

Climatic variation is distinguished mainly by differences in rainfall; it is generally heaviest in the high central mountains. The rainy season tends to fall between May and December, but the showers are usually brief.

Local Time

Puerto Rico is on Atlantic Standard Time for the entire year (same time as Ontario during Eastern Daylight Saving Time).

Population

In the 1990 census, the population of Puerto Rico was 3 314 000. In 1988, 679 489 students enrolled in the first month of school at public, primary and secondary schools. In the same year, 56 904 registered at the University of Puerto Rico; 98 809 students enrolled in other college-level schools.

Principal Cities

San Juan, a metropolitan area located on the north coast, has a population of over 1.5 million and is the capital. It is the commercial, political and transportation centre of Puerto Rico, and boasts having the busiest ocean terminal in the Caribbean as well as a modern international airport. Ponce, an old colonial town on the south coast with a population of 200 000, is the second largest city. It is a major commercial centre, but with less tourist appeal than Arecibo on the north coast because it lacks good beaches. On the east coast, Mayaguez (population 99 800) has great potential for industrial expansion and is one of the two free trade zones (FTZs). San Juan, the other FTZ, is already a major international trading centre.

Language

Spanish is the mother tongue of Puerto Rico and, with English, is one of the two official languages. English is widely spoken and understood, particularly among those engaged in commerce. The island is served by English-language television, radio and newspapers.

Religion

Freedom of worship is guaranteed under the constitution and Roman Catholicism is by far the predominant religion. Many churches offer services in both Spanish and English.