

# Grounds for Success

Taste what's brewing in Puerto Rico's thriving coffee scene.

**SAN JUAN APPEALS** to connoisseurs of all sorts: fashionistas seeking the latest designer styles, foodies craving Latin flavors, beach lovers on the hunt for world-class surf. But coffee mavens?

Even some of the most educated coffee connoisseurs don't know about Puerto Rico's locally grown beans. But that's not a reflection of the taste, says Adriana Vera of **Hacienda El Jibarito** ([www.haciendaeljibarito.com](http://www.haciendaeljibarito.com)), which roasts its own beans and has an onsite hotel for aficionados.

"We don't supply enough for our own demand," Vera says.

"We cannot ship anything because we don't even have enough for

ourselves. It's very rare for coffee from here to be exported to Europe or the US or even to the rest of the Caribbean. It's basically unique to here."

It's no wonder locals want to keep the beans to themselves. Each is hand-selected by cultivators in the island's central and western parts, especially in La Cordillera Central, a mountain range with optimal altitude and climate. Growers sell beans to coffee haciendas, which roast and grind the beans, and may distribute them to restaurants and coffeeshops—if they have enough. El Jibarito, for example, only sells its coffee at the hotel. But the beans are only one ingredient in Puerto Rico's gourmet cup of joe; preparation is just as important.

Ask for a *café con leche*, for example, and you'll get a traditional black coffee with steamed milk. A Puerto Rican *café expreso* will beat the socks off the espresso you get from your local barista; the unique flavor and aroma of the island's beans are best appreciated in this potent brew. To look like a pro, try a *café expreso* black; otherwise, order a *cortadito* (derived from the Spanish word for "slightly cut"), which is a *café expreso* mixed with a tiny bit of hot milk.

No matter what you order, savor every sip—there's no telling when (if ever) you'll have it back home.



## Caffeine Cravings

You can spend a night—or an entire vacation—at Hacienda El Jibarito, immersing yourself into the world of coffee production. But if you would rather just enjoy a cup, here are a few of San Juan's best spots.

**Karamelos Coffee & Gallery**

787-598-5152  
An Old San Juan café with a side of culture

**La Bombonera**

787-722-0658  
Bottomless coffee cups in turn-of-the-century surroundings

**La Mallorca**

787-724-4607  
Simple, hearty diner food to match the traditional coffee

