

MUSICAL TOURISM

Puerto Rico is Music!

A guide to rhythms, fiestas, and dancing venues



Ballet Folklórico Nacional Areyto

Puerto Rico is Music!

A tourist's guide to rhythms, fiestas, and dancing venues

Copyright © 2014 by Maritza Ramírez

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. This book contains material protected under International and Federal Copyright Laws and Treaties. Any unauthorized reprint or use of this material is prohibited. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without express written permission from the author / publisher.

First Edition, July 2014

ISBN 978-0-692-26442-3

Self Publishing

<http://www.puertoricomusic.com>

editor@puertoricomusic.com

Contents

Introduction to Puerto Rico is Music!	5
How is This Guide Structured?	9
Our Rhythms	13
Enjoy Bomba and Plena	19
Bomba and Plena Events	23
Bomba and Plena Dancing Performers	24
Bomba Dancing Performers Carrying the Northern Tradition	25
Bomba and Plena Music Groups	26
Learning to Dance Bomba and Plena	29
Bomba and Plena Nightlife	31
Places to Visit	31
Radio Stations With Bomba and Plena	32
Enjoy Folk Music	34
Folk Music Events	35
Folk Music Performers	37
Folk Music Dancing Companies	39
Learning to Dance Folk Music	40
Places to Visit	40
Radio Stations With Folk Music	42
Enjoy Salsa	43
Salsa Events	44
Salsa Concerts	45
Salsa Performers	46
Learning Salsa	47
Salsa Nightlife Venues	49
Places to Visit	60

Radio Stations With Salsa	64
Enjoy Reggaeton	65
Reggaeton Events.....	66
Reggaeton Performers	67
Learning Reggaeton.....	69
Reggaeton Nightlife Venues.....	70
Places to Visit.....	76
Radio Stations With Reggaeton.....	77
Largest Music Venues	78
Fiestas de la Calle San Sebastián	79
<i>Sample Program from 2014.....</i>	81
Día Nacional de la Salsa	87
<i>Sample Program from 2014.....</i>	88
Congreso Mundial de la Salsa	89
<i>Sample Program from 2014.....</i>	90
<i>Chronicle by an attendee from 2013.....</i>	91
Heineken Jazz Fest.....	98
<i>Sample Program from 2014.....</i>	99
<i>Jazztime Critic Review from 2014.....</i>	100
Festival Claridad	105
Guaya Guaya Fest.....	109
<i>Sample Program from 2014.....</i>	109
Las Justas Inter Universitarias	110
<i>Sample Program from 2014.....</i>	111
Special Events	113
Adoquín Jamming Nights, San Juan	114
Condado en Concierto, San Juan	115
Santurce de Bomba y Plena, San Juan	116
Retreta Dominical, San Juan	117
Ventana al Jazz, San Juan	117
Fiestas Patronales.....	122
List of Fiestas Patronales.....	124
Sample Programs of Activities	127
Security Advise	131
Festivals, Carnivals, Fairs	132
List of Festivals, Carnivals, and Fairs.....	135
Finding Current Events.....	148
Some Large Events, Festivals, Carnivals and Fairs	149
Fiestas Patronales.....	150
Special, Nightlife Events	151
Sponsored Events.....	152
Concerts.....	153
About the Author	155

Introduction

Puerto Rico has a long tradition of raising musicians who leave a mark on the global music scene. In the 1900s, our tenor Antonio Paoli was considered *the king of tenors* and was the first artist in the world to record an entire opera. In the 1930s, Rafael Hernandez gave Latin America about three thousand compositions that included “El Cumbanchero” and songs considered as unofficial anthems in various countries. Since the 1970s, Puerto Rican salsa bands have consistently dominated the lists of the top salsa performers of the world. Ricky Martin took the pop world by storm in the 2000s and achieved impressive accomplishments including ninety-five platinum records, six number one *Billboard* albums, eleven number one hit songs, six Grammy awards, and

the list goes on. Now is the turn of “reggaetoneros,” performers of a new music genre that went global after Daddy Yankee’s hit song, “Gasolina,” became a sensation. Ever since, most of the reggaeton performers who have reached international stature are Puerto Rican.

Music is so engrained into our culture that we use it to celebrate life, say goodbye to the dead, celebrate the victory of politicians, and then protest their policies. If you are wondering where we get all this musical stamina, then you should know that on any given weekend, over a thousand music-related activities are held across Puerto Rico, a place that measures just thirty-five hundred square miles. We have festivals, carnivals, fiestas, and a vibrant nightlife with live music in bars, pubs, restaurants, and in the lobbies of the main hotels. Most of the outsiders may witness the abundant music activity while they spend time in the traditional tourist zones. But that is just the tip of the iceberg. The opportunities to enjoy music are abundant, but they are hard to track. A lot of the marketing efforts to promote events rely on word of mouth or pages in the social

networks that are only known to specific groups. As a result, tourists may be visiting the island without knowing that a festival with international recognition is being held during their visit.

Ironically, Puerto Rico is well-known internationally because of its music ambassadors. It is no surprise for Puerto Ricans who travel to be reminded of artists by citizens in far away countries. They might not know where Puerto Rico is located, but they do know who Ricky Martin, Daddy Yankee, and El Gran Combo are.

The *Puerto Rico is Music!* guide is written for people who travel to Puerto Rico hoping to enjoy our music, learn how to dance, mix with the locals, and enjoy *la vida loca* while staying on the island. It is also written for local residents who want a convenient reference to the venues where they can go to have fun. On the following pages you will find:

- An introduction to the five music genres we cover in this guide.
- Lists of festivities and fiestas where you can enjoy

artistic activities for free.

- Lists of places where you can learn how to dance.
- List of venues where you can dance to the types of music you want to enjoy.
- Hard to find places on the Internet where you can find out about current events.
- Links to videos describing the types of music you might find at events.
- Sample music programs from the most relevant festivals and festivities.
- Descriptions of places and landmarks related to music and dance.
- Lists of current performers who you can watch at paid or free events.

This book is not:

- A travel guide. This is a complement to your travel guide that will enhance the discussion about all

things musical for tourists.

- An introduction to Puerto Rican music. This guide is more about finding places where you can enjoy and listen to five specific types of music: folk, bomba, plena, salsa, and reggaeton when you come to the island. We provide basic descriptions, but we don't apply any academic rigor.
- A calendar of events. Our approach is to help you discover the traditional and non-traditional venues and tell you where you can find information about upcoming events on the island where people always find an excuse to celebrate with music.

How is This Guide Structured?

Chapter 1 is an overview of the five music genres covered in the guide.

In Chapters 2 through 5, we enhance the discussion about the rhythms we cover in the guide. We provide links to videos that present the music and its associated dances. All these rhythms cater to different types of people of different ages, and you will learn the places

where you need to be to enjoy each one. We identify the most relevant events for each genre of music, bands to hear, or dancing groups to watch. We also list the names of dancing academies where you can learn how to dance, and places where you can go to practice your dancing skills at night.

In Chapters 6 through 9 we present different types of venues where you can find these genres in Puerto Rico. To simplify the process, we have classified them in six types of venues:

- Large Events
- Special Events
- Saint Patron Festivals
- Festivals, Carnivals, and Fairs
- Concerts
- Nightlife Activities

The *Large Events* we present in Chapter 6 are yearly festivals or celebrations that gather hundreds on up to tens of thousands of participants. They are usually held in the San Juan Metropolitan area but bring together people from the whole island, as well as an international

audience. The *Saint Patron Festivals* (in Fiestas, Patronales, or Fiestas, which follows) presented in Chapter 8 are held in each one of the seventy-eight Puerto Rico municipalities and gather a smaller, more regional audience. The *Festivals, Carnivals, and Fairs* described in Chapter 9 are also held once per year, with motives that depend on the peculiarities of the sponsoring municipality. All the *Fiestas, Festivals, Carnivals, and Fairs* are celebrated with abundant music and we provide sample programs in Chapter 8. The *Special Activities* described in Chapter 7 are open-air, free events of exceptional quality that are currently held on a monthly basis, some of which are not even known to locals. *Concerts* are paid activities that are held in coliseums, stadiums, performing art centers, or other private venues. The *Sponsored Events* are activities offered by local companies to promote their products. Being that Puerto Rico is such a musical place, it's only logical for them to resort to music to draw attention to their products.

The *Concerts* and other *Nightlife Activity* associated to each type of musical genre will be covered in Chapters

2 through 5.