



TRIP OVERVIEW

Puerto Rico boasts an astounding diversity of landscapes, from misty rainforests, crumbling outcrops of karst country, to reef-encrusted desert islands and withering dry forests. Add in the breathtaking scenery, unparalleled beauty, unexplored spaces and the laid-back lifestyle and it is a great place to explore and swim.

We are based on the island of Vieques, home to a pristine wildlife refuge and one of nature's most mind-boggling spectacles - the glowing waters of the world's brightest bioluminescent bay. We swim on three of the four coastlines and get a great sense of what a special place the island of Vieques truly is.

WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip is for swimmers who want to explore both extended reefs and lagoons in a protected environment, where you can see the sea bottom most of the time. This remote location is ideally situated to discover both exciting swims and unusual wildlife and offers the chance for swimmers to disconnect and enjoy an uninterrupted swimming holiday.

Swimmers should have a basic understanding of open water swimming and be capable of completing the average swim distance of 3 km, prior to the start of the trip. The average daily swim distance is around 5½ km (split over two swims).

We have given this trip a 'Leisurely' grading designed for people who want to swim at a more relaxed pace and enjoy the scenery.

TAILOR-MADE SWIMTREK TRIPS

This trip can also be offered as tailor-made experience. The date of travel and itinerary can be adjusted to suit you. For more information, [contact us](#) with the dates you'd like and number of people taking part. We'll be in touch to chat about putting together your dream swimming experience.

LOCATION SUMMARIES

Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is a US commonwealth, rich in cultural and geographical diversity. The island is surrounded by aquamarine waters, golden beaches, and multicolored fringing coral all of which is home to abundant marine life. Add to that the mountainous interior, featuring lush green jungles, and Puerto Rico is well worth a visit.

Vieques Island



This island is a much more chilled-out version of the pacier lifestyle you find on the main island of Puerto Rico. As the biggest of the islands sometimes referred to as the Spanish Virgin Islands, Vieques lies six miles southeast of the Puerto Rico mainland. The Puerto Rican poet Luis Llorens Torres dubbed it la Isla Nena (“Little Girl Island”), alluding to its perception as Puerto Rico’s little sister.

Esperanza Puerto Real

Our base for the week is the coastal village of Esperanza known locally as El Malecon. It is a favorite hangout for locals and visitors alike. El Malecon is a picturesque location with views of Monte Pirata (the highest peak on the island), a gorgeous beach, offshore cays, colorful fisherman boats on the water and warm amber sunsets.

Bioluminescent Bay

This bay is located just a few miles from our base at Esperanza on the southern shore of Vieques. In the waters of Mosquito Bay, there are organisms named Pyrodinium bahamense, Dinoflagellates (dinos). These “dinos” are responsible for this amazing natural phenomenon. When the “dinos” come into contact with another organism, or are disturbed, they produce a bright burst of blue light.

TRIP SCHEDULE

Start Point	El Block Hotel, Vieques www.elblok.com
Start Time	14:30 on Day 1
Finish Point	El Block Hotel, Vieques www.elblok.com
Finish Time	11:00 on Day 4

Please note that the below daily itineraries are an example of the swims that may take place during the course of your trip, however, actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions. Your SwimTrek guides and local boat pilots will determine the most suitable swim locations each day and will communicate the plan with all guests as soon as possible.

Day 1

Upon arrival at our hotel, we hold a welcome meeting to discuss the plans for the trip along with our safety briefing. Following this, we head down to the beach a few meters from the accommodation for a brief acclimatisation swim. After a chance to rest and relax, we reconvene for a group dinner.

Day 2

This morning we head to the north of the island for a couple of cracking swims. The first one is a unique swim along the full length of Mosquito Pier, originally constructed by the US Navy with the purpose of creating a sea wall between Vieques to the main island of Puerto Rico. The project was never completed and all that is left is this pier that juts out into the Caribbean Sea. The Navy’s loss is our gain as the sea life that congregates underneath the pier can be like a real-life aquarium with a variety of corals and fish species. Turtles are frequently spotted here too. It’s an ideal first swim as there are numerous ‘get out



points' along the way, should we wish to get out and rest.

After lunch, we head to the remote north-west coast and to Punta Arenas, with its shelving reef which extends with coral outcrops in all directions. The peak of Mount Britton in the El Yunque National Forest on the nearby island of Puerto Rico is clearly visible as we swim towards the headland at Punta Boca Quebrada. The coastline here is generally sheltered and offers an idyllic reef swim.

Once the swim finishes, we head back to our base at Esperanza, where you have a chance to rest and relax and maybe explore the village some more. We meet for sunset drinks on our hotel's rooftop bar and discuss the plan for tomorrow in more detail.

Day 3

Today, we base ourselves on the stunning South Coast of Vieques. We carry out two swims within the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge which contains some of the best examples of sub-tropical forest in the Caribbean.

Our morning swim takes us from the white sanded Navio Beach and across the entrance to Bioluminescent Bay. Once across the channel, we swim along the craggy coast, which features a number of inlets and occasional islets. A steep coastline means 'get out points' are limited. Our target is the abandoned Puerto Ferro Lighthouse which was first lit back in 1896. After being picked up by boat we head back to Esperanza for lunch and a chance to relax.

The afternoon's swim takes us further east as we go swim from the island of Chiva and towards Punta Conejo. Once we round the headland, we aim towards Punta Carenero. There are numerous fan and brain corals to swim over as well as schools of parrot fish, butterfly fish, eagle rays and hawksbill turtles which call the seagrass forests here home. This is remote swimming as several of the places that we pass are inaccessible from land.

The evening is spent together with a final dinner somewhere in Esperanza, where we can reminisce about the previous swims and look forward to the final swim to come.

Day 4

After a relaxed breakfast overlooking the sea, there is time for one final swim, and this is a fun crossing as we swim out to the island of Cayo Real which lies out directly in front of Esperanza village. Antler coral, nurse sharks and manatees have been spotted previously on this short crossing. The coastline around Cayo Real is rocky and is a haven for a variety of sea life. After time to rest and relax, it is time to say our goodbyes when the tour comes to an end.

TRIP INFORMATION

Essential Equipment Checklist

In addition to your daily non-swimming clothes, we also recommend that you bring the following items:

✓	ITEM	✓	ITEM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Costume (x2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Towel



<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Goggles (x2)*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Light Sweater/Fleece
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sun Hat and Sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Walking Shoes / Sandals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof Sun Cream	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aqua Shoes / Sandals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small Daypack	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insect Repellent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof Jacket	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal Drink Bottle (x2)

*Try to bring one clear lens and one tinted lens for different light conditions.

SwimTrek will supply swim hats, water and electrolyte drinks. The guides will no longer distribute shared drinks bottles, but rather will fill up each individual guest's personal drink bottle. Please ensure these are clearly marked to help our guides identify yours. If you would like to use a wetsuit, rash vest, snorkel or fins during your swims, please ensure that you bring these with you. For more on our Updated Packing List check out our: [Covid-19 guidance](#).

Group Size and Boat Support

This trip has a maximum group size of 12 swimmers and will be accompanied by two SwimTrek guides and local boat crew. The group will be split into a maximum of two groups based on speed, each of which is accompanied by their own safety vessel/escort.

TRIP GRADING

We have given this trip a 'Leisurely' grading designed for people who want to swim at a more relaxed pace and enjoy the scenery.

Swimming Distances

SWIM*	DISTANCE	SWIM*	DISTANCE
Mosquito Pier Circumnavigation	3½ km	Punta Arenas – Punta Boca Quebrada	2 km
Navio - Puerto Ferro Lighthouse	3 km	Chiva - Punta Carenero	2½ km
Cayo Real out & back	2 km		

*Please note that these swims are an example of what may take place during the course of your trip and should be used as a guide only. Actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions.

Swimming Conditions

Swimming in the sea is a fantastic experience but you need to be aware that marine life is abundant in Puerto Rico. Stonefish, scorpionfish, lionfish, jellyfish, sea urchins, coral and some shark species could be present during the swims. In all cases we will work on reducing your contact with these creatures, however if you suffer from anaphylaxis please consult the office prior to booking.



Walking Distances

While walking is not a focus of this trip, there are some optional walks, for which we recommend that you wear comfortable walking shoes or sandals.

Walking Conditions

The walks are short and flat and take place on established footpaths and trails.

Temperatures

MONTH	WATER TEMPERATURE*	AIR TEMPERATURE*
November	27-29°C / 81-84°F	26-28°C / 79-82°F
December	26-28°C / 79-82°F	26-28°C / 79-82°F

*Please note that these temperatures are indicative and should be used as a guide only.

Weather Caveat

For safety reasons, we rely on decent weather conditions when carrying out our swims. As a consequence, open water swimming holidays require a certain degree of on-trip flexibility which can result in changes to the planned itinerary. These changes often add a touch of uniqueness to your trip and will be communicated to you by your SwimTrek guides as quickly as possible.

GETTING THERE

There are no non-stop flights directly to Vieques Island from outside of Puerto Rico. So you should fly to Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport, also known as San Juan Airport (SJU) on the main island and then make your way from there.

As SwimTrekkers come from all over the world, and join our swimming holidays in numerous destinations, we don't currently offer flights as part of our SwimTrek packages. We do however want to do as much as we can to ensure that our guests get the best deals when travelling to one of our trips so check out [SwimTrek's tips to help you get the best deals for your flights](#) page on the website.

Travel from San Juan Airport to Vieques Island Esperanza

The most convenient way to get to Vieques is to book flights directly from San Juan International Airport (SJU) to Antonio Rivera Rodríguez Airport (VQS) a 30-minute flights. Airlines flying this route include Vieques Air Link and Cape Air.

If you are staying on Puerto Rico prior to your SwimTrek trip you may want to make your way to Ceiba's Jose Aponte de la Torre Airport (RVR). Flights from Ceiba to Vieques are 7 minutes each way. Services are light aircraft that might hold up to 14 passengers. Also leaving from Ceiba is the ferry which takes between 1 and 2 hours. The ferry is cheap but normally crowded and cannot be pre-booked.

Travel from Vieques Airport and Ferry Terminal to Esperanza

Getting from the airport or ferry terminals, on the north of the island, to Esperanza and the El Blok Hotel



is a short 15-minute drive across the island. You can take a *publico* (a communal taxi) and they are typically plentiful at both arrival points. Alternatively, organise a private taxi before leaving Puerto Rico so it is waiting when you arrive on Vieques by calling (787) 741-8294 (TAXI)

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Accommodation

Our home for the trip is the El Blok Hotel in the idyllic seafront hamlet of Esperanza. The hotel is inspired by the coral reefs and is an alluring arthouse-inspired hotel. It benefits from an excellent restaurant and rooftop bar. El Blok does not accept guests under 18 years of age.

The rooms feel natural, modern and minimalist. All rooms feature balconies and rain showers.

Pre/Post Trip Accommodation and Trip Extension Options

If you require any additional nights' accommodation on Vieques Island before or after the SwimTrek tour, this can be arranged directly through the El Blok Hotel via email at reserve@elblok.com. When contacting El Blok please ensure that you inform them that you are part of the SwimTrek group

For guests looking to extend their stay in Puerto Rico there is a wide range of hotels on the main island as well as charter boats if you'd be interested to explore by sea.

Food and Drink

All breakfasts are included on the trip. Two lunches are also included on each of the full days. Dinners are at your own expense, which gives you a fantastic opportunity to explore and experience the local cafes and restaurants of your choice over the course of your trip.

Extra Activities

Bioluminescent Bay is just a short hop from Esperanza and is well worth a visit at night time during your time there. It is simple to organise a trip to see the bay when you are on the trip. Other activities available on the island include sailing or horseback riding tours and explorative hikes. Besides taxis there are also 'golf cart' hire available for a fun way to explore.

Money, Extra Expenses and Tipping

You should bring extra money with you to cover such items as dinners, entertainment, souvenirs and drinks. The local currency is US dollars (US\$).

In some countries tipping, gratuities, is not part of the culture in others it has become an expected norm. We believe that tipping is entirely at your discretion. If you have been provided with excellent service it may be something you wish to do. Your SwimTrek guides can advise on local norms for service providers like boat crew, waiters, or taxis. Nothing is expected for your SwimTrek guides, but many groups like to present something to the guides at the end of the trip.



Passports and Visas

Since Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States, US citizens do not require a passport to enter the island. However, you must always travel with a valid photo ID.

Non-residents of the United States require a full passport to enter Puerto Rico, which should be valid for six months beyond the expected length of stay. The majority of visitors to the US require a visa to enter the country. Many nationalities can apply online for the ESTA Visa Waiver Program. For further information, please visit: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>. For further information about US visas, please visit www.travel.state.gov/content/visas/en.html.

Please note that all visa regulations are subject to change and we advise that you check your own visa requirements prior to travel.

Travel Insurance

We consider comprehensive travel insurance to be essential, and we strongly recommend that you purchase insurance which includes, but is not limited to, cover for illness, accident, emergency repatriation, ambulance, air ambulance, helicopter rescue services, cancellation, lost luggage, and delays. Your travel insurance should also cover you for open water swimming and any other activity listed in your trip itinerary (including races and competitions, where applicable). Please read your policy details carefully and remember to take them with you on your trip for your own reference. For further information about travel insurance, please visit www.swimtrek.com/travel-insurance.

Health Information and Recommended Vaccinations

For comprehensive health information for people travelling to Puerto Rico, including all recommended and required vaccinations, please visit www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries. Please note that this information is subject to change and you should re-check this site regularly prior to your trip.

Internet Access, Electricity and Travel Plugs

On Vieques Island internet access can be sporadic. At El Blok Hotel internet access (high speed and wireless) is available in the common areas while wifi is also available in guest rooms.

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit: www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/.