

# Helpful Hints,<sup>1</sup> October 2015 edition<sup>2</sup>

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## ¡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. These pictures are not made up or photo-shopped! 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! Just as any other duty station there are aspects for which a quick web search cannot prepare you! That is what this document is going to address. Over the last several years members and spouses have compiled the following information, much of it from “lessons learned,” to

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> This document will always be a work in progress; it has been updated for the 2015 transfer season. Updates may be recommended to the Logistics Department Head, robert.e.hemp (at) uscg.mil. Recent changes are highlighted in gray.

help future USCG members and families more easily transition to life in the Caribbean. This document complements policy and information in SECSJINST 1301.1 (series).

### **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!!!\*\*\*\*\*

### **Rio Bayamon Housing**

As of 2013, occupying Coast Guard government family housing is mandatory.<sup>3</sup> 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 dryer hook-ups (3 prong), carport, screened patio and cable-ready access in the majority of the rooms. Cable TV and Internet setup is accomplished with the local service provider. Rio Bayamon housing is guarded 24 hours a day with security rounds to ensure the safety and the well being of our community. The community includes a pool, basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts, community center, weight room, spinning room, small library, free community center Wi-Fi, self-help/maintenance shop, playgrounds, dog park, and a Child Development Center.

RBH is a friendly community where on any given evening you'll find friends hanging out and grilling in their carports, 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!

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<sup>3</sup> This means that the CG has to put people in housing if there is a vacancy. There is a process to request release.

When a house is available, the housing office will contact you. If your HHGs are on island, through customs, and ready for delivery, you must move in; if your HHGs are not ready for delivery, housing will ask the next person on the list, but you will remain at the top of the list for the next house. This is because, by policy, housing cannot deny someone the opportunity to move in without HHGs. If, after speaking with the housing staff, you think you may want to move in without your full HHG delivery, consider shipping your HHGs early. You can use the unaccompanied baggage/express shipment to send items<sup>4</sup> to make “camping out” in your new house more pleasant. While you wait for your HHGs to arrive you will be on TLA (temporary lodging allowance) utilizing an MWR Guest House or a local hotel. Please make sure to have a valid government travel card before arriving since shipment of HHGs can take up to 60 days.

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 1.1 mile paved trail around housing which many residents walk/run for exercise. There is usually some type of group activity (Exercise group , Yoga, etc.), just ask around! Also, remember that the CG can also use the gym facility at Fort Buchanan.

Block Captains- Hurricane season is from June 1st through November 30th – Block Captains pass information between the command and families of RBH in the event of a hurricane or other emergency. Stay alert and check the weather daily.

MWR –check-in with MWR. MWR will provide information about accessing the tennis/basketball courts, etc. MWR sponsors MANY community events. MWR also rents some equipment out.! 787-781- 6251.

Dog Park: available on the west side of RBH. This is a great fenced area for you 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.<sup>5</sup>

Getting there – directions are omitted from this document because it is posted to the internet. Your sponsor can tell you how to drive to RBH and show you on a map.

### **Unaccompanied Personnel Housing (UPH)**

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<sup>4</sup> Furniture is not allowed in the express shipment, but there is no restriction on camping equipment.

<sup>5</sup> <https://cgportal2.uscg.mil/units/sectorsanjuan/logs/MWR/SitePages/CDC.aspx>

Occupying Coast Guard government housing is mandatory for unaccompanied personnel if there is a vacancy. Although Officers and Chiefs may choose to live in the UPH, and some do, typically nonrates and junior Petty Officers are not released from government housing. Contact the UPH staff for the latest information, and see the Old San Juan section on the next page.

### **Living on the Economy**

Sector San Juan 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 families assigned to San Juan than housing units. 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. 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 events<sup>6</sup> that draw hundreds of thousands of visitors. Here you'll find<sup>7</sup> furnished and unfurnished apartments and condominium units, and Sector San Juan 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, nightclubs, and designer boutiques. There are several waterfront parks with beach access (although the swimming conditions on the Atlantic side in the Condado area are often quite rough and swimming is not advised). 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, windsurfing, kite boarding, and kayaking. Like Condado, you'll primarily find apartments and condominiums.

#### **Other popular areas**

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<sup>6</sup> One source for this info is the *Que Pasa!* magazine, from [www.topuertorico.org/tinfo.shtml](http://www.topuertorico.org/tinfo.shtml).

<sup>7</sup> [www.vidaurbanapr.com](http://www.vidaurbanapr.com) is one website where members have found apartments in old San Juan.

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 Sector San Juan. One thing to keep in mind is that 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 paved mile of road), and as a result, commute times can be extremely long. Try and keep that in mind as you plan your search. Morning commute from RBH to BSJ takes about 20-25 minutes; late afternoon can be 30-45 minutes.<sup>8</sup>

#### 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.<sup>9</sup> MWR has several rental units both in housing and at the Sector 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.
- 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 and cisterns.
- If you are not comfortable with the Spanish language, having someone (friend, co-worker, sponsor, etc.) that 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.)
- The Sector San Juan attorney is an excellent resource during this process. He will be available to look over your lease and make recommendations before signing.

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<sup>8</sup> To see traffic and commute time patterns, run scenarios at <https://maps.google.com/>. Click on traffic, then in the box next to "live traffic," click "change" and choose the time of interest.

<sup>9</sup> If you are not able to make an advance visit, consider coming a few days early to go househunting 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.

- 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 carefully.
- You can look for places on [www.clasificadosonline.com](http://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 to ensure you fully understand how OHA works. You will also need to visit your YN to formally apply for OHA.

**Postal mail and packages**

Mail can be sent here with US postage. 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 form<sup>10</sup> 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. The RBH Housing Office and the Sector mailroom care about their shipmates but they are not staffed to handle everyone’s personal mail. 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.

Before arriving, you may temporarily forward your mail to the RBH Housing Office using the address:<sup>11</sup>

Your Name  
500 CARR 177 BOX 161  
BAYAMON, PR 00959

You may do this even if you will not reside at RBH,<sup>12</sup> but please contact the housing office to inform them of your plan.

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<sup>10</sup> Forms are being replaced by <https://moversguide.usps.com/> (though there is a ‘print and mail’ option on the site). At the website, you may need to enter it in the form: 500 CARR 177, APT xx Box x If you are using the postcard form, take extra ones to fill out and mail once you have your permanent address

<sup>11</sup> Upon arrival you may pick up this mail at the RBH housing office in the Community Center between 0730 and 1530.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, if you choose to stay on Fort Buchanan while on TLA.

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

Your name here

500 CARR 177 BOX x, UNIT y-z

BAYAMON, PR 00959<sup>13</sup>

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. Definitely 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:<sup>14</sup>

Your Name

c/o Commander, USCG Sector (staff symbol or Division name) OR USCGC XXX OR USCG Station or ANT, etc.)

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.

Tentative: New for 2015: UPH residents may have letters sent to them at the UPH. The USPS mail carrier will deliver the mail to boxes in the UPH (but don't refer to it as a PO Box). Address is TBD. UPH management does not have capacity to handle mail or packages. Packages will be held at the BSJ mail room.<sup>15</sup>

## **Schools**

Please note 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. Hep A immunization is also required in Puerto Rico. Depending on your location in the US, your children may or may not have had this vaccination. Make sure all your other vaccinations are up to date. If a student is considering playing sports then we recommend

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<sup>13</sup> This address (with both the box # and the house #) should work for all mail and parcels. If you prefer a shorter address for items that you know will go in your mailbox, you can use 500 CARR 177 Box g (or whatever your box # is) (USPS won't reference the APT/Unit number, so mail addressed to B1, C1, D1, E1 may first go to Box 1). Parcels which won't fit in the box, or are delivered by other than USPS can include just the APT/Unit number such as: 500 CARR 177 APT C1 (or whatever your house # is).

<sup>14</sup> Upon arrival you may pick up mail at the BSJ mailroom between 0730 and 1530.

<sup>15</sup> You may pick up packages at the BSJ mailroom between 0730 and 1530.

having any necessary immunizations and the physical form completed in the States or wherever you are coming from prior to your move.

### 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. We also do a uniform swap at RBH at least twice a year.

Pam Pagan - District Registrar – 787-707-4621

School bus: the child must physically appear at the transportation office within the Superintendent's building (with parent) to sign up for a seat on the school bus. Seats may fill up early some years. Contact with the Registrar's office is encouraged.

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

[www.am.dodea.edu/acss/aes/pcs.htm](http://www.am.dodea.edu/acss/aes/pcs.htm)

Antilles Elementary School (pre-K – 4\*)

[www.am.dodea.edu/acss/aes/](http://www.am.dodea.edu/acss/aes/)

Main Office Numbers – 787-707-2364, 2366, 2368

Nurse: 787-707-2379.

Medical Form link: [www.am.dodea.edu/acss/aes/pcs.htm](http://www.am.dodea.edu/acss/aes/pcs.htm)

Pre-K is half day.

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.

\*when the new elementary school building is completed, 5<sup>th</sup> graders will register with and attend the elementary school. They currently wear the middle school uniform but have student-teacher conferences with the elementary school.

Antilles Middle School (5\*-8)

[www.am.dodea.edu/acss/ams/index.htm](http://www.am.dodea.edu/acss/ams/index.htm)

Main Office Number -787-707-2461

Nurse – 787-707-2463

Medical Form thru Google – MCEUH OP

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

Antilles High School (9-12)

[www.am.dodea.edu/acss/ahs/](http://www.am.dodea.edu/acss/ahs/)

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

[John.cunningham@am.dodea.edu](mailto:John.cunningham@am.dodea.edu)

Main Office Number – 787-792-5286

Nurse -787-707-2205

Medical Form Thru Google - MCEUH OP

If there is a possibility that your child will play sports at the 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

[www.dodea.edu/StudentServices/Health/healthForms.cfm](http://www.dodea.edu/StudentServices/Health/healthForms.cfm) under miscellaneous forms.

For new students, the High School nurse (per a meeting on 4/15/15) 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

### Private Schools

#### Collegio Rosa Bell

Spanish speaking private school near housing

[www.rosabell.com](http://www.rosabell.com)

Calle Marcelino Champagnat 6, Guaynabo, 00969

POC: Joanne (787) 781-4362

#### Maristas

Spanish speaking private school near housing Religion-based curriculum

[www.maristasguaynabo.org/portal/](http://www.maristasguaynabo.org/portal/)

(787) 720-2186

#### Baldwin School

English speaking private school (very exclusive) near housing

Only provide tours by appointment, and one time per week, (Thursdays?)

[www.baldwin-school.org](http://www.baldwin-school.org)

ppk-12 --IB school

BALDWIN SCHOOL OF PUERTO RICO

PO BOX 1827

BAYAMÓN, PUERTO RICO 00969-1827

(787) 720-2421

#### Puerto Rican Girls School // Las Ninas

Private Spanish speaking -All Girls school near housing, ppk-12

208 Turquoise Street

Guaynabo, PR 00968

(787) 782-2618

Email: [info@cpnpr.org](mailto:info@cpnpr.org)

<http://translate.google.com.pr/translate?hl=en&sl=es&u=http://www.cpnpr.org/content.html%3Fcontent%3D8E1DF042304856266FD9F6ED21E3EAAE&prev=search>

American Military Academy

Private Bi-lingual Military school near housing

P.O. Box 7884

Guaynabo, PR 00970

[ama@amapr.org](mailto:ama@amapr.org)

(787) 720-6801

787-720-8915

Wesleyan Academy

Private Bi-lingual school just a few exits from housing

Camino Alejandrio Rd 838

Guaynabo, PR 00969

(787) 720-8959

[www.wesleanacademy.org/](http://www.wesleanacademy.org/)

Casa Montessori Del Nino

Private Montessori -Spanish speaking school, short drive from housing, ppk-6

Rt. 844 Km 2.3 Cupey Low.

San Juan, Puerto Rico 00926

(787) 761-0880

<http://translate.google.com.pr/translate?hl=en&sl=es&u=http://casamontessoridelnino.com/&prev=search>

American Academy

English speaking private school in the south region

Ciudad Jardín Resort & Country Club

Carr. 189, KM 10.1, Parcela 10

Gurabo, PR 00778

(787) 737 0170

[www.americanacademypr.org/](http://www.americanacademypr.org/)

St. Johns school

Private exclusive English school in Condado

ppk-12

1454 Ave Dr Ashford, San Juan

(787) 728-5343

[www.sjspr.org/](http://www.sjspr.org/)

The TASIS School

Private English-speaking school located in Dorado

ppk-12

11 Carretera 693 Dorado, PR 00646

(787) 796-0440

[www.tasisdorado.com](http://www.tasisdorado.com)

### The Robinson School

Private English speaking school IB school  
ppk-12 gifted / special needs (pathways program)  
5 Narin St. San Juan PR 00907  
(787) 999-4600  
POC: Sharim  
[www.robinsonschool.org/](http://www.robinsonschool.org/)

Academia San Ignacio de Loyola (elementary school)  
Private Spanish speaking (curriculum is in English)  
Calle Narciso 1908  
Urb. Santa Maria  
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00927  
Tel 787-765-8190

Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola (7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade)  
Male Private school  
Calle Saucó,  
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00927  
Tel 787-765-3814

### Homeschooling

In addition to the public, DoD, and private schools, some families choose to homeschool. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has no reporting regulations for homeschoolers. Currently there are homeschoolers in RBH who get together weekly for classes such as Spanish and Physical Education. Homeschoolers are welcome to participate in individual classes and/or afterschool activities at the DoD school on Fort Buchanan. In order to participate, students must be registered with the school, following the registration guidelines listed above. It is important to inform the school that you plan to homeschool and to participate in only parts of the program. Additionally, in the community there are a few homeschool groups, including a group that does weekly field trips.

### Automobiles

#### Shipping your vehicle (see current Sector PCS Instruction for details)

USCG will pay shipping expenses for one vehicle. POVs can be tracked at [www.pcsmypov.com](http://www.pcsmypov.com) and/or by contacting the PR Vehicle Processing Center at 787-792-1233. 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 for the latest information about getting a rental car paid for by the shipping company or on a travel claim.

\*\* Please ask your sponsor and/or contact the Sector 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 Jose Suarez at the legal office in Sector (787-729-2310 fax 787-289-2058 email [Jose.L.Suarez@uscg.mil](mailto:Jose.L.Suarez@uscg.mil)) for help with the paperwork for the tax exemption for the second vehicle. The Hacienda office for this<sup>16</sup> 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. Keep in mind that a motorcycle counts as a vehicle (even when it is packed with your household goods). \*\*

Out-of-State License Plates – Keeping out-of-state license plates 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 Ft. Buchanan without a current sticker. The ACAA sticker can be purchased at the Hacienda (like the DMV in the States). The closest one to Sector 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).<sup>17</sup> 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 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.

Vehicles registered in PR must have a "Marbete" sticker instead which also proves insurance. Marbete stickers expire annually but not all expire in July.

### Vehicle Insurance

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

### Buying a used vehicle in PR ("Island Car")

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<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

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 at Fort Buchanan. 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 vehicle in PR if you are considering doing so.

**To Rent or Not to Rent a car** – Car rentals can be expensive. Check if your credit card offers insurance 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. You can reserve a rental before you even get to the island through national chains and discount clubs as well as local companies. Several have a presence at both of the big airports (Marin San Juan International and also Isla Grande) as well as areas that cater to tourists such as Isla Verde and Condado). Hertz has a desk at Fort B, ([www.hertz.com.pr](http://www.hertz.com.pr), 787-793-2693). Be sure to ask for a military discount. (Check with any associations you may be a member of for rental discounts). 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.

### **Health Care**

While living in Puerto Rico, families utilize Tricare Prime Overseas. There are a few options when it comes to health care. Sector San Juan Medical Clinic is only available to active-duty service members. Families may use the Rodriguez Army Health Clinic at Fort Buchanan or go to Salus medical clinic (formerly Clinic Las Americas Guaynabo) 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 for the clinic is (787) 707-4393. They are open from 0630-1600, Monday through Friday. The website is [www.rahc.amedd.army.mil](http://www.rahc.amedd.army.mil).

Salus medical clinic is considered the premier civilian 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 clinic will submit the referral request and all you have to do is call to make the appointment when the referral is approved. Contact numbers for the clinic are 787-789-1919 and 787-789-1996. The website is: [www.saluspr.com/en](http://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. There are English speakers in every hospital, but if you do not speak Spanish, you will need to be patient!

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 United States. 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.

Dengue Fever and Chikungunya 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 near your dwelling.

## **Hotels**

### **Rio Bayamon**

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. Priority is given to PCS'ing families. Living in guest housing a great way to begin connecting with your new Coast Guard community.

<https://cgportal2.uscg.mil/units/sectorsanjuan/logs/MWR/SitePages/Home.aspx>  
(secondary: [www.uscg.mil/mwr/lodging/BayamonGuestHousing.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/mwr/lodging/BayamonGuestHousing.asp))

### **MWR Rooms on Base San Juan**

<https://cgportal2.uscg.mil/units/sectorsanjuan/logs/MWR/SitePages/Home.aspx>  
(secondary: [www.uscg.mil/sectorsanjuan/MWRDocs/GuestHousing/Gonzalez%20Guest%20Rooms%20information.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/sectorsanjuan/MWRDocs/GuestHousing/Gonzalez%20Guest%20Rooms%20information.pdf))

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](http://www.ihg.com/armyhotels/hotels/us/en/fort-buchanan/mfbua/hoteldetail)

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

The following is a list of hotels that families have utilized during PCS season. It is not all-inclusive. They are listed in order of distance from Sector. 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. Not all hotels have on-site laundry. Members on TLA are authorized to use the laundry facilities at the UPH; contact UPH staff.

## **Old San Juan**

Sheraton Old San Juan: [www.sheratonoldsanjuan.com/](http://www.sheratonoldsanjuan.com/)

Within walking distance of Sector and accepts pets. No Laundry on site. If you ask, they may provide a mini-fridge for your room.

## **Between Old San Juan and Condado**

Caribe Hilton: [www.caribehilton.com/](http://www.caribehilton.com/)

Has lovely courtyard garden with peacocks, turkeys, fish, etc. but is more isolated from restaurants, etc. Walking distance from Escambrone beach.

Sheraton Convention Center: [www.sheratonpuertoricohotelcasino.com/](http://www.sheratonpuertoricohotelcasino.com/)

Accepts pets; cost is \$25 per night per pet for any pet over 25lbs.

## **Condado**

Condado Plaza Hilton: [www.condadoplaza.com/default-en.html](http://www.condadoplaza.com/default-en.html)

One side faces the lagoon and one faces the Atlantic.

La Concha: [www.laconcharesort.com/default-en.html](http://www.laconcharesort.com/default-en.html)

Best Western Plus Condado Palm: [www.condadopalm.com/default-en.html](http://www.condadopalm.com/default-en.html)

Marriott San Juan: [www.marriottsanjuan.com](http://www.marriottsanjuan.com)

Condado DoubleTree: [www.sanjuandoubletree.com/default-en.html](http://www.sanjuandoubletree.com/default-en.html)

## **Isla Verde**

Verdanza Hotel [www.verdanzahotel.com/default-en.html](http://www.verdanzahotel.com/default-en.html)

Accepts pets and provides rental car under the Government Advantage Package.

Embassy Suites San Juan: [www.embassysuitessanjuan.com/default-en.html](http://www.embassysuitessanjuan.com/default-en.html)

El San Juan Resort & Casino: [www.elsanjuanhotel.com](http://www.elsanjuanhotel.com)

Hampton Inn: <http://hamptoninn3.hilton.com/en/hotels/puerto-rico/hampton-inn-and-suites-san-juan-SJUHHHX/index.html>

Courtyard by Marriott: [www.sjcourtyard.com/default-en.html](http://www.sjcourtyard.com/default-en.html)

### **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](mailto: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. 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 (there are reports that 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). 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.

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

[www.united.com/web/en-US/content/travel/animals/petsafe.aspx](http://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/](http://www.spcai.org/get-involved/military-support/operation-military-pets/operation-military-pets-assistance-application/).

## **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<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>)
- Exchange (also located here is the food court, barber shop, beauty salon, optometrist, hertz car rentals, and many kiosks. Outside there is a car dealership)
- Commissary (closed on Mondays and no adults without military or dependent ID allowed)
- PXtra (home furnishings, sporting/camping goods, toys, lawn/garden, 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 8:30am2pm/Thurs 8:30am- Noon. \*Pay by cash or check only.
- Rodriguez Army Health Clinic
- 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.)
- Waterspout (splash pad/water park. Military family membership is \$50/year, or \$5/person per visit)
- Physical fitness center (full gym, ball courts, group exercises classes, indoor cycling, etc.)

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<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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>

- Child Development Center
- Lending closet (can sometimes lend you 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)

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

## **Miscellaneous**

### Cell Phones:

AT&T, Sprint, and Verizon all have service coverage in Puerto Rico, though perhaps not as solid as urban CONUS areas. Concrete buildings here can impede the signal also. As with any other move, you will need to update your cell phone to Puerto Rico towers (consult your phone company for information on how). Verizon does not own towers here and will not initiate service here, but many with Verizon phones find them to work as well as others (though perhaps on ‘extended network’ for voice or ‘roaming’ for data). If you find that your Verizon phone does not work here, Verizon will let you terminate the contract without penalty. If you have a different wireless provider, ask.

### GPS and other electronic maps:

GPS navigation, including single-purpose units (such as a Garmin or TomTom) and smartphones work fairly well in Puerto Rico. Like anywhere, having a GPS-enabled map can be very helpful, especially when new to an area. GPS coordinates (latitude and longitude) are helpful to have when choosing a destination, but most things can be found without them by simply specifying an address, searching for a point of interest, or browsing the map. If you are bringing your GPS from elsewhere be sure it has PR maps loaded before you travel, because it may be less convenient to load new maps on a hotel internet connection. Many people find success with the Google maps on their phones. Single-purpose GPS units with traffic capabilities may not work as well as traffic routing advice from a smartphone. If your GPS or smartphone can’t find something, try going to the store’s website and using the store finder before you assume there are no Home Depot stores, for example.

### 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 Sector San Juan 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 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](http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/perdiemCalc.cfm).<sup>20</sup> 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?

No. Many people do quite well without knowing any, but the ESO and others can teach you a few key phrases that will help you. Attempts at Spanish, even if feeble, are appreciated as a sign of respect for the culture, and will help you enjoy your tour more. 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>.

#### Are there national chain stores/restaurants?

Yes, we have many of them. See GPS section above regarding not using mapping software as your only search tool. 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. While there are many national chain options, don't be afraid to branch out and enjoy local places!

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<sup>20</sup> Full explanation of TLA computations: [www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/perdiem/Computing\\_TLA.pdf](http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/perdiem/Computing_TLA.pdf)

### 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 to 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, 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.

### 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](http://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. With today's technology, you can add San Juan (or Bayamon) to the locations that your favorite website or app provides weather for. 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>

### What else?

When you check in with your YN, be sure to get a welcome basket or bag that has lots of helpful information including maps and places to go, and information about Fort Buchanan, designed to be helpful after your arrival.

### How can I help with this document?

Thank you for your interest! Please see footnote on the first page.

## **Appendix A: Basic facts**

Puerto Rico is 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. Although the outside temp is warm, it is advised to carry a light sweater or wrap with you if you are going to a restaurant, doctor's office, or hospital. The air conditioning can make it quite chilly! 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. The first thing you must always remember is to drive defensively at all times, look around, and understand that people are going to pull out in front of you. Do not expect to see turn signals, and watch out for vehicles with one or more lights not working. 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. Try to keep a positive and relaxed attitude, rather than let road rage get the best of you. Avoid rush hours if you can: 7am – 10am and 4pm – 6:30pm, but if you can't, use that time to learn Spanish on CD, enjoy music, etc.

Informal Rules of the road are somewhat different, as well - one-lane exit ramps become at least 2 lanes (sometimes 3) when traffic slows or is at a standstill. Never jump a green light; wait and look before going. The law used to allow driving through a red light (after a stop) after 2300. That law is no longer in effect, but beware of other drivers acting as if it is still ok. Potholes are common and it's normal for cars to swerve or drift into your lane to avoid the potholes in their lane! Be extra cautious during intense rainstorms since roads tend to flood easily, especially in Old San Juan. Edges of potholes are sometimes painted yellow and eventually repaired. At a lane drop/merge, many drivers do not merge until the last few feet, and when it is time to merge; the informal rule is that the driver whose bumper is in front at that moment has the right of way (to the point that if your bumper is in front, the other driver will be expecting you to hurry up and make the lane change). Most exits are well marked; some exits are marked well in advance with "PROXIMA SALIDA" ('next exit'), but don't expect a second exit sign at the spot where the exit ramp is.

Traffic laws in Puerto Rico are very strict and violators may have to pay heavy fines. Also, you may ONLY use hands-free cell phones while driving. The fine is \$50.00 (plus court costs) if caught. However, enforcement of the speeding laws seems to be variable, and don't be surprised to be passed on the right or to see a vehicle driving slowly in the left lane or a vehicle without working lights.

Ensure your spare tire is ready to be used, and carry a Spanish-English dictionary or a translating app on your cell phone. 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.

When driving in and out of Old San Juan you have 3 roads. The high road is one-way into the city, the middle road which is one-way and out of the city and the low road goes both directions. On the high road and the middle road there is a bus lane to the far left. The bus travels the opposite direction as traffic....DO NOT drive or jog in the bus lane. If you want the high road, get in the right lane of Route 1 North as you approach the intersection with Avenida Ashford (Ashford Ave.) Following the sign for Route 25R, go straight through the long intersection at the end of the Dos Hermanos (Two Brothers) bridge (cars from Route 26 will be going across right to left to try to get to the low road/Route 1).

**Reading road signs** – Distances in PR are in kilometers, but speed limit signs are in miles per hour. Road signs are not always visible; try to use landmarks to remember locations at first. Merges/lane drops are not always posted. "CALLE SIN SALIDA" is "street without exit" (DEAD END). You should stop at the red octagonal "PARE" sign but do not be surprised if other drivers treat it like a YIELD sign. In a few places, it is good to know that "DERECHO" is straight, "DERECHA" is right, and "IZQUIERDA" is left. Cardinal Directions: North, South, East, and West (N, S, E, W) are Norte, Sur, Este, and Oeste (N, S, E, O).

**Getting gas** – The same type of gasoline is sold here, but by the liter - not gallon. When getting gas you have to pay first and at most gas stations you cannot pay at the pump; you must go to the cashier before pumping. When getting gas, you can just say your car type, point and give them the money. If you want to try some Spanish you can say \$10 on pump five (diez en cinco), or just hand them \$20 or \$40 and say "numero ocho por favor" (number 8 please).

**AutoExpreso toll tags** – If you don't want to carry change and will be driving on toll roads a lot, you can purchase a pass to avoid 'Cash' lanes. Apply online at [www.autoexpreso.com](http://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, toll booths, or by phone (888-688-1010). As of September 2015, it is optional to register AutoExpreso tag accounts to a particular license.

**Keep a map (paper or phone) in your car-** maps of the San Juan metro area and island are found at Fort B (PX cash registers). Ask your new friends / neighbors for their number before you start exploring so you can call if you need help. In the end, try not to get too stressed about driving. Who knows, you might just be amazed at how many different and wonderful things you'll find along the way.

If all this is too intimidating at first, just ask a fellow member of the CG Community if you can get a ride!

### **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 cottage at RBH, your hotel, or the Base. Sponsors can also be a great source of information about 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 'pinchos' stand (barbecued meat on a stick) is if you're ready to try some local food.

### **Appendix D: Having a baby in PR**

If you are expecting a baby, congratulations! Contact the ombudsman 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 issued you 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, and you may want to avoid exposing the baby to crowds. 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 under Puerto Rico law 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." (attached in Spanish and English:



In it, 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 license, and voting identification cards. Please contact SSJ Legal Office at (787) 729-2370 if you have any questions.