

HELPFUL HINTS

For living in Rio Bayamón Housing & Puerto Rico from people who've "been there...done that"

Puerto Rico is 100 miles long by 35 miles wide. Close to 4 million people live on the "Island of Enchantment," with more than a million in the greater San Juan metropolitan area alone. 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. Mail service is the US Postal Service. The climate is as close to perfect as it can get, averaging 83°F (22.7°C) in the winter and 85°F (29.4°C) in the summer. In other words, it's always summer! The trade winds cool the coastal towns and the temperature decreases as you go up into the higher mountains. Although the outside temp is warm, it is advised to carry a light sweater with you if you are going to a restaurant, doctor's office or hospital. The air conditioning can make it quite chilly! P.R. is in the Atlantic Time Zone, and does not observe Daylight Savings Time.

Other good sources of information are:

**"Welcome to Puerto Rico" packet at the Sector website.
www.uscg.mil/sectorsanjuan (see the Welcome Aboard Handbook link)

**If you are new to the Coast Guard 'family', check out the New Spouse Handbook for some great information on services, benefits and entitlements: <http://www.uscg.mil/esuseattle/docs/CoastGuardSeaLegs.pdf>

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¡BIENVENIDOS! WELCOME to Puerto Rico! Brought to you by the Spouse's Club of San Juan (revised 02/11)

We've all been in your place...new, scared, frustrated, & confused. To help you feel more comfortable, we have put together this light-hearted guide full of information that should help you in adjusting to island life. This guide has essential info about living in Rio Bayamón Housing (RBH), local driving, Fort Buchanan, civilian healthcare, and exploring. We've also created a separate packet of maps to guide you to local grocery stores, pharmacies, hospitals, theaters, dry cleaners and shopping galore. Hopefully this information will assist in making your transition to Isla del Encanto less stressful. For your part, you'll need to put aside whatever you may have heard or thought before arriving and realize you are not in Kansas (or the U.S.) anymore - and it can be a good thing!!

GETTING TO RBH FROM THE AIRPORT

By now you should be familiar with the sponsor who has been assigned to you & your family. Your sponsor's main responsibility is meeting you at the airport and ensuring you arrive at your MWR cottage at RBH, your hotel or the Base. Sponsors can also be a great source of information about military life in Puerto Rico. Don't be shy about asking your sponsor for suggestions about arranging a rental car and help with picking up some groceries. Sometimes you may find that you have so many questions, you don't know where to begin or what to ask; so you may want to ask your sponsor what info they feel is important OR what they found helpful when they moved to the

island!! They probably also know where the local 'pincho' stand is, (barbecued meat on a stick!) if you're ready to try some local food.

**Also, please give your spouses the contact information for the Sector or your units Ombudsman. Our ombudsmen are a great resource but are often underutilized so please take advantage of their knowledge & experience. If your unit does not have one, contact the Sector Ombudsman. Once you are settled, ask your spouse if he/she would be interested in volunteering for the position. It is a rewarding experience & beneficial to the Unit & the families.

When renting a car, it might still be best to have your sponsor meet you and follow their car back to RBH. If necessary, you can take a taxi from the airport. Cost is approximately \$30 for the one-way trip (you will pay extra if you have a pet, even if it is small & in a carrier and there may be a per suitcase charge) and here are a few helpful things to know and/or tell the taxi driver if they have no clue where to find.....

"Coast Guard Housing":

Tell the driver: Exit "Frailes" ("fry-ee-less") from Carretera 177, and also "American Military Academy" in Guaynabo ("gw-eye-nah-boh"). Our address is technically Bayamón ("bye-a-moan"/emphasis on the 'moan'), however we are right next to Guaynabo City.

* "CARR 177" is Carretera 177; it's an exit off Hwy 20 South

*Hwy 20 Sur (South) is also called 'Martinez Nadal'

*The taxi driver should head West (Oeste) on 177 and after two stoplights the exit for RBH says 'Frailes' & 'American Military Academy/Baldwin School' Continue to the Right off the exit and we are the first development on the right - you will see the words "Comunidad Rio Bayamón" and a gate guard where you will need to show military ID to enter.

By the way, once you get assigned to your RBH housing unit, your address will look like this:

500 CARR 177 Box #____

USCG Housing __-__

BAYAMON, PR 00959-_____

The Box # is the mailbox assigned to your unit. Technically, you don't need the 2nd line of the address, however, it can be very helpful if you are expecting a delivery or package to use your unit letter & number: "A-1", for example. Another tip is to include the USCG HOUSING UNIT ___ for the SHIPPING address & then omit that line for your billing address. Many banks/businesses (like USAA) will not accept the word BOX because their "system" thinks it's a PO box. For this reason, you may just want to put 500 Carr 177 #__ Unit__.

****For mail delivery before being assigned to a specific housing unit, your only option is to send it via the military member's name to Base San Juan - ask your sponsor for assistance with this, if needed.**

**** For some local forms, you may be asked what your "urbanization" is. We do not have one, just leave it blank****

THINGS TO KNOW IMMEDIATELY UPON ARRIVAL

***** If you have an emergency situation at your unit in housing (fire, medical, police), CALL 911, this service works here just like in the states, bilingual operators should be available. If possible OR if you have problems with the 911 system, call the RBH Security shack 787-774-0054 so they can direct EMS etc to the appropriate unit. If you require further assistance, call the Sector Command Center 787-289-2041 ****Please keep a record of these phone numbers in your unit, car as well as saved in your cell phone!!!*********

***If you are admitted to the hospital, contact the Duty Health Services Technician (787-360-1613)**. They are here to assist members &/or families with hospitalizations & make sure you are receiving adequate care. Again, please make a note of this number & save it in your cell phone, etc

1) **To Rent or Not to Rent a car!**- Car rentals are expensive here (you'll understand why when you see all the dented cars driving around - even new ones!). Just to be sure to check if your credit card offers insurance OR consider purchasing the extra insurance from the rental company. Still it can be a good idea to start to get your bearings before your POV arrives. You can reserve a rental before you even get to the island through Costco.com if

you are a Costco member. Go to the travel section of their website & look for rentals. Costco's prices are VERY competitive & most of the rental companies are located in or near at San Juan airport (airport code SJU). Keep in mind, you may not be able to use a debit card for the deposit. Many Coasties have also used Charlie Cars (www.charliecars.com, airport, Isla Verde & Condado locations), which has good prices. Hertz also has a desk at Fort B, (www.hertz.com.pr, 787-793-2693) or use a (free!) computer in the RBH library to compare prices at other companies. Be sure to ask for a military discount (check USAA rental discounts if you're a member). Your sponsor can help you find a ride to pick up the rental.

2) Once your POV arrives -(www.wherismypov.com) and/or the P.R. Vehicle Processing Center at 787-782-6544) make sure you have current insurance, registration & Coast Guard sticker. You can get a CG vehicle decal from Base San Juan (either at the main gate or Building 105) - you'll need your driver's license, proof of insurance and registration. You will need an ACAA sticker (fee is \$35 - bring cash and correct change only) & a P.R. vehicle inspection certificate (\$11) for your car. **They are required.** The ACAA sticker can be purchased at the Hacienda (like the DEPT of MOTOR VEHICLES in the States), which is located on the "LOW Road" in San Juan. Your sponsor should be able to direct you to it. Keep in mind, there is a dress code at the Hacienda. You will be sent away if you are in shorts, tank tops, flip flops etc. (It is usually just easiest to do all your business there in your CG uniform) The P.R. Vehicle Inspection Certificate [\$11 @ Automotive Center next to bowling alley at Fort Buchanan]. See "Driving in P.R." below for more advice. Be prepared to wait possibly an hour or more so bring some reading material & patience!

** Please ask your sponsor and/or contact Sector Legal Office (787-729-2370) to find out about shipping a 2nd vehicle to PR. Please be aware that the cost to ship the 2nd vehicle is "out of pocket" & there may be tax issues associated with the 2nd vehicle car**

3) **Set up TRICARE Overseas-ASAP**...Fill out your TRICARE overseas form and sign up for a PCM through Nelida Lazu, Beneficiary Service Rep., at Base San Juan. Ask around (neighbors, friends, Ombudsman, etc) if you'd like advice on choosing a doctor at Clinica Las Americas or other practitioners on the island.

4) **Household Goods**: You can contact **Mr. Tom Velez, (787-729-2316)** the Transportation Assistant at Base San Juan, for more information about whether your household goods shipment is on island, when to expect arrival and arranging delivery. It is wise to touch base with the shipping company often to check on the arrival of your household goods.

5) **Note: there is NO FLUORIDE in the water anywhere in P.R.** As outlined by the American Dental Association (ADA) guidelines, the SSJ Dental Officer recommends fluoride drops (for infants) or chewable tablets. Both the tablets and the drops require a prescription that can be obtained from the pediatrician or from the dentist. Based on demand, the SSJ Pharmacy may make fluoride available for the dependents. Topical fluoride is also beneficial for the teeth that are already present in the mouth; two main sources of topical fluoride are fluoridated toothpaste and fluoride-containing mouth rinses (ex. ACT) that do not contain alcohol. These can be purchased over-the-counter at any pharmacy, most grocery stores & the Commissary.

SPOUSE'S CLUB

The Spouse's Club would like to extend you a very warm welcome to Puerto Rico and Rio Bayamón Housing. The Spouses Club usually meets once monthly; it is open to all spouses. The club plans various community activities such as community clean-ups, wine tasting, holiday events & charitable functions. We encourage everyone to get involved and play an active part in making our community a great place to live.

LIVING IN RIO BAYAMÓN HOUSING (RBH)

Whether you've already received your household goods, or are still waiting - there are some things to know about living in RBH:

1. Everyone is welcome at **Spouse's Club** monthly meetings, the second Tuesday of each month in the Small Activity Room in RBH. Come see what it's about, get involved & make some new friends!
2. Check your email free at the Library or use the **free Wi-Fi** on your laptop in the Community Center.
3. **The toddler/pre-schooler playgroup** meets on Wednesdays at 11am at the covered playground.

4. **The Parrot newsletter** is the newsletter for USCG Sector San Juan and community. Every month, the Parrot has tips on beaches, restaurants & community events as well sector news. You can email contributions to rbhparrot@yahoo.com by the 25 of each month for publication on the first of the month.

At the present time, we also have an email system that let's you know important & fun things going on with our CG community. Your email address is never given out & does not appear on any of the mass emails that are sent. If you are interested in being placed on the emailing list, simply email **prcoastieconnection@gmail.com** & say that you would like to be added to the list. You can ask to be removed at any time.

5. The **community pool** is a great place to relax and cool off. The pool is closed Mondays. MWR provides pool parties free of charge for all active duty and dependents. After-hours swim is reserved for teens & adults who have passed a swim test with the Pool Manager & must be done with a buddy. Water aerobics & swim lessons are offered at the pool throughout the year. There is no charge for active duty members. There are daily, monthly and annual memberships for dependents.

6. A neighborhood **Book Club** exists, watch the Parrot for details.

7. Along with the **fitness gym** in the community center, there's a paved trail around housing which many residents walk/run for exercise. The trail is 1.1 miles long. There is usually some type of group activity (Exercise group in the Large Activity Room, Spinning classes, etc), just ask around!! Also, remember that the CG can also use the gym facility at Fort Buchanan, your ID is your pass. They have a variety of classes & activities.

8. The **Dog Park** can be accessed via a passcode once you have registered your pet with MWR. The dog park is usually empty so if your pet wants company, make a play date!

9. **OMBUDSMEN** act as liaison between families and the Command. They are here in RBH to guide you in a crisis or family emergency. They are also a valuable source of information about services available to military spouses. You can ask your spouse, sponsor, or MWR staff for the Sector Ombudsman's contact information. They will be happy to help you!!!

10. **BLOCK CAPTAINS -Hurricane season is from June 1st - November 30th.** Block Captains pass information between the command and families of RBH in the event of a hurricane or other emergency. A list of the block captains will be provided to RBH residents prior to Hurricane Season each year. Contact the Housing office or Sector Ombudsman to volunteer & be sure to stay alert & **check the weather daily.**

11. **Other things to know:**

MWR - All new RBH residents **must check-in with Housing & MWR.** Make sure to ask MWR for the wonderful **welcome basket** they provide to ALL San Juan families, in RBH or on the economy. It's chock full of information & goodies. MWR will also provide more information about accessing the tennis/basketball courts, pool membership, etc. MWR sponsors MANY community events such as Coast Guard Day, Welcome to Puerto Rico night, Friday night movies, children's holiday parties/activities, adult Christmas party, shopping trips, and children/teen activities. MWR also provides equipments rentals at RBH and Sector San Juan. You can rent anything from basketballs to surf boards!

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. Go inside for information on fees and health certification.

Mail - At some point you may receive mail in your box for other RBH residents and/or previous tenants; please pass it to the Housing Office - or be a kindly neighbor & deliver it to the unit if you know where it belongs. If the mail carrier leaves a notice for a package or certified letter, pick up is at the Bayamón Post Office in Flamboyán Gardens. [See included packet of maps.] Inside the Post Office, packages are on the far left; take a number & wait.

Radio/TV/Phone -Two radio stations here playing 'American' music are 93.1 and 105.7. The local NPR station is AM 1030. Sirius Satellite radio does work here (sometimes with a little static) but XM does not.

The number **for OneLink Cable communications** is 787- 250-7780
Dial 811 from any local phone to set up **P.R. phone service**

for your unit. Most cellular companies work well in P.R. (though not always the best reception inside our concrete housing!), & some residents use Vonage broadband phone service as an alternative to local phone hookup if you sign up for cable internet (see Powerlink under cable subscription services).

Housing Maintenance - [BORING...we know! But this is stuff you need to know right away!] Here at RBH, residents benefit from government housing (central A/C, no utility bills, generators, gated security, etc.), but also must do their part to care for individual units & the greater community. The Housing Manual has much more detail & you should read it thoroughly as well:

1. Work Orders - Submit Work Order Requests at the Housing Office (M-F, 7am-3:30pm) or online at <http://www.uscg.mil/sectorsanjuan/root/housingworkorder.html>

*****For Housing emergencies (NO hot water, NO A/C, ENTIRE household plumbing/toilets out of order) during business hours go directly to the Housing Office or maintenance shop ***After-hours housing emergencies (evenings/weekends), call the Duty DC at 787-379-0853*****

2. Lawn Care for the 'common areas' is handled by a commercial contractor, however, each resident maintains a portion of their own yard. Self-Help lawnmowers & weed-eaters may be borrowed from the Maintenance shop. Please ask for help if you are unsure of the proper operation of these tools, and be a kindly neighbor by returning these items clean & ready for use by the next resident in need. Residents are also responsible for taking fallen palm fronds to the dumpster area by the CDC

3. Trash pick-up is once weekly; presently, early MONDAY morning; trashcans are collected and returned to enclosure by contractors. Each household should take their own Recycling to the sorting dumpster fenced in next to the CDC parking lot. There are 3 dumpsters. The middle dumpster is for recyclables. Please break down cardboard boxes (especially during transfer season, it fills up fast!), and you can bag cans/plastic together. The recycling area is opened during the hours of 3pm-5pm daily for recycling drop-off. There is no glass recycling in PR.

4. Friendly Critters/Bugs! - You will soon discover the abundance of critters running around. The gecko/lizards are harmless & cute to watch, but if they give you the heebie-jeebies, try not to leave your doors open since a few may find their way inside. There are fire ants in the grass here, so be careful where you step (Fire ants usually live in large mounds that look like dirt). Black ants & some funky little (tiny!) brown/clear ants are a nuisance inside & out. They find the smallest cracks & come right in. Green Light (powder) and Terro (liquid/gel), available at Home Depot, make some great products to get rid of them. Housing Maintenance will have your unit sprayed if requested, but be aware it may simply drive the ants further indoors. Unfortunately, ants are persistent little buggers & will just keep coming back.

Termites (look like ants with wings) have been found in some units, and you should alert the Housing office if you see evidence of them in your unit. Mosquitoes & other little biting bugs (no-see-ums) are problematic for some people & don't seem to bother others. If you are one that tastes/smells good to mosquitoes, you'll want to put bug spray on pretty much whenever you step outside - they seem to be biting all day long, not just in the mornings & evenings. We also have had incidents of **Dengue Fever** here in P.R., so it is advisable to use repellent with Deet and try to eliminate any sources of standing water near your unit (rooftops, trashcans, etc.). Cockroaches (big & small) are also around & bothersome - bait traps seem to work quickly, or you can sprinkle boric acid powder in the back of your cabinets/behind appliances (away from kids & pets), and the internet has many helpful suggestions for 'bait balls'. You may find it's best to keep food in closed containers or Ziploc bags inside cabinets, and try to keep the kitchen as tidy as possible.

5. Air-Conditioning Filters - Check your A/C filters once a month to determine if they need replacing. (Ask for help if you've never lived someplace where you had to do this before.)

Despite high humidity, you'll find dust & dirt accumulate very quickly on the tile floors and get sucked up into the filters. Replacement filters can be picked up at the maintenance shop near guest parking directly across from C block. Be sure to check both A/C unit filter sizes before requesting new ones. If your family is particularly sensitive to indoor allergens or you have pets, look at the PXtra for 'MicroAllergen' filters - they have some of the right sizes, but not all.

6. Dehumidifiers - It is **highly recommended** to invest in one or two dehumidifiers for your housing unit, and they are well worth the expense; since we are in the Coast Guard, you will more than likely always live in an area of high humidity so it **will** get used!!! High humidity levels in P.R. do not allow the A/C (even constantly running) to remove enough moisture from the air to get rid of the musty smell you may find indoors. You will most likely discover the need to keep fresh foods in the fridge since they will spoil quickly if left out - bread, fruit, etc. If you are unsure whether you need a dehumidifier, try buying a 'closet hanger' of Damp Rid to test your unit - it is shocking how much water accumulates in the bag in just a few days! Dehumidifiers can be found at the PXtra, WalMart, Sears, Costco & Home Depot. The water will need to be dumped daily, or you may be able to use a hose to empty into one of the A/C unit drainage hole/pipes in the floor (located in 1st floor storage room, or 2nd floor closet).

Water Coolers

1. You can buy the 5 gallon jugs of water at the Pxtra at Fort Buchanan & at some grocers like Amigo. At the Pxtra, you pay about \$15 for the first full jug but you can trade in for a full one for about \$5.

2. Cable TV & Internet - OneLink Communications offers an upgrade to Digital cable with additional channels, HDTV and a DVR. Call 787-250-7780 for the cable box. They also offer PowerLink broadband cable internet service, and the monthly fee is discounted if you have the expanded/digital cable service as well. Installation is free unless you want the cable location moved or additional outlets; you pay for the modem and they have previously offered a reduced monthly rate for the first 6 months. (NOTE: Verify your mailing address is correct before signing the order form since some RBH residents have had trouble receiving a bill in the mail.)

DRIVING IN PUERTO RICO

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 here in P.R. is VERY different. The first thing is to drive defensively at all times, look around and understand that people are going to pull out in front of you. Also prepare to see people driving in a variety of places other than on the road...like emergency lanes and medians.

Watch out for scooters and motorcycles since they will weave between cars & lanes and ride everywhere they shouldn't. It actually can be quite entertaining to watch once you get used to it - you'll start to predict who will cut you off before it happens. Try to keep a positive and relaxed attitude, rather than let road rage get the best of you, at least in non-life-threatening situations. Avoid rush hours if at all possible: 7am - 10am and 3pm - 6:30pm. There are no public school buses, so everyone is dropping off or picking up their children (you'll see it from the American Military Academy on the road by Clinica Las Americas).

Rules of the road are somewhat different, as well: it is rare to see someone using a turn signal (unless they have left it on); stop signs appear to be optional (especially the ones just outside of RBH!); cars will 'edge' in ahead of you regardless of whether it is your lane and you are in the 'right;' one lane exit ramps become at least 2 lanes (sometimes 3!) when traffic slows or is at a standstill; and you will invariably see road workers closing off lanes (with little warning, sometimes just over a blind hill) to trim the weeds or so they can pressure wash and paint the concrete medians. And in case you didn't notice on the drive from the airport, POTHLES are EVERYWHERE and it's perfectly fine for cars to swerve into your lane to avoid the potholes in their lane! Be extra cautious during rainstorms since roads tend to flood easily, especially in Old San Juan.

Traffic laws in Puerto Rico are very strict and violators may have to pay heavy fines. That said you may witness many people who disregard the rules. For that reason be extra vigilant and practice good defensive driving.

Always keep a good map in your car, ensure your spare tire is ready to be used (you will get flats here!), carry some spare change for a random tollbooth in case you get lost and a Spanish-English dictionary can also be helpful. You may also want to carry some paper & pen so you can ask for a drawn map ('un mapa por favor') if someone is giving you directions, spare toilet paper and a gallon of water in your car.

Other things to consider about driving in P.R.:

Out of State License Plates - Keeping out of state license plates means you need to maintain current registration from that state. Get the annual ACAA sticker (Agency for the Compensation of Automobile Accidents) similar to No Fault Personal Injury Protection Insurance in the states, since it's required on all vehicles operated in Puerto Rico - \$35 payable at the Hacienda. And don't forget a PR Vehicle Inspection certificate - \$11 from the Automotive Skill Center at Fort B (cash & checks only, no appt necessary but it's first come-first served). There are VERY hefty fines from P.R. cops if you get pulled over & don't have everything in order.

Reading road signs - Distances in P.R. are in kilometers, but speed limit signs are in miles per hour. Road signs are not always visible, many may be damaged, removed or are covered by foliage. Try to use landmarks to remember locations at first, since if you ever get directions from a local they don't usually know the highway numbers or exit names anyway. Common road sign phrases are included with your maps.

Getting gas - The same type of gas is sold here, but by liter - not gallon. When getting gas, you can just say your car type, point & give them the money. If you want to try some Spanish you can say \$10 on pump five (diez en cinco). You normally always pay first, and with a credit card they'll want you to leave it & your i.d. at the counter till you're done filling up. Fort Buchanan is one of the few places you can fill up using a credit card at the pump. Avoid gas stations on the 'high road' into Old San Juan if using credit/debit cards.

AutoExpreso toll tags - If you don't want to carry change & will be driving on toll roads a lot, you can purchase a pass to avoid 'Cash' lanes. 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 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. You can also purchase tags at the toll offices, a Texaco station, or by phone (888-688-1010). Be aware that there are still a few tolls around P.R. not set up to accept the express tag & you will have to pay manually like everyone else.

Keep a map in your car - Additional maps of the San Juan metro area & island are found at Fort B (PX cash registers). Keep those Welcome Wagon phone numbers on hand, and ask your new friends/neighbors for their number, too, before you start exploring so you can call if you need help. In the end, try not to get too stressed about driving. You will get lost ~ we all did!! Who knows? You might just be amazed at how many different and wonderful things you'll find along the way!

WHAT'S AT FORT BUCHANAN? (Fort B)

Your packet has a map of Fort Buchanan Army Base to help you find your way around. The MAIN GATE is nearest to the PX/Commissary & Gas Station, and open 24 hours/day. All visitors and vehicles without military stickers (rental cars!) must use the Main Gate & stop at the Visitor Control Center (Bldg 670). The Golf Gate is accessed from Hwy 20 and open 5am to 9pm M-Sat, 5am-7pm Sundays.

Here's what you'll find: * **PX** - "Exchange" department store, also offers check cashing (up to \$300) near customer service * **Commissary** - grocery store (check here first! some items are cheaper than at PX!), **closed on Mondays** . As of January 2011, there are **NO VISITORS** allowed in the Fort Buchanan commissary. * **Food Court / Barber Shop / Beauty Salon / Hertz Rentals / Optometrist** * **PXtra** - includes things not found at PX like furniture, appliances, lawn/gardening, rugs, pet items, baby items & toys, liquor/beer/wine, also propane gas tanks, 5 gallon water jugs & refills

* **Gas Station** - now located across from Commissary near Main Gate, pay at the pump with credit card, offers oil changes & you can purchase tires with a lifetime guarantee (a good idea with all the potholes in P.R.!) * **Post Office** - normally open Mon-Sat, closed for some non-federal Puerto Rican holidays. Someone was told outgoing mail goes directly to the airport (avoids sorting at main P.R. post office), so possibly goes faster than from RBH mailbox?

* **Lending Closet** at Fort Buchanan can sometimes lend you household item "packages" to "hold you over" until your household goods arrive. Call them at 787-707-3697 or 707-3682 to see what is available for borrowing.

Other Services at Fort Buchanan* Welcome Center: Here you can change/update DEERS info, obtain new I.D.s, questions about household

goods shipments * **Golf Course** kids 12 & under golf free! * **Bowling Alley** *
* **Library**: weekly storytime, borrow movies (DVD & VHS), it is also a great resource for music, closed Sundays. Bring copy of military orders to obtain a library card * **Veterinary clinic**: 787-707-2039 building 676, Mon & Wed 8:30am-2pm/Thurs 8:30am-Noon * **Rodriguez Health Clinic 787-707-4393**: some prescription medications available (&free!) - see list in your basket

EDUCATIONAL & DEVELOPMENTAL INTERVENTION SERVICES

(EDIS): helps families who have questions/concerns about their child's development (from birth to age 36 months); EDIS can provide referrals to physical, occupational & speech therapists as well as other specialists. No cost for military families. Families that are in the process of moving to Puerto Rico with children with special needs should contact them to request services. The contact for this program is María de los A. Ortiz, EDIS Program Manager/Occupational Therapist Rodriguez Army Health Clinic Fort Buchanan, 00934 Office: (787) 707-2167/ 2165

<http://www.buchanan.army.mil/edis/home.html>

* **Post Chapel**: offers Protestant & Catholic services in English. There is a sign outside chapel with services times ***Automotive Skill Center vehicle**, 787-707-3972 Emissions test, cash/check only, they fix flat tires; must wear closed shoes to change your own oil and work on your car) They also provide towing services ***Waterspout** - water park. Military family annual membership is only \$50 (cash/check) * **Physical Fitness Center** ball courts, group exercises classes, indoor cycling, etc ***Child & Youth Services (Youth Sports)** ***Army Community Services** * for current events info at Fort B, download "MWR Caribbean" newsletter:

<http://www.buchanan.army.mil/MWR/default.html>

Remember, follow the "Rules" on base or risk getting a ticket/fine from Fort B security:

1. Cell phone usage only allowed in your car with 'hands-free' device once you are on the base;
2. No parking 'against' traffic - ex: Do not 'pull through' to the parking space ahead of you; do not "cut through" the lot via empty spaces
3. Make sure you have current insurance card & registration, valid drivers license, ACAA sticker (for out of state license plates) & P.R. vehicle inspection/smog certificate. Fort. B security may check these items at times - and have been known to deny entrance for not having it.

Antilles School (Fort Buchanan schools) Registration: All children need an annual physical for school (even for RBH CDC!), We've provided one copy of Form 600 & Supplement (you'll need one for each child attending Fort B schools); you'll also need to obtain a packet from the specific school your child will attend. Once you've completed the necessary paperwork, head to the registrar (Bldg 566, near the Post Office) to start your adventure. The transportation office for Bus passes is in the same building (566). Child Nutrition Services for their breakfast/lunch cards is located directly behind building 566 in a trailer.

Your child may need additional immunizations to attend school in PR. You may **NOT** need the GREEN PR IMMUNIZATION form for Proof of Immunizations for Fort B schools. If the school is asking for documentation for a specific immunization, you can ask the pediatrician to write on their prescription pad saying your child has received the required immunization, date etc (example, Joey Smith received 2nd dose of varicella vaccine on 9/24/2011). There is a fee for the green form & often times, it's unnecessary!!! Ask the school nurse what type of documentation they require!!

*****Uniforms for Fort B schools** are at "Froilan/ Uniform Outlet Inc." on the Old San Juan low road just past the McDonald's; say "Fort Buchanan" schools if you need help. Be sure to check with the school your child will attend about the color of polo shirt. Also, the store/parking is VERY crowded the last 2 weeks before school starts. You can also buy a plain but the appropriate color polo shirt for your child & have the AES, AMS or AHS patch (available from the uniform store) put on (\$3 each). Sometimes this is cost effective if you find a good price on the plain polo shirts. We currently have a "**School Shirt Recycle Program**" here in RBH. Read the Parrot for details about where & when the shirts will be available in RBH. These are gently used shirts that have been passed down from previous CG families...best of all.....they are FREE!!!!

Other schools in the area-

There are many private schools in the area, if you would like options. Some are bilingual, some are primarily Spanish This site lists many schools & usually can provide a direct link to the schools website OR contact information, <http://www.grandpajunior.com/Puerto.shtml>

Also, feel free to ask your sponsor, neighbors, ombudsman, friends where they send their children.

CIVILIAN HEALTHCARE IN P.R.

Doctor's visits, like everything else, will be a very different experience in P.R. You will most likely wait longer to be seen at appointments and more so for emergency room care, but physicians are usually bilingual. Your packet includes a copy of the handout 'After Hours Use of TRICARE Civilian Health Care Facilities' with advice on what to do when the clinic/your doctor's office is closed. If you experience problems with your PCM or a referral you can contact **Tricare Overseas Program Call Center (1-800-700-7104, www.tricare-overseas.com)**. If you need help translating in a medical situation you can call the **HS1 (Hospital Liaison) at 787-360-1613** or you can also try **Tricare Interpreter 1-800-834-5514**.

Clinica Las Americas/Guaynabo (CLAG)- 787-789-1919 You aren't required to choose a PCM doctor from Clinica (ask Nellie Lazu for a list of providers) CLAG is conveniently located to housing (near the American Military Academy) & has appointments similar to back "home" - scheduled for a specific time. HOWEVER, be advised they do require you to sign-in **30 minutes early (1 hr for the very first appt)** & you may actually be turned away if you are not there early enough. **It's also a good idea to learn your clinic file #s to schedule appointments easier over the phone.** Also, if you are trying to get a same day appointment for illness, call FIRST thing in the morning. Don't wait because they fill up quickly!!!

Clinica Las Americas/Guaynabo (CLAG) HOURS OF OPERATION-

Monday- Thursday 8am-9pm Friday 8am-7pm and Saturdays 8am-2pm. They are CLOSED on Sundays & most holidays. The **Main Number for the Clinic is 787-789-1919**. Push "9" for English when prompted. The **pediatric pager** number for CLAG is **787-493-0146**. This may be used for "after hours" concerns for **established** patients. Please be aware that they **do not** answer pager calls on Sundays or Holidays.

* **Step-by-step process at Clinica when you are there for an appt:** For general physician & pediatric appts, sign in at front window; Wait in waiting area; Go to window # when name is called (**you will be called in Spanish**) to sign your file authorizing insurance billing; Wait; Get called to nurse's

station/"infirmaria" for height/weight/ temperature check; Sometimes you proceed directly to doctor's office, sometimes you wait again until called. At the end of the appt you're expected to take your medical file to the check-out windows (near the Lab), but you shouldn't have any co-pays w/Tricare Prime Overseas. You can schedule any follow-up appts at that window as well. If you have problems with a doctor or referral at Clinica, speak with Luis Candelaria, TRICARE patient coordinator 787-789-1919 (x258).

Dental Appts: Check-in for dental appointments is at window #6 in the main Clinica lobby. The hygienist will come out to call you when ready. You will again have to take your file to a check-out window near dental before leaving - you may have a charge depending on the service.

**** As mentioned before, try to bring a sweater with you. It is very chilly in the offices. It's also a good idea to you bring something to pass the time for yourself &/or the kids. It makes waiting that much easier****

Medical Tests: Test results (MRI, X-ray, etc.) have to be picked up after 24/48 hours and brought to the follow-up appointment with your PCM or referred specialist since the results do not automatically get reported back to the doctor who ordered the tests.

Lab tests- There is a lab located within CLAG, but there are also others in the area that you may use if they accept Tricare. ****If you know that you will need lab work done prior to your next visit to CLAG, ask your provider to write the prescription for it so you can have it drawn & results in hand for the next time you are seen. This avoids seeing the doctor, having labs drawn, waiting for results & then waiting again to see the doctor with the results!!**

****As we mentioned you are not required to select a PCM at CLAG. Ask your ombudsman, friends, neighbors who they use. Regardless of which provider you use, we strongly encourage you to ask your physician if he/she has an AFTER HOURS contact number. This may save you a trip to the ER for minor illnesses or may facilitate faster treatment at the Emergency Room if your doctor is aware you are going to the ER***.**

Pharmacies - There is one located next to CLAG; also, Pharmacies at Costco and Amigo are good; Ft. B clinic (free! Bring list of available meds to Dr. appt so you can request prescriptions from the list); Walgreen's (nearest is located two stoplights past Rte 20 exits on CARR 177 East, open 24-hours); and Kmart (Guaynabo Plaza or San Patricio). ****Make sure you ask about pharmacy laws at the Pharmacy on your first visit. These laws differ slightly from laws in the United States and you may not be able to fill your prescription as you expected.**

Express Scripts (Tricare's mail order pharmacy) for any prescriptions that you need on a daily, recurring basis. 1-866-363-8667 (call to see if pre-registration is needed). They will accept prescriptions for 90 day supplies in most cases, which lessens trips to the pharmacy, amount paid in co-pays etc. It also means that you will have PLENTY of medication on hand in case an emergency (hurricane etc) arises. Your doctor can phone in prescriptions 1-877-283-3858 or fax them to 1-877-895-1900 with dependents full name, id #, D.O.B, mailing address & providers information. You may need to ask your physician/office staff to call or fax it in while you are there with them to ensure it gets done, but it is worth it in the long run!!!

Hospitals/Emergency Room Visits - Going to the hospital can be quite different from what you've experienced in the States. Be prepared to wait and bring warm clothing, blanket and pillow for your comfort (please note that most hospitals do not provide these items). Although most doctors are bilingual, nurses aren't always able/willing to speak English as it is considered a second language here. A scheduled admission or surgery requires a pre-registration process that can take hours. In stressful emergency situations when it can be difficult communicating, consider bringing a friend/ neighbor/ ombudsman with you for help. Never feel like you are here alone, there is always someone who can help. **Call the Duty Health Services Technician (787-360-1613)** for assistance from the Command. The closest hospital to RBH is San Pablo (in Bayamón, included with maps/directions), other options are: Auxilio Mutuo (off Rte 17 - local road to airport), and Ashford Presbyterian (Condado).

Having a baby in Puerto Rico - Like many things in Puerto Rico, you may find some differences from the states if you are expecting and having a baby here. Everything is done via civilian doctors, so you can either use a local hospital or travel back to the States early enough to switch TRICARE

coverage areas and give birth near family. The biggest issue for most women seems to be a language barrier with nurses (all doctors should be fluent in English), so it may be helpful to learn a few Spanish phrases before the big day. "Tengo dolor, medicina por favor" means 'I have pain, please give me some medicine.' It shouldn't be hard to find someone who has had a baby here if you want advice, so please ask around to familiarize yourself with different policies and facilities.

12 Things to know about pregnancy/childbirth in PR:

1. ARRIVING TO P.R. PREGNANT: The OB/GYN doctors at Clinica must begin seeing you before you are 6 months along. Sign up with TRICARE Overseas ASAP and make an appt with your PCM to get a referral to see the OB. **Talk to Nelly Lazu (787-729-2334, TRICARE Rep)** for assistance.

2) You will need to pre-register at the hospital. You will also need to purchase a "newborn" kit at this time, so be sure to bring a method of payment with you. (about \$20 for the baby kit & \$20 for scrubs for the father)

3. Natural childbirth is preferred, unless you've had a previous C-section, and (recently) pre-natal classes are required for anyone attending the birth/labor. Epidurals must be planned for in advance (& pre-approved via TRICARE). Nurses are very slow in dispensing pain medication post-delivery.

4. After a C-section, recovery is done in the general surgical recovery area. The baby is taken to the nursery and you/your spouse will not see the baby until you are moved to a maternity room.

5. TRICARE does not cover the cost of a 'private room', but you can pay out of pocket. A nurse will take the baby to the nursery if you are alone at night.

6. In a shared room, overnight guests must be female and your spouse can only see you/baby during regular visiting hours.

7. You will supply your own pillow, comforter, toiletries, maxipads, diapers.

8. Bring a few soft baby outfits (front snap newborn t-shirts are best).

9. It may be difficult to prevent your baby from receiving a pacifier or bottle of formula when he/she is taken to the nursery & your spouse cannot accompany the baby for receiving shots.

10. You may not receive much guidance from lactation nurses with learning to breastfeed your baby (possibly due to language barrier), but other spouses in RBH will be happy to help/offer advice.

11. Remember, in the event of a medical emergency or complication, the Command is prepared to evacuate any CG member/dependents to a military hospital in the States, if necessary.

12) Some of our spouses have had differing experiences with the rules for obtaining Birth Certificate/Social Security cards for newborns. You may want to get tips/advice for filling out paperwork for these items from other CG spouses. You will need to go to a govt office to obtain them, which is often time consuming since a limited number of birth certificates are issued on a daily basis. It is also customary in Puerto Rico for the baby to be given the fathers AND mothers last name on the birth certificate. Please ask for help with this to avoid confusion or problems with the documents.

HURRICANES & TROPICAL STORMS

Along with all of the usual moving 'stress', you are also arriving in the Caribbean just in time for hurricane season, which runs from June 1st until November 30th. There are many important things to consider in preparing your family and your residence for a hurricane. RBH Housing staff and maintenance & neighborhood **block captains** will pass along up-to-date information as the need arises when a tropical storm or hurricane is approaching. Please take the time to find out whom your block captain is so you are familiar with them. The Command has worked hard to ensure we will have limited electricity via generators, however, it is up to individual families to purchase & store their own household supplies & water. Below you will find a list of the recommended disaster kit needed to care for your family in the event of a hurricane.

In the event of a severe storm or hurricane cutting off basic services (water, electricity, telephone), families should have enough supplies on hand to last for at least 5 days. You should assemble the following items and store them in a sturdy container:

1. 5-day water supply - one gallon for each person per day (4 person family = 20 gallons)
2. 5-day food supply - canned or packaged food that will not need refrigeration and little to no preparation; baby food &/or pre-mixed formula
3. Clothing: One change of clothing and footwear per person (sealed in Ziplocs to keep dry), rain gear, sturdy shoes/work boots, hats & sunglasses
4. Blankets / Camp Shower
5. First aid kit (band-aids, sterile gauze pads & bandages, adhesive tape, pain reliever, anti-diarrheal, antacid, laxative, activated charcoal, antiseptic wipes, pair non-latex medical grade gloves, scissors, tweezers, cold pack, medicine dropper, eye drops and DON'T FORGET a supply of any prescription medications.
6. Emergency tools such as battery-operated radio and flashlights; car charger for cell phone; wrench to shut off household gas & water; signal flare; whistle; pliers
7. Batteries (lots of them!)
8. Cash & change - no electricity means **no ATMs or credit card machines** working (also a side note - ATM machines are called ATHs - if you have an ATH card, this might not work like a debit card but only as an actual ATM card).
9. Full tank of gasoline in your automobile(s)
10. Sanitation supplies including waterless hand soap (antibacterial) and toilet paper, feminine supplies, bucket with lid, garbage/trash bags, disinfectant, household chlorine bleach
11. Specialty items for infants and elderly, such as baby wipes, diapers, dentures or extra eyeglasses
12. Manual (non-electric) can opener
13. Fire extinguisher - (provided in each unit - kitchen)
14. Matches & candles (the commissary & px usually sell the large hurricane candles during the season)
15. Method for cooking (Sterno, camping/portable gas stoves or a barbecue grill and propane gas)
16. Bug spray & sunscreen (lots of it!)
17. Paper plates, bowls, utensils, and cups
18. Napkins / paper towels / aluminum foil / plastic storage containers / extra trash bags

19. Miscellaneous items: paper/pencil, needle/thread, tape, entertainment items (cards, board games, portable music device, etc.)

*****NOTE: Don't forget your pets! They will need food, water and medications, too.

It is very easy to avoid thinking about a hurricane when we live on a sunny tropical island. Don't be lulled into a false sense of security that 'it'll never happen while I'm here.' Read the information in your housing manual. Please be cautious when using some of the items listed above, especially around young children. Also, never operate a generator inside your house and be mindful of open flames.

By maintaining the exterior of your quarters & yard in an orderly fashion and keeping things securely stowed when not in use will prevent having too much to clean up during the countdown to the storm.

Keep your hurricane food & water stocked in an area where it won't be used up and need replenishing at the last minute. Plan a three to five day 'menu' for your family - ask yourself what you'd want to eat and be able to prepare without a stove or running water. Use that menu to create your shopping list for supplies. If space allows, consider storing some of your plastic water-filled jugs in the freezer to keep food frozen longer when the power goes out. Plan to use your canned supplies as a last resort, and use items in the fridge first to ensure the least amount of spoilage. Keep yourself busy by cooking & baking some food items to be used first - banana bread can be a great breakfast food and chili or a roast can be easily reheated for quick meals. Especially for children, try to be creative with your choice of paper plates ('zoo pals!') and games for easing stress during the post-storm recovery. Include the kids in your preparations and let them know what to expect.

Another good idea is to place important family documents and records (will, insurance policies, stocks/bonds, passports, SSN cards, birth/marriage certificates, immunization records, bank account info, credit card companies & numbers, etc.) in Ziplocs for protection. In the event that you would have to submit a loss claim with to the government and/or renters insurance (you should have renters insurance while living in RBH!), it will be extremely beneficial to have a household inventory. Even better would be to scan your documents and save an electronic copy on a portable disk/drive.

When the storm is approaching, you may want to fill any extra containers with water, such as bathtubs, trashcans, etc. In addition, think about checking on your neighbors that may not be ready, such as a spouse with children whose husband is on a patrol boat (which may have to get under way before the storm hits land). The waiting can be unnerving and you can certainly gather with neighbors to pass the time. Remember to call family in the States to touch base and reassure them you are prepared, since a power and/or cell tower outage from the storm may take days to be restored. When a hurricane is expected to hit land within 12 hours, you will be directed to remain indoors in a closed room away from windows. By knowing how to prepare and what to do, you will be ready to weather the storm. Follow the 'storm tracking' (updated every 6 hours) at the NOAA website: www.nhc.noaa.org
You may want to check this site daily during hurricane season to stay informed!!!!

EARTHQUAKES- There is a significant amount of seismic activity near PR. Usually, they are small & cannot be felt. Every so often, we may experience one of greater intensity. The homes in RBH are Seismic grade 3 & are considered safe. For more information about what to do during an earthquake, http://www.fema.gov/hazard/earthquake/eq_during.shtm

BASE SAN JUAN

You'll find a map to the Base from RBH in your Maps packet. There is a Coast Guard Exchange store with basic grocery/sundries, sporting goods, electronics & some major appliances & electronics. The Barber Shop is located next to Exchange Auto Sales. MWR has an office on Base with sporting & camping equipment available for rent. The Galley serves three meals a day at very reasonable prices. The clinic at Base San Juan has some over the counter medicine for adults & children (i.e, ibuprofen, Tylenol, etc) available for free to active duty members.

Also, it's a great place to hunt for shells & sea glass, but keep your shoes on at the beachfront since it's not always clear of debris. The view from the Base is spectacular, especially if a cruise ship is entering the harbor. Lastly, don't miss the chance to tour the Coast Guard Cutter Eagle or any other Allied ships passing through.

SHOPPING IN PUERTO RICO

Now that you know how to drive in P.R., you're ready to go shopping! It seems there is a mall or shopping center on every corner (see included maps). You can find almost everything you need here on island. Marshalls & TJ Maxx department stores are here and have very reasonable prices. Other stores you may be familiar with are: Kmart, Walmart, BedBath&Beyond, Home Depot, Payless Shoes, Banana Republic, Gap, Old Navy, OfficeMax, Office Depot, Circuit City, Best Buy, JCPenney, Sears, Macy's, Sam's Club & Costco (membership warehouse store, only 1 mile from RBH on 177 Oeste).

The closest grocery stores around are Amigo (Walmart owned) and SuperMax (on 177 Este). The Commissary at Fort Buchanan (see below) Other local grocers include: Pueblo (in Isla Verde & next to ToysRUs at Plaza Las Americas); for organic items check out Supermax, Amigo, Hacienda Meat Market in Garden Hills & Freshmart (see your maps). Many organic & gluten free products can be found at the Commissary as well (milk, cheese, juice, cookies, crackers canned/frozen fruits & veggies, etc.). You can also check out the health food stores located by the Walgreens by Santa Rosa Mall. If you are interested in locally sourced foods, got to

www.eldepartamentodelacomida.com

You can sign up for various weekly deliveries or pick-ups of fresh produce!!

The cost of living may be higher than you're used to (depending on where you came from!), so grocery prices can seem very expensive. Check out these free coupon websites: boodle.com, smartsource.com, coupons.com, and boxtops4education.com. Some RBH residents report savings of \$10 to \$29 per trip using coupons, depending on what you normally buy. Also try going directly to a company's website for coupons for products you purchase often. The Commissary accepts coupons up to 6 months expired. You can also check out entire boxes filled with coupons from the Fort B library. You will need to have a library membership. All you need for that is a copy of the CG member's orders & your military ID.

There are 2 outlet malls: Prime Outlets in Barceloneta (Hwy 22 west/toll road) and Belz Factory Outlets near Fajardo (Hwy 26 to 66 tollroad east). Plaza Las Americas or "PLAZA" as locals call it, is the 'largest mall in the Caribbean', and don't forget about Old San Juan which has some wonderful shopping including name brand outlet stores (Ralph Lauren, Dooney & Bourke

and Coach), jewelry stores and local art - though you may find 'tourist' prices in many places as they're so close to the cruise ships.

As for online-shopping, getting anything shipped here can be frustrating. Many 'big companies' back home will not ship to P.R. (rumors are that package insurance is too high?), or they will only ship small lightweight packages via USPS. Sometimes you cannot buy online even if you are buying gifts to be shipped within the States, because the website won't accept P.R. as a 'billing' address. For those instances you can usually call the company & order via telephone. Basically, it's best to review the shipping policies on a website first before finding the things you want and then realizing you cannot get them sent here or without paying outrageous shipping prices. We've had some luck with AAFES.com, Target, Crate & Barrel, Pottery Barn, Amazon, Joann Fabrics (FREE shipping deals with no tax are great!), but it really depends on the product, size & weight. When stores do ship here, shipping charges tend to be much higher. You can always ask friends & family for care packages, or start making that list of what to buy for the next time you'll be back in the States.

HOLIDAYS & EVENTS

Puerto Rico is a great place to be for the holidays!!!! Puerto Rico's Christmas season starts in early December and lasts until Three King's Day/Epiphany in January. (that is when the schools go back, but the party continues until San Sebastian feast) The season combines delicious food, great music and festive merrymaking. Typical dishes are roast pig, seasoned rice with pigeon peas and pasteles, a kind of tamale made with meat and either plantain or yucca. Friends & neighbors often form "parrandas" - a sometimes-rambunctious group of Christmas carolers. Lively music is sung, usually to bongo & guitar accompaniment, as the group goes from home to home eating and drinking until the wee hours. Traditionally the City of Guaynabo sends the Mayor on a Parranda, with the Sector Commander along for the ride, through RBH in early December. The participants are often costumed, travel in cars & trucks and they toss candies, rubber balls & CDs to the children. Santa even visits RBH via CG helicopter for a pancake breakfast!!! You'll notice that shopping/parking at local malls & shops becomes quite frantic during the holiday season, so you may want to shop early. It shouldn't be a problem finding a real Christmas tree to purchase (the Pextra at Fort B,

Amigo, Costco) but may need to buy one early since they can go fast (the Pextra usually gets their trees the week of Thanksgiving)

Puerto Rico has many official holidays when stores, offices, and schools are closed all day or half- day. Each town celebrates a festival or fiesta in honor of a local patron saint that can last up to 10 days. For official holiday dates, please visit: <http://www.topuertorico.org/reference/holi.shtml>

MEETING PEOPLE & EXPLORING THE ISLAND

There are numerous community activities that can help you get out of the house & keep the kids from driving you crazy. At RBH we have the Spouse's Club, weekly toddler Playgroup activities, the Book Club, water aerobics, karate for kids, gym with cardio machines & weights, the swimming pool & MWR sponsored group trips around the island. Come join us! And you can check out the San Juan Newcomers Club, which offers activities every month, for more info visit www.newcomerspr.com . Check out the monthly Que Pasa! magazine for more advice & the www.gotopuertorico.com website. Find some more fun things to do on the web at sites like <http://www.PuertoRicoDayTrips.com>

Also, for great pocket maps complete with photos of Old San Juan, Condado & Isla Verde visit <http://www.areasurbanguides.com>

If all else fails, get in your car and go! Explore the island without fear of getting lost or language barriers. As always, be sure to take your "common sense with you- be aware of your surroundings & be "street smart" There are so many beautiful things here that you can only see if you leave our secluded neighborhood. Go to a beach, go snorkeling, go see a historical site or building, or eat at one of the wonderful restaurants here. Puerto Rico has so much to offer, & although you may have to work a little to find some of it - you will almost always be rewarded with a great family memory. Soon you will be driving like a local and using the back roads to get to places. Just have some fun and make it an adventure living on the Enchanted Island!

Fun Things to Do

- Fly a kite up on El Morro in Old San Juan
- Walk around the Old City & admire the beautiful buildings (it's especially fun to walk around the Old City at Christmas time to see the decorations)
- Stop in to the landmark La Bombonera cafe & have a mallorca (my-or-kah)an unbelievably delicious local pastry & a café con leche!!
- See some bats at Rio Camuy Caves near Arecibo
- Tour the Bacardi factory (the tours is FREE & you receive 2 free drinks!!)-- or Casa Don Q (the "real" P.R. rum!) across from Pier 2 in Old San Juan!
- Take a free tour of the beautiful Capitol building in Old San Juan
- Museums- Visit the Wildlife Museum Museo de Vida Silvestre, located off Kennedy), the Museum of Art in Santurce (the gardens in the back are beautiful & they have one floor devoted to kids!) Check out the children's museum in Old San Juan (near the cathedral & El Convento Hotel)
- Visit the organic farmers market every Saturday (8am-2pm) in the courtyard of Museo de San Juan 150 Norzagaray in Old San Juan
- Try to visit as many of the town squares & beautiful churches located in them as you can!
- Visit Castillo Serralles in Ponce
- Feed the pelicans on the boardwalk in Ponce
- Hike through the rainforest in El Yunque; swim under a waterfall
- Buy a CD of the 'singing' Coqui frogs
- Go to 'Gallery Nights of Viejo San Juan (Old San Juan)' - first Tuesday of the month during summer
- Plan a weekend 'getaway' to Vieques or Culebra islands off the East Coast
- Visit the lighthouses of the island (CG can get in to some lighthouses for free!!)
- Go see Air Station Borinquen in Aguadilla and stay in their cottages for Coasties
- Learn to surf out in Rincon (ask other CG families for hotel recommendations. The Lazy Parrot in Rincon gives a CG discount)
- Kayak through a bioluminescent sea in Fajardo, Vieques, or Ponce
- Check out Las Cabezas de San Juan Nature preserve in Fajardo.

Beaches - local beaches

-Escambrón: on "high road "into Old San Juan, pay to park, watch the surfers, collect sea glass (sometimes the CG can enter for free when you show ID)

-Condado: street parking

- Isla Verde- just past the Ritz Carlton hotel; near the airport. There is parking lots & bathroom facilities.

-Piñones: northeast of airport - pincho stands along the way, no facilities, park on roadside (sandy)

Just a suggestion, you may want to keep a roll of toilet paper in your beach bag. Although most beaches have restroom facilities (baños), often time there is no paper. FYI- A **playa** is a beach that has no bathroom facilities. A **balneario** is a beach that has bathroom facilities, lifeguards, etc.

Beaches Around the Island (too many to name them all!)

- Flamenco beach in Culebra- With its beautiful calm water, soft white sand, it was voted the number 2 in the top 10 most exotic beaches in the world!!!!

- The Island of Vieques offers MANY beautiful beaches as well!!

-Fajardo: Rosey Roads has a protected shallow beach with picnic pavilions; Luquillo Beach;

-Borinquen Area: lots of surfing beaches in/near Rincón; Crashboat Beach; Jobos (near Happy Belly's restaurant); Montones (near El Mar Hau Resort where you see horses from the road); Shacks (snorkeling, near Tropical Trail Rides); Surfer's Beach, Survival Beach (steep steps/walk down from Borinquen base at Cliff Rd & Sixth, get gate code from security gate)

Roadside Stands

You will find a wide variety of items at roadside stands from fruits & vegetables to meat & coconut drinks. If you see something and aren't sure what it is - locals would be happy to tell you how to prepare some of the local favorites, especially if you attempt to speak a little Español. Follow your nose and your judgment: sanitation varies widely, some have refrigeration while others do not. Things to be on the lookout for: Pinchos - local shish kabob or "meat on a stick": mainly chicken, pork or seafood. Fruit - Papaya (Papaya candy with cheese is a traditional Puerto Rican Christmas treat made with green papaya, boiled with cinnamon and sugar), Mango (substitute for tomatoes and make a great salsa), Pineapple, Grapefruit & Oranges, Bananas

(try 'finger' bananas!), Avocados, Plantains (green cooking bananas; found in local dishes such as Tostones & Mofongo), and Breadfruit. Hammocks - are made locally and can be a great memento of your stay in P.R.

*****DIRECTIONS TO LOCAL HOSPITALS*****

****Please be aware that the hospitals only provide basic linens for patients (i.e, sheets) You will need to bring your own blankets & pillows.*****

***Directions from Housing to San Pablo- *one of the closest hospitals to housing- has a separate Pediatric Emergency Room**

Head WEST on 177 (towards Costco). Make the first RIGHT (onto Carr 174) after the light at COSTCO (AMIGO) is on your LEFT when you are at the light. Take that road down (you will come to a large intersection with the PR interstate 2 & Santa Rosa mall on your left). Cross over the 2 & you will see signs for the hospital, which will be on the LEFT. Make the LEFT at the light & then RIGHT into large parking area & you will see signs for EMERGENCY ROOM & PARKING to the left.

DIRECTIONS TO CENTRO MEDICO HOSPITAL**TRAUMA CENTER*

Take 177 East to the 20. Take the 20 to the 2 . From 2--take exit for highway 22 este (like you are going to the large mall Plaza Las Americas or the airport). Take Highway 22, the road splits 22 or 18, stay to the RIGHT for HIGHWAY 18 (you will be passing Plaza Las Americas, but still on the highway) Follow signs for HOSPITAL from HIGHWAY 18, when you take the exit, the hospital will be directly in front of you at the end of the exit ramp.

Directions to PROFESSIONAL HOSPITAL this is a small hospital close to housing that has ample parking & is usually not as crowded as the larger hospitals & accepts Tricare (always verify prior to care)

Professional Hospital

Ave Las Cumbres

Guaynabo 00969

- 1) Head east on Carr 177
- 2) Continue onto Ave Lomas Verdes/Pr- 177

- 3) Slight **right** onto the ramp to **Expreso Martinez Nadal/PR-20**
- 4) Slight **right** at **Expreso Martinez Nadal/PR-20**
- 5) Take the exit toward **Ave Las Cumbres/Pr- 199**
- 6) Turn **left** at **Ave Las Cumbres/Pr- 199**

***Directions from RBH to ASHFORD PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL-**

Head **east** on **Carr 177**

Continue onto **Ave Lomas Verdes/Pr- 177**

Take the ramp

Continue straight

Take the ramp on the **left** onto **Expreso Martinez Nadal/PR-20**

Continue onto **Interstate PR-2 W**

Take the ramp onto **Expreso Jose De Diego/Interstate PR-22 E**

Take the exit on the **left** onto **Interstate PR-1 N**

Turn **right** at **Ave Dr Ashford/Puente Dos Hermanos**

Continue to follow **Ave Dr Ashford**

Destination will be on the left

***DIRECTIONS from RBH TO AUXILIO MUTUO HOSPITAL-**

Exit RBH housing. Turn left to merge onto **177**. Take exit ramp on left for **PR-1 North** (take for 6.3 km). Turn **RIGHT** on **Calle Arroyo**. Turn **RIGHT** at **AVE PONCE de LEON/PR 25**.

****Alternate Route-** Go **EAST** on **177**. Take **20 North**. Stay on "service road" or "marginal." Take **RIGHT** at traffic light onto **17**. Follow **17** to exit ramp to **AVE JUAN PONCE DE LEON (PR 25)**. Turn **LEFT** at **AVE JUAN PONCE DE LEON**

Address- Avenue Ponce De Leon San Juan 00918