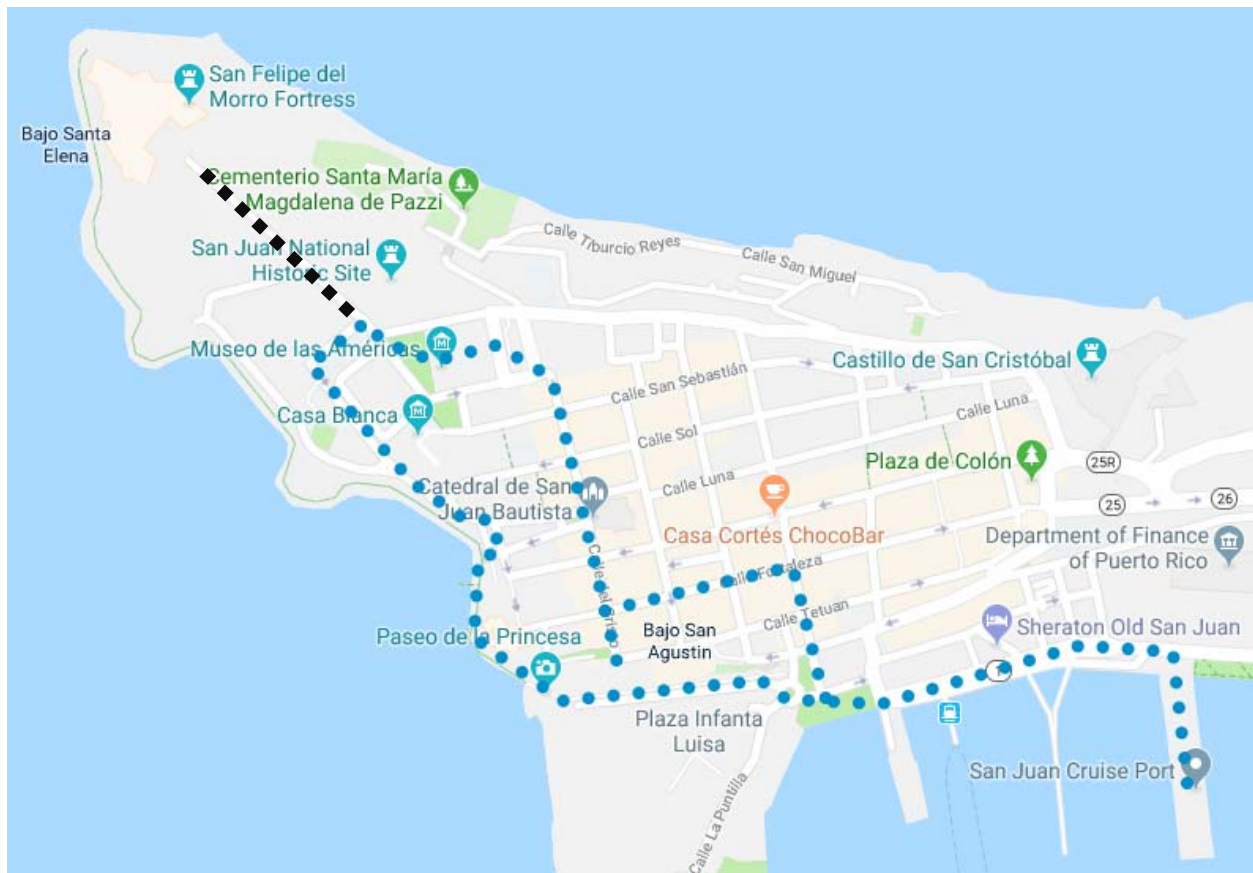




TRAVEL ADVISORY: Always be vigilant and constantly aware of your surroundings when exploring any port on your own. Reduce your risk by leaving jewelry and other valuables on the ship. Check the U.S. State Department Travel Advisories before deciding to explore a port on your own: <https://travel.state.gov/traveladvisories>

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

Walking Tour: Historic Old San Juan



<https://goo.gl/maps/GUwAuBdsin82>

Route Info

Time: About 1 hour round-trip;
more time for stops.

Difficulty: Moderate; Some Hills

Admission

Walk: FREE

Catedral de San Juan Bautista: FREE

San Felipe del Morro Fortress: \$
<http://bit.ly/2EqnOKC>

Overview

From Wikipedia and National Park Service:

Old San Juan (Spanish: Viejo San Juan) is the oldest settlement within Puerto Rico and the historic colonial section of the city of San Juan. The settlement is a National Historic Landmark District and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1508, Juan Ponce de León founded the original settlement, Caparra. In 1509, the settlement was abandoned and moved to a site which was called at the time "Puerto Rico" (meaning "rich port" or "good port"). In 1521, the name "San Juan" was added, and the newer settlement was given its formal name of "San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico."

Constructed in 1521, Casa Blanca served as the first fortification of the settlement and residence of Juan Ponce de León descendants, until the mid-eighteenth century. Masonry walls fully encircled the city of San Juan by 1783 as part of a major system of fortifications that once defended the whole islet. It was considered one of the best fortified cities in the Caribbean.

During the late 1940s, disrepair in the old city was evident. Anthropologist Ricardo Alegría advised Mayor Rincón de Gautier to have local zoning laws changed to favor remodeling and the incorporation of Spanish colonial motifs in any new construction. This helped preserve the city's architectural profile, and has been a key to San Juan's current status as a tourist destination.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_San_Juan

<https://www.nps.gov/saju/learn/historyculture/citywalls.htm>

1. Exit the port, turn left, and walk along the wide, waterfront sidewalk (Calle Marina).



2. The sidewalk will cross into a park with a pink/red building in the center (La Casita). Continue walking on the sidewalk near the harbor through the park.



3. After passing the La Casita pink/red building, the sidewalk will end near a set of stairs. Turn right and walk up the stairs to the traffic roundabout.



4. Cross over the traffic roundabout diagonally to the left toward the shaded walkway, Paseo De La Princesa.



5. Walk along Paseo De La Princesa in the same direction as you were walking along the harbor.



6. You will pass a small children's playground (Old Town Princesa Park) on your right that is typically open to the public. There are several entrance gates, so look for the open ones to enter.



7. Continue along Paseo De La Princesa until it ends at the fountain/sculpture Fuente Raíces.



“The Raíces (Roots) Fountain, which was completed in May 1992, was designed by architect Miguel Carlo to commemorate and celebrate the New World’s 500th anniversary. This collection of bronze statues is represented as a ship being steered out into the open sea with leaping dolphins leading the way to a bright 21st century future. The picturesque San Juan Bay serves as a backdrop to the statue, adding an interesting dimension to the ship at sea concept.”

“The basin of the sculpture represents the sea, while the pedestal represents the island of Puerto Rico. A bilingual plaque explains the meaning of each of the figures and the history and purpose of the fountain.”

<http://www.puertorico.com/blog/the-raices-fountain-of-old-san-juan>

http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMDYF1_Races_Roots_Fountain_San_Juan_Puerto_Rico

8. Continue walking past the fountain and walk along the waterfront path at the base of the walls.





“Masonry walls fully encircled the city of San Juan by 1783, now Old San Juan, as part of a major system of fortifications that once defended the whole islet.”

“As you stroll along the Paseo del Morro, you will notice that the natural cliffs that face the San Juan Bay to the west are massive enough to provide a great natural defense. However, in 1586, nearly 50 years after the construction of Castillo San Felipe del Morro began; rudimentary masonry walls were set above those cliffs at the Sana Elena and the San Agustín batteries.”

“However, after Sir George Clifford of Cumberland successfully attacked the fort from the east and held it briefly and the Dutch plundered and burned the city in 1625, Spain realized that the city and forts needed further fortification. Engineers Thomas O’Daly and Juan Francisco Mestre designed a ‘defense in depth’ system which called for improvements to the walls and the construction of Castillo San Cristóbal.”

“They repaired the existing west walls and built and improved walls to the south and east to protect the city of San Juan. Bastions, angled structures that project outward, were added to the walls to provide additional reach and a better range of angles to fire cannon and muskets. Finally, a wall connecting El Morro and San Cristobal was built along the north coast and the city was entirely enclosed.”

“Five gates were built so that farmers, herders, soldiers and others could enter and exit the city. The San Juan Gate faced the bay and was the ceremonial gate used for dignitaries.”

“In 1797, Sir Ralph Abercrombie, along with approximately 6,000 to 13,000 English and German attempted to take San Juan and failed. The English never again mounted an attack against San Juan.”

<https://www.nps.gov/saju/learn/historyculture/citywalls.htm>

9. At the San Juan Gate, turn right and continue through the gate.

[NOTE: If you like waterfront walk, you can keep walking past the San Juan Gate. Just be sure to return and walk through the gate to continue the tour.]



“San Juan Gate was built in 1635, it is the oldest and the last gate standing. San Juan was a gated city with five gates and the San Juan Gate ‘La Puerta de San Juan’ was the main gate to the city. As you approach the gate you will see the inscription ‘Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini’ Blessed who comes in the name of the Lord.”

<https://www.nps.gov/saju/planyourvisit/placestogo.htm>

10. After crossing through the San Juan Gate, turn left onto Calle Clara Lair and follow the sidewalk uphill on the left side of the road.





At the top of the sidewalk, you'll find Plazuela De La Rogativa:



“Plazuela de la Rogativa features a small plaza with a bronze sculpture by Lindsay Daen. The work recreates the day, that according to legend, a bishop and his companions helped frighten away British troops during the 1797 attack on the city by carrying torches and chanting. The enemies thought the procession was local troop reinforcements.”

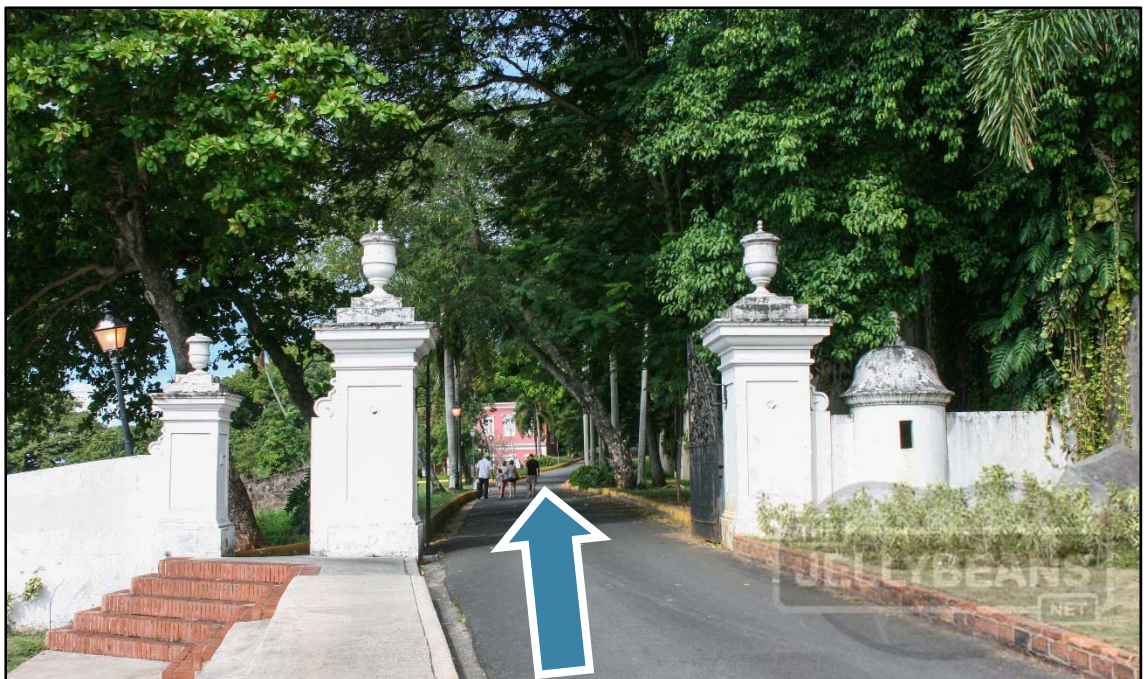
<https://www.nps.gov/saju/planyourvisit/placestogo.htm>

At Plazuela de la Rogativa, look behind you for a view of the Governor's Mansion (La Forteleza, also known as Palacio de Santa Catalina). It is the oldest executive mansion in continuous use in the New World.



11. Continue walking through Plazuela de la Rogativa and pass through the white gate pillars. Continue along the road toward the pink house (Casa Rosada).

NOTE: BE CAREFUL! THIS IS AN ACTIVE ROADWAY!



12. At Casa Rosa, take the right side of the fork in the road and continue uphill. If you have kids, there is a playground located along the left side of the road.



“Casa Rosa was built in 1812 as a barrack for the troops assigned to the San Agustin Bastion. It was converted to an officers quarters in 1881 by the Spanish Army. The building was later converted to a museum used for Puerto Rican crafts. Today it operates as a day care center for the children of employees of the Government of Puerto Rico.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casa_Rosa

The road from Casa Rosa ends at the San Felipe Del Morro Fortress, also known as El Morro.



*The open area in front of El Morro is a **GREAT** location to fly a kite!*



“Castillo San Felipe del Morro, (El Morro) sits atop a high promontory overlooking the entrance to the San Juan Bay. It is the result of the efforts of Spanish engineers over a period of more than 250 years and is one of the largest fortifications built by the Spain in the Caribbean. Although its foundation was laid in 1539, the six-level fortification was not considered complete until 1787. During World War II, the U.S. government added an artillery fire control station. El Morro suffered several attacks from the English in 1595 and 1598 and the Dutch in 1625. In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, United States Navy ships fired upon the fortification, destroying the lighthouse, which was later restored.”

<https://www.nps.gov/saju/planyourvisit/index.htm>



If you do not go into the fort, there is a small gift shop with bathroom facilities (\$ required) located on the right side of the field.



13. Exit the fort/park area via the sidewalk. The bright, two-tone yellow building on the right side at the end of the sidewalk is the School of Visual Arts and Design of Puerto Rico. Continue walking straight to Cuartel de Ballaja, or "Ballajá Barracks."



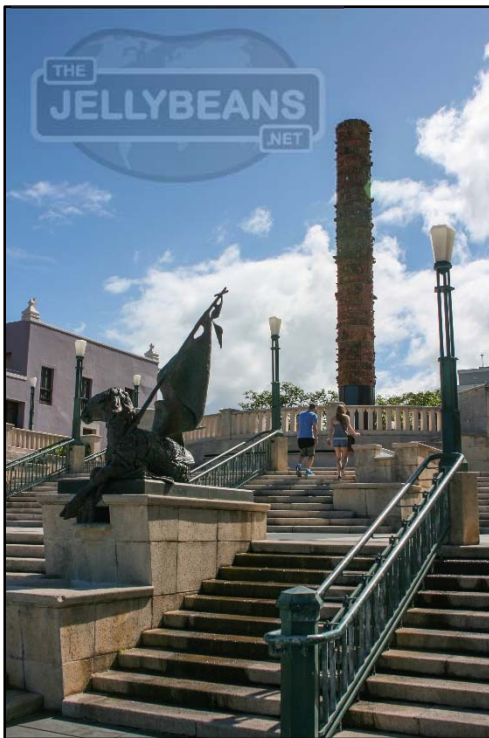
"Ballajá Barracks was a military barracks built from 1854 to 1864 for Spanish troops and families. Today, it houses educational and cultural organizations."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballaj%C3%A1_Barracks

14. Turn left to enter Cuartel de Ballaja and continue straight through the courtyard.



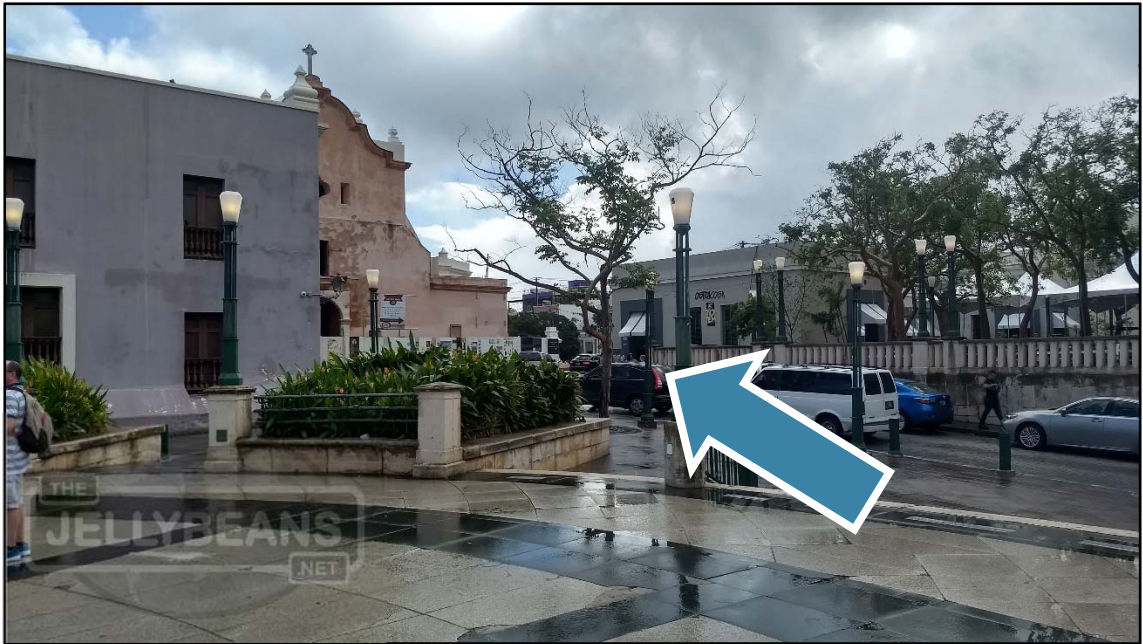
15. Exit the building and walk up the steps on the other side of the road to Plaza del Quinto Centenario.



“This modern square is shoehorned in among several architectural landmarks and offers great views over El Morro and the ocean beyond. Built in 1992 for a rumored \$10 million to honor the 500-year anniversary of Columbus’ first voyage to the Americas, it is dominated by a stylized granite and clay totem pole – El Tótem Telúrico – by Puerto Rican artist Jaime Suárez. Using clay from across the Americas, it is meant to signify the origins of the people of the Americas.”

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/puerto-rico/san-juan-around/attractions/plaza-del-quinto-centenario/a/poi-sig/1418616/358130>

16. Walk up the stairs for a view of the totem pole and exit the plaza behind the totem pole. Turn left as you exit the plaza onto Calle Dr Francisco Rufina De Goenaga, which leads to the Iglesia de San Jose.



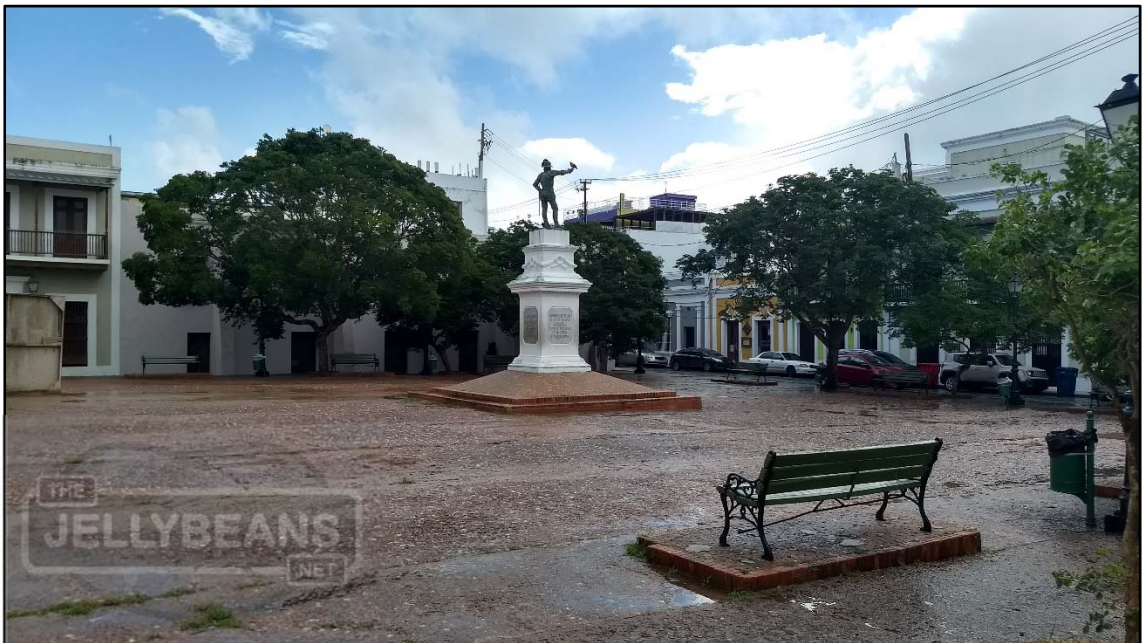
“San José Church is one of the first significant works of architecture on the island of Puerto Rico. The church is one of the earliest surviving examples of 16th-century Spanish Gothic architecture in the Western hemisphere.

“The church was constructed from 1532 to 1735 by the Dominican Order as part of their Saint Aquinas monastery. It was renamed by the Jesuits who took over the monastery in 1865.

“Juan Ponce de León, the first governor of Puerto Rico, was buried in the crypt of the church from 1559 to 1836, when his remains were exhumed and later transferred to the Cathedral of San Juan Bautista. However, his coat of arms is still located near the main altar. His grandson, Juan Ponce de Leon II is buried in the crypt beneath the Sanctuary's floor.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Jos%C3%A9_Church

17. Follow the road as it curves to the right and becomes Calle Del Cristo. Next to San José Church, you will find Plaza San José.



“This small plaza is dominated by a statue of Juan Ponce de León, cast from English cannons captured in the raid of 1797. The statue’s finger points toward Caparra, the original Spanish settlement in Puerto Rico he founded in 1508.”

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/puerto-rico/san-juan-around/attractions/plaza-de-san-jose/a/poi-sig/373385/358130>

[https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plaza_de_San_Jos%C3%A9_\(San_Juan,_Puerto_Rico\)](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plaza_de_San_Jos%C3%A9_(San_Juan,_Puerto_Rico))

18. Continue downhill on Calle De Cristo towards the harbor you can see in the distance. Be careful of the uneven brick roads and sidewalks as you walk.



You will pass Catedral Metropolitana Basílica de San Juan Bautista on your left.



“The Catedral Metropolitana Basílica de San Juan Bautista is the Roman Catholic cathedral of the Archdiocese of San Juan de Puerto Rico. It is one of the oldest buildings in San Juan and is the second oldest cathedral in the Americas.

“The original cathedral was constructed from wood in 1521. It was destroyed by a

hurricane and the current structure constructed in 1540, being reshaped in later centuries, the last time being in 1917.

“The cathedral contains the tomb of the Spanish explorer and settlement founder Juan Ponce de León. It also has a shrine to the Blessed Carlos Manuel Rodríguez Santiago, the first Puerto Rican, the first Caribbean-born layperson in history to be beatified.”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catedral_Metropolitana_Bas%C3%ADlica_de_San_Juan_Bautista_\(San_Juan,_Puerto_Rico\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catedral_Metropolitana_Bas%C3%ADlica_de_San_Juan_Bautista_(San_Juan,_Puerto_Rico))



19. Exit the church, turn left, and continue downhill towards the harbor.



At the intersection of Calle Fortaleza (and Calle De Cristo), look to the right for another view of the Governor's Mansion (La Fortaleza).



20. Continue walking down Calle del Cristo to the end of the road. Turn right to enter Parque Las Palomas (Pigeon Park).



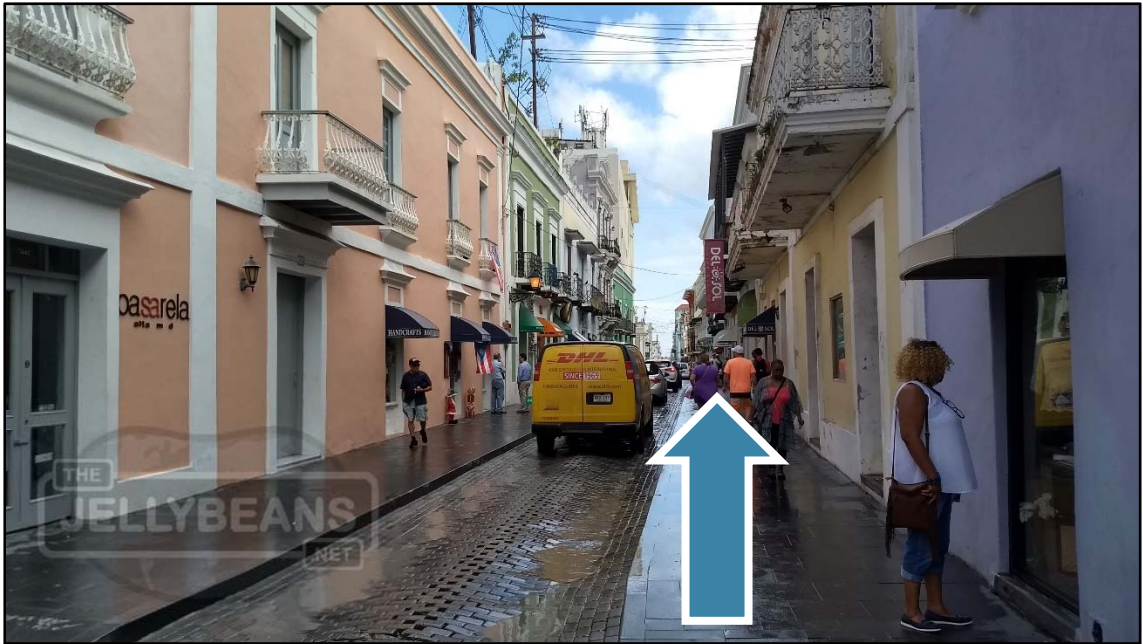
Parque Las Palomas (Pigeon Park)



You can get a good view of the harbor and port from this area:



21. Return to the intersection of Calle Fortaleza and Calle del Cristo. Turn right onto Calle Fortaleza and follow the road, walking away from the Governor's Mansion (La Fortaleza).



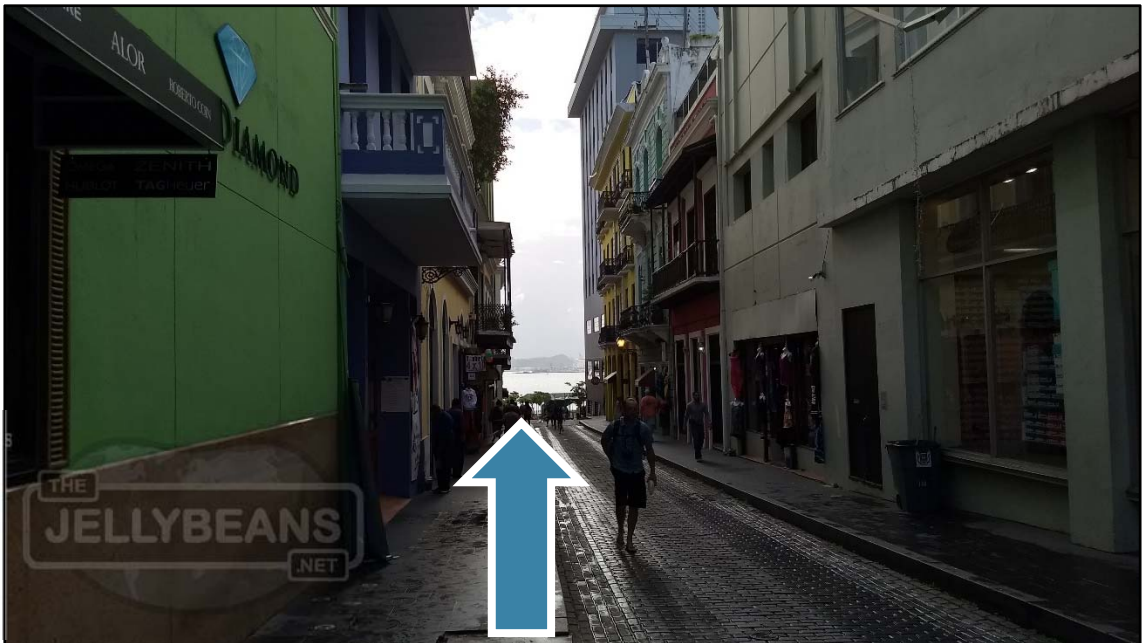
As you walk along Calle Fortaleza, look for the plaque on the right side of the street celebrating the creation of the Piña Colada in 1963.



22. At the intersection of Calle Fortaleza and Calle San Justo, turn right onto Calle San Justo.



23. Follow Calle San Justo to the harbor and port area to end the tour.



If you are in need of a bathroom as you walk back to the harbor and port area, we have previously used one in the building with the “United States Post Office and Court House” plaque located at Calle San Justo and Calle Recinto Sur, near the traffic circle you walked by at the start of this tour.



If you need to do some shopping while in port, both a CVS and Walgreens are located along the road that follows the waterfront by the port.

