

Yabucoa: A southeastern hidden gem

Miguel A. De Jesús Colón

Many tourists enjoy the historical landscape of Old San Juan with its castles, colonial architecture, and exquisite gastronomy. Who doesn't have a picture of the emblematic San Felipe del Morro and San Cristobal Castles in their Facebook profiles?

Another famous tourist site is Ponce, a southern municipality brimming with culture, history and food delicacies that are sure to leave any tourist wanting more.

Puerto Rico is so much more than San Juan and Ponce, and there are many towns on all parts of the island with memorable experiences for tourists. Let's start in the southeast region and explore 4 things you can do in Yabucoa.

Yabucoa: A small town with a sweet past

Yabucoa is a coastal town in the southeast region of Puerto Rico. It was founded in 1793. Its grandiose valley and mountain range collide with the Caribbean Sea.

Yabucoa is known as *La Ciudad del Azúcar* (The City of Sugar) as it was a main hub of sugar cane growth and production in all the region.

Yabucoa hosts the ruins of the last sugar mill to be shut down at the turn of the 21st century: Hacienda Roig.

This town has many sites to offer that range from the historical, natural to the modern.

Ruins of Central Roig Sugar Mill

Dating back to the 1870s the Central Roig Sugar Mill produced around 23,000 tons of refined sugar yearly. It was one of the largest sugar mills in the first half of the 20th century.

After many years of management reforms and high costs of sugar production, Central Roig ceased operations in 2001 and thus ending Puerto Rico's sugar economy.

Access to the mill is prohibited due to its fragile and decaying infrastructure, even more so after Hurricane María in 2017. Tourists can walk around the mill, take pictures of the area and chat with the residents that live nearby.

We recommend calling the municipal government to coordinate private tours in the mill.

Ruins of Hacienda Santa Lucía

Located in barrio Camino Nuevo and the panoramic 901 route, the ruins of Hacienda Santa Lucía are a glimpse into the past of Yabucoa's sugary history. It was one of the 6 sugar estates established in this town.

You can see the remains of the sugar cane machinery and even walk around the estate. Local artisans gather on the weekends to sell their crafts, so you can support local businesses and talents.

El Cocal Beach

El Cocal Beach is a hidden gem for surfers all around. With its strong waves and stretching shore, this beach is a must for tourists who enjoy surfing.

There's a small and quiet natural pool called *La Posita*. Once you cross a small wooden bridge, keep treading to the left until reaching the edge of the beach.

There you'll find a circular rock formation that encloses a natural pool. You can sunbathe, swim, or just relax there while your friends ride the waves.

We recommend checking local tide forecast before visiting El Cocal Beach.

Yabucoa Skate Park

If history or beaches aren't your thing, you can always hop on your skateboard and show off your tricks at the Yabucoa Skate Park.

This site is a favorite amongst teenagers and adults alike.

It's a bustling hub in the afternoons with people exercising in the open gymnasium, soccer practices in the track field, and skating all around.

After you destress from skateboarding, you can refresh in stores at walking-distance.

Fun for all—Yabucoa is for you!

Whether you are a history junkie, a nature lover or just here for the ride, there are many more things that Yabucoa can offer.

Plan your stay—Yabucoa is waiting for you!

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3 teaching strategies for Puerto Rican ESL teachers

Miguel A. De Jesús-Colón

Teaching English in Puerto Rico can be a heavy ordeal. According to the Puerto Rico Community Survey (2016 – 2020), [76.2%](#) of Puerto Ricans speak English less than “very well”.

Even though English is Puerto Rico’s second official language, it is not used in everyday scenarios. It is confined to legal, government and college spaces.

Historically, English was the failed vehicle used by the United States to accelerate assimilation after acquiring Puerto Rico in the 1898 Spanish-American War.

English is taught as a second language, but many students leave the education system with no-to-low English language proficiencies.

According to the 2018-2019 META PR (Puerto Rico’s standardized test for public system students) findings, only [38.9%](#) of students demonstrated proficient and advanced performances in the English standardized test.

Most Puerto Rican students are not exposed to the language due to many factors. They don’t feel the need to learn English in a Spanish-speaking country. Others are just afraid of speaking English because they won’t sound “native-like” or might not be understood.

Puerto Rican English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers are extremely creative to spark students’ interests in the language. They are known to use out-of-the-box strategies to help students improve their English language proficiency.

Here are three strategies you can add to your repertoire to make English learning fun and easy-going for students who need that extra help.

Cognates are your best friends!

Start your school year with a week-long lesson on cognates. Cognates are words in two or more languages that have similar spelling, meaning and pronunciation. For example, “pause” and “pausa” are English-Spanish cognates since they share all the characteristics previously mentioned. Here’s a list of most common [English/Spanish cognates](#)

Implement cognates throughout the whole school year to benefit students with low English proficiency. As a pre-reading activity, students can highlight and list all the

cognates in the text with their Spanish translation. This will increase English language vocabulary and make reading more accessible to them.

ESL teachers cannot generalize that all English-Spanish cognates are correct. Students need to understand false cognates. Take for example “choke” and “chocar”.

Students might assume that these are cognates since they have similar pronunciation and spelling. But the meanings are completely different. “Choke” is “estrangular” in Spanish while “chocar” is “to collide” in English. You can find a list of false cognates [here](#).

Try the two truths and one lie with false cognates. Divide the students in groups of three. Write down three words on the board: 2 true cognates and 1 false. Students must identify the false cognate and explain their choice. Students can use dictionaries or consult with their teammates. The group with the most points wins and receives a reward to be determined by the teacher (bonus points, stickers, etc.).

Finding cognates will come as natural as breathing once the system is ingrained in every lesson. You’ll be surprised how quickly their mindsets will shift and even find cognates you might’ve missed!

S-P-E-L-L-I-N-G your way into their minds

ESL teachers can attest that most Puerto Rican students can’t pronounce the English alphabet. This is a foundational skill for English language learners.

Much like the cognates system, spelling can be implemented to review the alphabet in every lesson. Students can discriminate sounds per letter and notice patterns in pronunciation for certain words. Phonemic awareness will be intrinsic when students practice spelling known and unknown words.

You can easily tie this with cognates. It might take some time for students to distinguish between two alphabet systems. Be sure to always establish your goals with spelling and reiterate the benefit of this strategy for their learning.

By the time English Week comes around, you’ll have a full class of participants for the Spelling Bee.

Stick to the classics: Use dry-erase lapboards

Teachers are expected to integrate technology in their lessons. Sometimes that isn’t the case due to lack of resources and unstable internet service in Puerto Rican schools. This strategy does not require any technological aid. You just need a dry-erase lapboard, a marker and an eraser.

Use a dry-erase lapboard assessment system for any lesson. Each student will have a dry-erase lapboard with a marker and eraser. This encourages participation even for those students that usually remain quiet or distant. Teachers can assess understanding of concepts to review or proceed to the following lesson while students have fun showcasing their knowledge.

Let's use cognates as an example. You can write an English word on the board and give students a minute to write down the Spanish cognate. You can challenge them by doing the opposite.

If you're teaching parts of a sentence, write it down on the board and have students identify a part of the sentence correctly. If you see many mistakes, you can quickly review the concept and continue with the activity.

Lapboards provide endless possibilities for ESL teachers without resorting to technology. If you want to use lapboards in your classroom, Amazon has great and affordable [options](#).

Learning a new language doesn't have to be hard

All students are different. Teachers need to lesson plan from this idea. However, learning English through these activities can help overcome any insecurities your students have about the English language.

These strategies add a little flavor to your lessons. Students will expect them daily and will be interested in coming back to your class.

Have fun with them and celebrate the small victories!

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Internships and grants in Puerto Rico you don't want to miss!

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Whether you're a college student, a non-profit organization/community-based project or a professional looking for the next career move, here's a list of internship and grant opportunities in Puerto Rico to consider for 2023. Be sure to check them out before the deadlines!

Reproductive Rights Fund

Puerto Rico Women's Foundation, Inc.

The Reproductive Rights Fund is a grant for organizations and feminist collectives for educational projects about reproduction rights and sexual health. This grant aims to provide recurrent financial aid to organizations that create community-led programs about reproductive justice.

This grant is eligible for the following:

- Community-based organizations and/or feminist collectives that have incorporated gender perspective in their activities and projects.
- Popular education focused organizations and/or collectives that incorporate gender perspective in their activities or that have created alliances with feminist organizations.
- Initiatives based in Puerto Rico with a year or more of operation.

The deadline is January 22, 2023. Fill out the form [here](#)! (Available only in Spanish.)

For more information about Puerto Rico Women's Foundation and the grant, visit the following [page](#).

Programa de Apoderamiento y Retención de Agentes de Cambio (PARACa)

Mentes Puertorriqueñas en Acción (MPA)

The Agents of Change Empowerment and Retention Program (*PARACa*) is an 8-week social action fellowship for college students and recent graduates based in Puerto Rico. It takes place during the summer (June-July) and is a full-time commitment of 32 hours from Monday to Thursday while Fridays and Saturdays are dedicated to workshops and field trips.

Their goal is to develop leaders with a sense of awareness of social issues in our current society. *PARACa* is organized in four major components: social awareness modules, field visits, internships, and community-building with other agents of change.

The deadline is February 28, 2023. Click [here](#) to apply now! (Available only in Spanish.)

For more information about *MPA* and *PARACa*, visit their official [website](#). Information is available in Spanish and English.

Revive el Cafetal Puertorriqueño

Hispanic Federation (HF)

As part of the revitalization efforts of the coffee production industry in Puerto Rico after the passage of Hurricanes Irma and María and as a response to the limited access of coffee seedlings in Puerto Rico, Hispanic Federation created the *Revive el Cafetal Puertorriqueño* program in 2020 which subsidizes 2.25 million coffee seedlings.

This grant extends for 18 months and covers most of the coffee seedlings costs. There are specific requirements for potential applicants, such as, three years of agricultural experience and small scale producers who work coffee in their lands.

The application covers detailed questions that will determine eligibility for this grant like property information (years of experience, size, type of crop, agricultural practice, workforce), coffee production experience, survey of needs, commitment to coffee production, and additional information.

There is no official deadline. You can apply [online](#) or [print](#) the form. (Available only in Spanish.)

For more information about Hispanic Federation and the grant, visit the following [page](#).

Internship opportunities in Puerto Rico you don't want to miss!

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If you're a college student looking for new opportunities, professional development, and career exposure, here are two internships to consider for 2023.

Web and Social Media Producer Internship *WAPA TV & WAPA Deportes*

WAPA TV, one of Puerto Rico's leading television stations, is offering students a web and social media producer internship opportunity. The intern will be in charge of the 2023 Caribbean Series digital coverage for WAPA Deportes.

Among other requisites, interns are required to demonstrate a passion for sports, especially baseball, have experience creating social media content in Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and be available for professional development and coverage of the Caribbean Series.

The 2023 Caribbean Series is slated for February 2. If you're interested in this internship, send your resumé to recursos.humanos@wapa-tv.com.

For more information about this internship, visit the following [page](#).

Events Coordinator Foundation for Puerto Rico

Foundation for Puerto Rico, a nonprofit organization that "seeks to unleash Puerto Rico's potential in the global economy", is looking for an Events Coordinator intern.

As an Events Coordinator intern, you will be expected to lead and coordinate events, facilitate communication between stakeholders, and manage data for decision-making and grant reporting, among other responsibilities.

This is a paid internship with hybrid work, a fixed schedule from Monday to Friday from 9AM - 6PM, and 30-40 hours per week.

Be sure to check out the full job announcement [here](#); you can also apply through their official LinkedIn [page](#).

For more information about Foundation for Puerto Rico, visit the following [page](#).