



Assessing Sustainable Tourism Best Practice & Opportunities for Puerto Rico

An assessment of sustainable tourism case studies & marketing and communications opportunities

Executive Summary

Detailed report delivered to Discover Puerto Rico on April 16, 2024

Skift.
ADVISORY
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TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

Discover Puerto Rico engaged Skift to identify **best practices** in sustainable tourism both locally and internationally, and to formulate strategies for **marketing and promoting Puerto Rico as a sustainable tourism destination**.

Sustainable tourism aims to **minimize environmental impact** by conserving resources and protecting ecosystems, **support local communities** by preserving cultural integrity and promoting fair practices, and **generate economic benefits** by ensuring equitable distribution of income and supporting local businesses. It strives for a balanced approach that respects natural and social environments while fostering economic growth.

OBJECTIVES

IDENTIFY BEST PRACTICES

BENCHMARKING & INSIGHTS

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY

POSITIONING & DIFFERENTIATION



PHASE 1:

FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

- Project kickoff
- Evaluation criteria definition
- Domestic framework development
- International framework development



PHASE 2:

ASSESSMENT & PRIORITIZATION

- Sustainable tourism initiatives rating
- Domestic case study selection
- International case study selection



PHASE 3:

ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION

- Case study analysis
- Drafting of Insights Report
- Insights Report feedback & finalization
- Insights Briefing

METHODOLOGY



EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Our approach considered various elements that could impact the success of sustainable tourism, considering the environment, economy, and community.

| BASIC CREDIBILITY | ECONOMIC IMPACT | SOCIAL IMPACT | ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT | SIMILARITY TO PUERTO RICO |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Efforts made by the business or destination to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), achieve formal third-party sustainability certifications, or have a strong public relations plan. | Contribution to decent employment within the tourism industry, well-supported tourism infrastructure, and empowerment of innovators and entrepreneurs. | Level of impact on the well-being of the local community, its efforts to conserve culture and heritage, and the amount it enhances accessibility. | Approach towards protecting or improving the environment, sourcing materials and products locally, and conserving water and energy resources. | For international case study benchmarking, destinations' likeness to Puerto Rico in terms of products and experiences, visitor arrivals, pricing, and geography. |

NOTABLE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES, ON THE ISLAND & ABROAD

We identified the following 9 Puerto Rican initiatives and 6 non-Puerto Rican initiatives as having notable practices in sustainable tourism.



1

4 CASITAS

Sustainable accommodation using renewable resources.

CABO ROJO

2

RINCON DIVING & SNORKELING

Boat-free experiences conserving biodiversity.

RINCON

3

SEMILA

Educational agrotourism reducing food scarcity.

BARCELONETA

4

CABACOOOP

Non-profit work co-op with educational excursions.

MOROVIS

9

EL YUNQUE NTL FOREST

Culturally important forest with deep sustainability partnerships.

EL YUNQUE

5

ROCA NORTE

Natural rock-climbing gym promoting well-being.

VEGA BAJA

6

FINCA GAIA

Agrotourism farm supporting crucial biodiversity.

DORADO

7

CASA SOL B&B

Historical accommodations prioritizing sustainability.

SAN JUAN

8

RAINFOREST INN B&B

Jungle accommodation with creative sustainability efforts.

RIO GRANDE

1

TIDE TOURS

Community tourism emphasizing land stewardship.

TOLEDO, BELIZE

2

CAMINOS DE OSA

Interlinked tourism entrepreneurs protecting biodiversity.

PUNTARENAS, COSTA RICA

3

FINCA TIERRA

Sustainable permaculture and agroforestry educational experiences.

PUERTO VIEJO, COSTA RICA

4

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SHARK RESEARCH

Adventurous citizen science programs researching sharks.

MIAMI, FLORIDA, USA

5

EL GALLO ECOLOGDE

Community tourism experiences with a unique jungle accommodation.

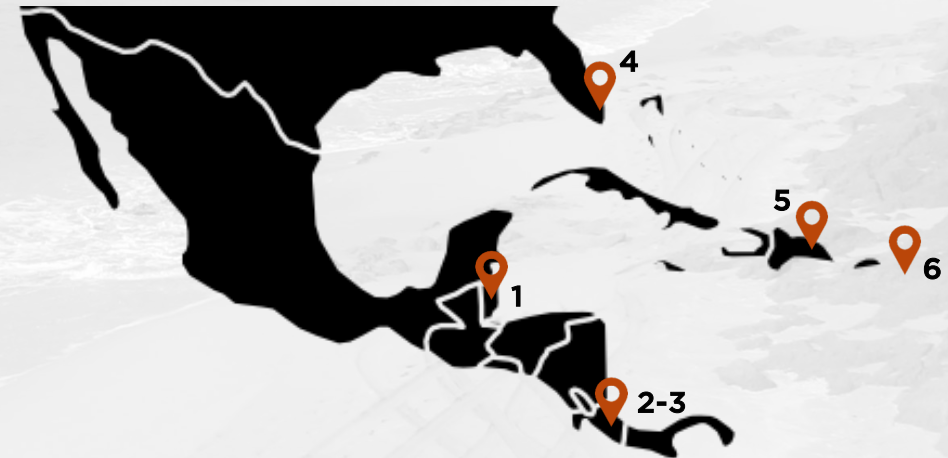
PUERTO PLATA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

6

CONCORDIA ECO RESORT

Historic island stay with a long history of sustainable hospitality.

ST. JOHN, US VIRGIN ISLANDS



SUSTAINABILITY BEST PRACTICE TRENDS

Sustainable tourism holds significant promise for Puerto Rico, offering a pathway to economic growth while preserving the island's natural and cultural heritage. Five trends were identified amongst the top-ranked sustainable tourism initiatives within Puerto Rico.

1. LOCAL-LED EXPERIENCES

Community-led initiatives are crucial for sustainable tourism in Puerto Rico as they empower locals to actively participate in and benefit from tourism development.

2. RESILIENT REBUILDING

Much of the tourism industry of Puerto Rico and surrounding areas continues to rebound post Hurricane Maria. By prioritizing sustainable rebuilding practices, the island can bounce back stronger while minimizing environmental impact.

3. HERITAGE-INNOVATION FUSION

By combining heritage conservation with innovative strategies, the island can attract visitors while safeguarding its cultural and natural assets for future generations.

4. ENGAGE, EDUCATE, EXPLORE

Through hands-on activities, tourists gain a deeper appreciation for Puerto Rico's heritage and environment, leading to greater respect and care for these resources.

5. CONSCIOUS COMFORT

By offering eco-friendly accommodations, responsible dining options, and curated experiences that prioritize environmental and social responsibility, luxury establishments can cater to discerning travelers while minimizing their ecological footprint and contributing positively to the local economy and environment.



1. Local-Led Experiences



2. Resilient Rebuilding



3. Heritage-Innovation Fusion



4. Engage, Educate, Explore



5. Conscious Comfort



DEFINING THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL TRAVEL & TOURISM

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