesses to change your address, some may not have an option on their website for PR...don't panic, just contact the company and explain that it's a US Territory with a ZIP code that receives US mail. Mentioning that you are moving due to military orders often helps too.

⁹ For more information on OHA visit <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/oha.cfm>

¹⁰ Forms are being replaced by <https://moversguide.usps.com/> (though there is a 'print and mail' option on the site).

Before arriving, you may temporarily forward your mail to the RBH Housing Office using the address:

Your Name

500 CARR 177 BOX 161

BAYAMON, PR 00959 The Urbanization code is available on [CG Portal](#).

You may do this even if you will not reside at RBH,¹¹ but please contact the housing office to inform them of your plan.

Once you are assigned a unit at RBH, change your address to:

Your name here

500 CARR 177 Box Z9-99 (*replace Z9 with unit letter and # and replace 99 with box #*)

BAYAMON, PR 00959 ¹² The Urbanization code is available on [CG Portal](#).

The Housing Office will inform you of your box number. All mail received at the local Post Office is sorted by box number, not house number, then given to the mail carrier for distribution. Some senders may not ship to a PO Box. You can either assure them that this is not a PO Box (UPS, FedEx, and UPS deliver packages to your door), or omit the box number for those shippers. Do not include "PO BOX" because some senders don't ship to PO Boxes. As the first piece of mail from each sender arrives, check it to ensure that it has your correct address.

If you will live in the UPH or on the economy, you may temporarily forward your mail to the BSJ mailroom using the following address:

Your Name

Unit

5 CALLE LA PUNTILLA

SAN JUAN, PR

00901-1800

It is essential that you include your unit or division; the mail is handled by a shipmate who has a lot of mail and supplies to manage. This mail will be picked up by your unit or Division. Don't forget to update your physical address in Direct Access when you are in your new place.

¹¹ For instance, if you choose to stay on Fort Buchanan while on TLA or will reside in Dorado on OHA.

¹² This address will work for all mail and parcels. USPS won't reference the APT/Unit number, so mail addressed only to B1, C1, D1, etc. may go to Box 1). Parcels which won't fit in the box, or are delivered by other than USPS, won't reference the box number. You may use this ZIP code regardless of whether your house is technically in Guaynabo or Bayamon.

First Class letters to and from the island are the same as CONUS letter rates. Parcels sent via USPS, UPS, or FEDEX to RBH are left at the front door of the house. The USCG Exchange in Old San Juan will special order items for people. Items ordered through the Army-Air Force Exchange web page have a free delivery option to the Fort B exchange.¹³

UPH management does not have capacity to handle mail or packages. Packages will be held at the BSJ mail room, where packages may be picked up Monday through Friday from 0730 to 1530.

Getting plugged in to the CG community

The Active Duty member will have a sponsor assigned. There is a “closed” group on Facebook for CG members and dependents living in with PCS orders to PR to communicate and ask questions. Ask the sponsor about the name of this closed group (after requesting to join, stand by for a private message within a few days).¹⁴ There is also a moderated email group that functions like a list server (ask your sponsor). Both are run by volunteers and are not official command entities. Morale events such as pool parties and the Coast Guard Day celebration are great places to meet others. There are also interest groups like a toddler playgroup, surfers, etc.

Schools

Children attending DoD, public, or private schools in Puerto Rico need to have a current physical prior to starting school, as well as a TB test. Hepatitis A immunization is also required in Puerto Rico. We recommend having any necessary immunizations and the physical form completed in the States or wherever you are coming from prior to your move, especially if the child is considering playing sports.

Fort Buchanan DODEA Schools in Puerto Rico

If you have school age children Pre-K – 12, Fort Buchanan schools are approximately 5 miles from RBH. Bus transportation is provided to and from RBH, as well as many other locations for others who may be living on the economy. Students wear a school uniform, which can be purchased at the Uniforms Outlet in San Juan. There is a uniform swap at RBH at usually twice a year.

If there is a possibility that your child will play sports at the Middle School or High School, then it is recommended that you have a sports physical done instead of a regular physical. The sports physical form can be found at

¹³ Amazon Prime usually ships via USPS and not Second Day Air like in CONUS. Refer to their policies.

¹⁴ This message may go to the "message request," "Other messages," or "junk" folder.

www.dodea.edu/StudentServices/Health/healthForms.cfm under miscellaneous forms.

This link will help you out with any questions you may have regarding registration, immunizations, eligibility, medical forms and form 600:

<https://www.dodea.edu/Americas/aboutAm/amEligibility.cfm>

Antilles Elementary School (pre-K – 5)

<https://www.dodea.edu/AntillesES/index.cfm>

Main Office Numbers: 787-707-2364

Nurse: 787-707-2379.

For new students, the Elementary School nurse will accept the overseas screening physical (complete with the Doctor's signature) as the school registration physical if it has been completed in the last six months. Pre-K is half day.

Antilles Middle School (6-8)

<https://www.dodea.edu/AntillesMS/index.cfm>

Main Office Number: 787-707-2461

Nurse: 787-707-2463

Medical found on the website.

Please check website for Summer Reading Programs prior to starting school.

Antilles High School (9-12)

<https://www.dodea.edu/AntillesHS/index.cfm>

John Cunningham – High School Registrar – 787-707-2203 –

John.cunningham@am.dodea.edu

Main Office Number – 787-792-5286

Nurse -787-707-2205

Medical Form found on website.

For new students, the High School nurse will accept the overseas screening physical as the school registration physical if it has been completed in the last six months.

Note the overseas screening physical cannot take the place of a Sports physical.

Please check website for Summer Reading Programs prior to starting school

*If you wish to inquiry about public schools, private schools, or home schooling, please inquire with your sponsor.

Automobiles

Please see [Appendix B: Driving](#) for important information. See also Sector San Juan vehicle policies on the [CSO's CG Portal site](#).

Shipping your vehicle (see current

<https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/sectorsanjuan/logs/Transportation> for details)

USCG will pay shipping expenses for one vehicle. POVs can be tracked at www.pcsmypov.com. Once your vehicle arrives on island, you will need to bring your registration and ACAA sticker to the VPC to pick up your POV. In order to get a CG vehicle placard from Base San Juan you must have current insurance and registration. If your vehicle is delayed, contact the Transportation staff at Sector San Juan for the latest information about getting a rental car paid for by the shipping company or on a travel claim.

Ask your sponsor and/or contact the Sector San Juan Legal Office (787-729-2370) to find out about shipping a second vehicle to PR. You can get a tax exemption on the second vehicle but you will have to pay to ship it. We recommend you call the Legal Assistance Attorney for Sector San Juan (787-729-2310, fax 787-289-2058, email Jose.L.Suarez@uscg.mil) for help with the paperwork for the tax exemption for the second vehicle. The Hacienda office for this¹⁵ is located at The Mercantil Plaza, Ave. Ponce de León, Parada 27-½, San Juan, PR. Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 4:30, (787) 200-7700. *

Out-of-State License Plates – Keeping out-of-state license plates is allowed but requires you to maintain current registration from that state. Those with out-of-state plates must get the annual ACAA (Agency for the Compensation of Automobile Accidents) sticker, which is similar to No-Fault Personal Injury Protection Insurance INCONUS. These stickers are only good through July of each year and must be renewed annually. We recommend you purchase your sticker as soon as possible. You must bring it to pick up your POV from the VPC. You will be denied access to both the Old San Juan Facility, and Ft. Buchanan without a current ACCA sticker. The ACAA sticker can be purchased at the Hacienda (like the DMV in the States). The closest one to the Old San Juan Facility is located on the "LOW Road" in San Juan (but others such as Carolina may have a shorter wait). Make sure to bring driver's license, proof of insurance, vehicle registration, and \$35.00 (cash only).¹⁶ Your sponsor should be able to assist you in this process. You will be sent away if you are in shorts, tank tops, flip flops etc. (Some find it easiest to do all your business there in their CG uniform or business dress clothing.) Sometimes Sector San Juan has a morale fundraiser in which a Spanish-speaking morale rep takes the form you and many others fill out and goes to the Hacienda to get ACAA stickers. Some insurance companies will give you a rebate if you provide proof that you have purchased the ACAA sticker.

¹⁵ The Hacienda office in Mercantil Plaza is the only one in the San Juan Metro area for the excise tax exemption. There are more options for ACAA stickers and other transactions.

¹⁶ When filling out your ACAA form: 1. Put the VIN in the Registration Number field. 2. "date" field: for new-to-the-island vehicles, enter the date when the car was or will be available to pick up at the VPC. For renewals, enter 1JULYY, where YY is the current year. 3. If you have an ACAA sticker from the previous year, that number doesn't go anywhere as they change the old sticker with a new one, and they have different numbers. 4. leave the Serial Number field as N/A.

Vehicles registered in PR must have a “Marbete” sticker (instead of an ACAA sticker) which also proves insurance. Marbete stickers are good for one year are available at local banks.

Vehicle Insurance -- You will need to have your private insurance or The Compulsory Insurance (ACAA or Marbete) from the government of PR. Check with your current insurer, your sponsor, or the internet.

Buying a used vehicle in PR (“Island Car”)

Many families decide to buy an “island car” to use during their tour here, with the intention of selling it before they PCS out. Monitor SSJ Swap n Shop on FaceBook to find CG members selling their island cars. There is also a small used car lot on Fort Buchanan, near the commissary. If the vehicle you decide to purchase is already registered in PR you will not need to pay taxes; however, you should contact the Legal office at SSJ about the peculiarities of buying and selling a PR-registered vehicle if you are considering doing so. For instance, you should get proof that the seller has paid any traffic fines (otherwise you will have to pay the fines before you can register the vehicle).

To Rent or Not to Rent a car – Car rentals can be expensive. Check if your credit card offers insurance (and does not exclude PR) OR consider purchasing the extra insurance from the rental company. It can help you feel settled to drive around to start to get your bearings before your POV arrives. Your sponsor can help you find a ride to pick up the rental. FYI, Target car rental is not associated with the mainland retailer of the same name and symbol. Some hotels include a rental car in their package. TLA will not cover the cost of a rental car unless it is included in the hotel rate.

Maintenance and repair – there are national chains and local auto repair parts suppliers and repair shops. See the **Fort Buchanan** section of this document for information on auto services available there.

A note about bicycling

Due to road layout, commuting from RBH by bicycle is very difficult and there is no direct route. However, protected bike lanes on the high road and the middle road have improved the safety and beauty of commuting from other locations closer to the Old San Juan Facility.

Health Care

While living in Puerto Rico, most families utilize Tricare Prime Overseas, though a few choose Tricare Standard. The Coast Guard Clinic in Old San Juan is only available

to active-duty service members. Families may use the Rodriguez Army Health Clinic at Fort Buchanan or go to the Salus medical clinic in Guaynabo (very close to RBH).

The Rodriguez Army Health Clinic at Fort Buchanan can be designated as the PCM for dependents age 5 or older. They see patients for routine and urgent medical needs. The phone number is (787) 707-4392/4393. They are open 0630-1600, Monday through Friday. The website is www.rahc.amedd.army.mil. English is the primary language.

Salus medical clinic is considered the premier non-military clinic on the island and is a Mayo Clinic Care Network member. The clinic offers many specialties including primary-care doctors, pediatricians, dermatologists, OBs, cardiologists, optometrists, mental health care providers and even pediatric/adult dentistry. As with all Tricare Prime networks, you must see a primary-care doctor before you can see a specialist. Usually the Coast Guard Clinic will submit the referral request and all you have to do is call to make the appointment when the referral is approved. The website is: www.saluspr.com/en.

There are six hospital emergency rooms near Coast Guard housing. They are Hima-San Pablo (adult and separate pediatric ER), Hospital Melendez, Bayamon, Hospital Metropolitano, Veterans Hospital (only for active duty), Ashford-Presbyterian Hospital in Condado, and Centro Medico in Rio Piedras.

Overall, most families are pleased with the level of health care they receive here in Puerto Rico. However, remember that this is a U.S. territory and sometimes appointments and visits are not as smooth as the experiences in the continental U.S. It is important to be patient and willing to accept the differences that will be encountered. For instance, family or friends are expected to provide pillows, blankets, etc. for a hospital stay, and the air conditioning can be quite cold. Also, specialty appointments can take longer to obtain due to reduced availability of specialists. Tricare standards for appointment time still apply. If the system will not be able to meet those standards, HSWL has a mechanism (called Travel to Obtain Healthcare) which can fund travel to facilitate obtaining care within standards. Members anticipating bringing a dependent who regularly specialty needs care are welcome to contact SSJ Medical to discuss their situation. There are numerous Walgreens around the island that will fill Tricare prescriptions. Prior to arriving to arriving, ensure you and your family members are up to date on all medical exams, dental exams, cleanings, immunizations, and prescriptions prior to reporting.

As noted on our [Medical](#) CG Portal site, there is a quality assurance and customer feedback process.¹⁷

¹⁷ There is an officer on base whose role is to ensure that all CG personnel and their dependents have access to high quality health care and work-life programs. He is responsible for monitoring and evaluating clinically effective and efficient systems of care and service with the continuum of

Dengue Fever, Chikungunya, and Zika are caused by mosquito bites and are endemic in PR, so it is advisable to use repellent with DEET and try to eliminate standing water (even small quantities) near your dwelling. Please see more detailed Zika information provided on [Sector's CG Portal site](#) (CAC required).

Short-term lodging (Hotels & other)

On a base:

Rio Bayamon Housing

MWR has 7 guest houses available for rent. These include 1 four-bedroom, 2 three-bedroom, and 4 two-bedroom homes. All accept pets except the four-bedroom house. Reservations can be made up to three months in advance with orders. Living in guest housing a great way to begin connecting with your new Coast Guard community.

MWR Rooms on Base San Juan

10 rooms. Can't beat the commute, and the view is beautiful.

Holiday Inn on Fort Buchanan

www.ihg.com/armyhotels/hotels/us/en/fort-buchanan/mfbua/hoteldetail

Located on Ft. Buchanan. Pet-friendly. Within walking distance of the base schools, commissary, and Exchange.

Hotels

Some hotels have special "Coast Guard rates" and some will include a rental car in the hotel rate. It is best to call the local hotel to ask about these. It is recommended you check on any additional fees such as resort fees, parking, and pet fees. TLA will cover resort fees but not pet or parking fees, as long as the total is less than the total TLA allowance. MWR also has information about hotels with special rates. Not all

care. Additionally, as the CG Liaison to TRICARE Latin America, he works directly with TRICARE/ISOS representatives to ensure quality of patient care, evaluation of appropriateness and timeliness of service, and patient experience. If you have any issues or concerns regarding the CG HSWL Program and/or TRICARE, including care provided by civilian practices (whether PCM or specialist), please contact Dr. Wigfall. You may also use the HSWL Customer Service email: D7HSWLcustomerservice@uscg.mil. That email address is monitored to forward issues to the correct entity for action.

hotels have on-site laundry. Members on TLA are authorized to use the laundry facilities at the UPH; contact UPH staff.

Getting Taxes Waived at the Hotel

When traveling on official government business (can also be used when member is on TLA), the following information is required to request a government tax exemption for Puerto Rico hotels. There is no requirement to do this, but you may wish to do so if you wish to save the Coast Guard some money or your daily rate (with taxes) will exceed your TLA.

- Full name of every guest staying at hotel
- Arrival/departure date
- Hotel name
- Purpose of visit
- PCS Orders or email address with federal government domain

Send required information to roomtaxpr@prtourism.com. For further information you can contact the Room Tax Division of the PR Tourism Company at 787-721-2400 Ext. 3600. Please allow 2-3 working days to process. After approval, give to the hotel. Keep a copy of the approved exemption in case the hotel seems to have lost it.

Traveling with Pets

The government does not cover the cost of transporting your pet. Keep your receipt; you may be able to claim the cost on your taxes.¹⁸ Pets do not need to be quarantined when coming into Puerto Rico. Most airlines require a clean bill of health certificate within 10 days of your flight and a dog must be up to date on their rabies shot. All requirements can be found on the airline's website, and it is advisable to contact the airline. Smaller pets can fly in cabin under the seat for a fee. Make sure to check your airline's website for the correct size carrying case for your pet.

Some have used the United Pet Safe program to transfer their larger pets.

www.united.com/web/en-US/content/travel/animals/petsafe.aspx

PetSmart in Guaynabo at the San Patricio Plaza has a pet hotel and also doggie day camp. <http://stores.petsmart.com/Store/Details/2160> Phone: 787-774-1370

The SPCA has a financial grant program to help cover the cost of moving your pet. For details and application, see www.spcai.org/get-involved/military-support/operation-military-pets/operation-military-pets-assistance-application/.

¹⁸ Consult your tax advisor if considering claiming pet transportation expenses on as a tax write-off as moving expenses.

In the summer, some programs will only fly large animals during certain times of day to reduce exposure to high temperatures in the plane's cargo hold while waiting to unload, unless you pay for the climate controlled transport. If the forecast is too hot in San Juan at arrival time, the airline will not fly the pet because they don't want the pet to get overheated. If you must travel on a particular day (e.g., to report for duty) and your pet will be flying as cargo and not climate controlled, it is recommended that you have a friend on standby who can come pick up the pet at the airport of origin and ship the pet to you so you can make your flight and your pet can be cared for as well.

You may not need to fly on the same flight as your pet if they are flying as cargo. Be sure to know how long the airline will hold your pet for you to pick them up.

If you will be bringing your pet in the cabin (e.g., under the seat), it is recommended that you ask, when your booking your flight, how many pets are on that flight because certain airlines only allow 4 pets in the cabin at once.

Fort Buchanan

Fort B is located approx. 15 minutes away from housing, and has a lot of amenities and activities that we have access to. There are two gates: the [north gate](#)¹⁹ is simplest to navigate to and closest to the commissary and gas station, and the east or main gate is near the welcome center and golf course. Some of the services available at Fort B are:

- Welcome center (ID cards/DEERS needs can be taken care of here; appointments required.²⁰ TRICARE and the Personal Property Shipping Office are here also.)
- Exchange²¹ (also located here is the food court, barber shop, beauty salon, optometrist, hertz car rentals, and many kiosks. Outside there is a car dealer)
- Commissary (closed on Mondays and no adults without military or dependent ID allowed anytime)
- PXtra (home furnishings, sporting/camping goods, toys, lawn/garden,

¹⁹ The GPS coordinates for the north gate are N 18°25.086' W066°07.569'. If someone refers to the Main Gate, we recommend confirming whether they mean the one on the north or east side of Fort Buchanan.

²⁰ 787.707.3511 / 3872; appointments required and can be made at <https://rapids-appointments.dmdc.osd.mil/appointment/building.aspx?BuildingId=217&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>; See also <https://cgportal2.uscg.mil/units/sectorsanjuan/logs/SPO/ID%20Cards/Forms/AllItems.aspx> for information on what to bring and how to find this and other DEERS sites.

²¹ The CG Exchange at the Old San Juan Facility has a lot of items (including food, clothing, uniforms, sporting goods, kitchen items, propane, and electronics), and can do special orders.

propane)

- Gas station (gas sold in gallons not liters, one of few places in PR to pay at the pump; offers oil changes & you can purchase tires with a lifetime guarantee. Has a nice air pump for tires)
- Golf course (kids 12 & under golf free!)
- [Bowling alley](#)
- Library – weekly story time, borrow movies (DVD & VHS), it is also a great resource for music and adult and children’s books; closed Sundays
- Veterinary clinic 787-707-2038 building 676, Mon & Wed 8:30am-2pm/Thurs 8:30am- Noon. *Pay by cash or check only.
- Rodriguez Army Health Clinic (see additional information in the [Health Care](#) section of this document)
- Educational & developmental intervention services (EDIS) (free service for families who have questions/concerns about their child's (from birth to age 36 months) development.
- Post chapel– offers Protestant & Catholic services in English. (787)564-2014 / (787)598-7583
- [Automotive skills center](#) (certified emissions testing facility, flat tires, air conditioning, brakes, etc. plus recommendations on locating specialty services). Towing service (787-707-3972).
- [Waterspout](#) (splash pad/water park) Military family membership is available.
- [Physical fitness center](#) (full gym, ball courts, group exercises classes, indoor cycling, etc.) Can also be a resource for getting a shower when it’s not practical to get to your hotel. One-time registration required.
- Child Development Center and School Age Care Center- for information about the USCG CDC and its after school program, see <https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/sectorsanjuan/logs/MWR/SitePages/CDC.aspx> or <https://sjmwr.com/mwr/cdc/>.
- Lending closet (lends household item “packages” to “hold you over” until your household goods arrive call 787-707-3697 or 787-707-3682 to see what is available). Furniture may be available; they don’t deliver outside of Ft. B, but CG personnel may be able to borrow a USCG GV (if available) to transport loaner furniture.

For more information, and to see what is going on at Fort B, check out www.buchanan.army.mil/ and www.buchananmwr.com.

Beaches

There are many gorgeous beaches here. You can find world-class surfing, relaxation under a palm tree, snorkeling, food, protected coves for swimming, waves crashing on rocky outcrops, and more. Some beaches have several of these characteristics. www.puertoricodaytrips.com/beaches-101/ has a great orientation to them. You can also search our community's unofficial Facebook page²² for "beach" to see what other community members have shared. Although there are many places where you can just drive up to a roadside beach and enjoy it for free, there are advantages to paying a few dollars to park at a balneario (including that the balnearios have life guards, restrooms, showers, and water quality testing). Regarding water quality testing, note that this is done at many beaches throughout the U.S., and that the method (same as INCONUS) takes 24 hours to incubate. Beach contamination is more likely after a heavy rain www.puertoricodaytrips.com/beaches-101 has a link to the beach water quality monitoring report.

Miscellaneous

Cell Phones:

AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon all have service coverage in Puerto Rico, though perhaps not as solid as urban CONUS areas.

Personal Firearms:

You are strongly advised to not bring a firearm to Puerto Rico, even though it is possible to try. Firearms may NOT, under any circumstance, be stored within the Rio Bayamon Housing complex, in the Old San Juan Facility Armory, or in a vehicle. In addition, it is illegal to possess a firearm in PR unless you have a license from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; licenses from other states are not recognized or honored here. Bearing, carrying, or transporting a firearm requires the permission of a Superior Court Judge of Puerto Rico and to do so without proper documentation is a felony. It can take 6-12 months to obtain this documentation. Additionally, shipping firearms with your HHG can severely delay the release of your shipment. Further, it is even harder to ship a firearm off of the island when your tour is complete.

Government Travel Charge Card:

Every member should have a government charge card prior to departing for Puerto Rico. Verify the following with your current Government Travel Charge Card Coordinator prior to departure (because rules for OCONUS PCS are different than INCONUS and because GTCC rules change): You can use this card to cover food and

²² See the [Reporting Aboard](#) section of the Sector San Juan CG Portal site (CAC required for access) for help accessing this Facebook page)

hotel expenses while living on TLA. If the member does not have a government travel charge card, they should see their government travel charge card coordinator. Ask your current YN to charge your flight to the CBA vice your GTCC so you don't have a large bill.

Temporary Lodging Allowance (TLA):

TLA is a travel entitlement to cover the costs of lodging and meals while waiting for quarters, arranging housing on the economy, or waiting for HHG delivery. Members reporting to San Juan can receive up to 60 days of TLA. If justified, extensions can be granted through the Servicing Personnel Office. TLA rates are based on Per Diem rates and the number of dependents. Per Diem rates can be found at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/perdiemCalc.cfm.²³ TLA does not cover parking, rental cars, or pet fees. Lodging facilities with kitchens can alter the reimbursement for TLA.

TLA claims must be filed with your servicing YN. Claims can be filed no more often than every 10 days. A member must bring a copy of their PCS orders and itemized hotel receipts in order to file the claim. Meal receipts are not necessary as the Meals & Incidental Expenses part of TLA is a fixed amount, not based on actual expenses. It can take up to a month to receive funds. You cannot receive OHA and TLA at the same time. TLA stops the day OHA starts or you occupy quarters.

Do you have to know Spanish?

Many people do quite well without knowing the language. Living in a Spanish-speaking culture is a great opportunity to learn a language that is becoming more and more prevalent in the US. Newer web browsers and smartphones can be set to automatically translate websites, and web browsers should be able to use <http://translate.google.com> or similar sites.

Are there national chain stores/restaurants?

Yes, we have many of them. If you are considering whether to renew your warehouse club membership before you move, there is a Costco close to RBH, and a Sam's Club on route 2 between Old San Juan and RBH.

Why are the movers asking me to fill out a power of attorney?

Household goods (and other items) being moved into PR need to clear customs. Some TSPs (shipping companies) ask for a lot of information from you just in case they need it. Some of this may be necessary, and you should answer their questions about your shipment, but it is good practice to not sign a form authorizing someone else to represent you for tax matters unless the specific authorizations/limitations are completed. You should also ask for a Notice of Privacy Practices from the TSP,

²³ Details of TLA computations: www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/perdiem/Computing_TLA.pdf

and if you need to provide sensitive information such as a social security number, transmit it by phone or fax and not by email. If unsure, provide information through JPPSO (.mil email).

What is there to do?

Lots! In addition to listings from unit morale rep, CG MWR, and Ft. Buchanan MWR, ask your sponsor (and other San Juan shipmates) what their favorite activities are. Check out www.puertoricodaytrips.com for a wealth of information on fun activities; this is a review website that many people find very helpful.

What is the weather like?

Tropical! It is warm enough for year-round swimming, volleyball, etc. For averages over time, here are two websites that allow you to compare the typical weather in one or more locations:

Simple:

<http://adstest.climate.weather.com/outlook/travel/vacationplanner/compare>

More complex: <http://outflux.net/weather/noaa/index.php>

Electric Power?

Electrical power can be fragile in Puerto Rico. You must protect all electronics with durable surge protectors or uninterruptible power supplies to prevent damage from power surges, lightning strikes to the grid, and/or blackouts and brownouts. Don't underestimate how many common appliances have sensitive electronics in them. Also keep in mind that cheaper surge protectors may continue to allow power to flow once they have stopped working as a surge protector. The following web pages have a good discussion of surge protectors and UPSs:

<https://thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-surge-protector/> and

<https://thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-uninterruptible-power-supply-up>

Appendix A: Basic facts

Puerto Rico is about 100 miles long by 35 miles wide, about the size of Connecticut. It is a vibrant, modern, multicultural society, one that has been molded by Spanish, African, Indian, and U.S. influences. The local currency is the U.S. dollar, and no visas/passports are required to enter Puerto Rico from the United States. The trade winds cool the coastal towns and the temperature is lower in the mountains. PR is in the Atlantic Time Zone, and does not observe Daylight Savings Time, so in the summer the US East Coast observes our time, and in autumn they fall back to being one hour behind Puerto Rico.

Appendix B: Driving

This may seem like a daunting task at first, but you can drive safely here if you know what to expect. The culture of driving in PR is different.

- Be extra cautious during intense rainstorms since roads tend to flood easily, especially in Old San Juan.
- Slow down if you see “REDUCIR VELOCIDAD,” “LOMO,” or “REDUCTOR DE VELOCIDAD” as they mark speed humps.
- Emergency vehicles often have flashing lights on continuously—you don’t need to pull over unless they turn on the siren.
- If you visit the US Virgin Islands, be ready to adapt to driving on the left side of the road in a vehicle which has its steering wheel on the left.

Getting gas –Gasoline is sold by the liter – not the gallon. You must pay the cashier before pumping, and at most gas stations you cannot pay at the pump. The Fort Buchanan gas station lists prices by the gallon and you can pay at the pump.

AutoExpreso toll tags –Apply online at www.autoexpreso.com, but you will need to provide a credit card for automatic refill of the tag. There is a one-time setup fee (~\$10) per tag & you choose an amount (\$10, \$20, etc) to be deposited on the tags. Once you complete the setup you should receive your tag in the mail within 3 days and you can link it to a credit card for automatic replenishment. You can also purchase and recharge tags at the toll offices, toll booths (the ones marked “C” or “R”), or by phone (888-688-1010). At some toll gates (such as Rte 22 between Bayamon and Dorado), there is no “C” lane; to pass you must buy a pass in the “R” lane or use a pass that you already have.

Appendix C: Travel from the Airport

You should be familiar with the sponsor who has been assigned to you & your family. Your sponsor's immediate responsibility upon your arrival to the island is meeting you at the airport and ensuring you arrive at your MWR guest house at RBH, your hotel, or the Old San Juan Facility. Sponsors can also be a great source of information about life in Puerto Rico, so please feel free to ask questions. Uber cannot pick you up at the airport. Only taxis and car rental buses are allowed to pick up people from the airport.

Appendix D: Registering a new baby in PR

If you are expecting a baby, congratulations! Contact your ombudsman or medical for the latest verified information on this topic. The following verified information only addresses obtaining a birth certificate and social security card.

Birth Certificate and social security card

The hospital will not automatically issue you a birth certificate. However, they should give you paperwork upon discharge that you take to the demographic office to register the birth of your baby and apply for a birth certificate. It is very important that you check to ensure that this paperwork has been signed in PERMANENT INK by both the pediatrician who attended to your baby in the hospital as well as the OB/GYN who attended to you.

Within 30 days of discharge from the hospital, you need to take the paperwork from the hospital to the demographic office to apply for a birth certificate. The baby does not have to be present to receive a birth certificate. Bring with you your military ID, mother and father's birth certificate, and your marriage license.

At the demographic office, you should be issued the baby's birth certificate and leave with it on that day. The demographic office is located at Centro Medico or in the Canton Mall. The demographic office should automatically apply for a social security card for the baby when they issue you a birth certificate. Make sure you ask!

Puerto Rico law requires the inclusion of both parents' last names as part of the name of the child on birth certificates issued in Puerto Rico. This requirement is based on the Puerto Rican Spanish heritage in which both paternal and maternal last names are used. In response to our request for an exemption, the Puerto Rico Demographic Register (PRDR) issued "Informative Bulletin No. 5, 2013-2014 series". The Executive Director of the PRDR directs her personnel to allow the recording of births in Puerto Rico pursuant to the "law and culture" of the non-resident parents' place of origin if they so desire. Therefore, CG families having children in Puerto Rico may request that the name of the newly born would only contain the father's last name on the birth certificate. If you want only one last name on the birth certificate, we recommend you bring a copy of the attached Bulletin to the office of the Demographic Register at time of the birth's recording. In addition, CG families should bring proof that they are not legal residents of Puerto Rico, such as PCS orders, driver's licenses, and voting identification cards. Please contact SSJ Legal Office at (787) 729-2370 if you have any questions.