



“Thanks for all you did for us. You and your staff definitely made it a highlight of these student’s lives as well as the best band trip that I have been on!” –Kristofer Sanz

Music Director Winston Churchill H.S., 132 participants 2012, 175 participants, 2015

## Puerto Rico Educational Programs

# Tentative Itinerary Proposal for Travel to *Puerto Rico* 7 Days, 6 Nights

*From a Tropical Rain Forest to a Glowing Bioluminescent Bay and Exotic Coral Reefs to a 500 Year Old City*

*Experience a Culture Fueled by a Latin Beat*

This proposed itinerary is for a 7 Day, 6 Night cultural immersion-based choir / music performance tour of the Spanish speaking country of *Puerto Rico*. The focus of PREP TOURS’ programs afford today’s music directors, educators and students access to various venues while also broadening and strengthening their global awareness. Our experienced, licensed tour guides are not only hand-picked for their knowledge, but also for their warmth and character. Through choral and music performances at select venues intertwined with hands-on, rich cultural immersion experiences, participants will absorb the breathtaking beauty of the landscape, customs, history and traditions, language, music, geography, and food of *La Isla del Encanto*, the Enchanted Island. These life long memories that will be taken back to stateside schools and communities can only be achieved through interaction with the ideal mix of musical, educational, cultural and recreational activities not found in any textbook, classroom, auditorium or rehearsal hall.

## Day 1- Depart for San Juan, Puerto Rico



Arrive mid-day/afternoon in La Isla del Encanto (The Enchanted Island) where you'll be greeted by Paul Borkowski, PREP TOURS owner, and staff members. Your cultural immersion experience will start immediately with a taste of Puerto Rican style Media Noche sandwiches, island grown fruit, Quesito pastries, and bottled water.



Transfer to the **Embassy Suites Dorado Resort** via motor coach – *approximately 40 minutes from the airport to the resort*

Time permitting, there will be a short stop at a market close to the Dorado Embassy Suites if you wish to purchase refreshments, snacks etc. for your suite's refrigerator and to practice your Spanish Language skills. After getting acquainted with your well-appointed suite, you will have time to explore the beautiful resort.

Welcome buffet dinner at the resort



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## Day 2 - Community Service – Choral Workshop

Full cooked-to-order breakfast buffet at the Resort

9:30 a.m. – Board Bus

10:00 am- A Community Service Project at a local Senior Community Center where you may provide a song or two and a little something for their needs (bed linens, toiletries compliments of PREP TOURS), while practicing your Spanish with the residents. This Meaningful Community Service will be a truly rewarding experience for you and the residents and may be noted on your college resumes.

PM Workshop and free time at the Resort

Dinner followed by free time at the Hotel

B/L/D

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## Day 3 - El Yunque Rain Forest - Bio Bay Excursion

Fully cooked-to-order breakfast at the Resort



1130 am Depart for **El Yunque Rain Forest** for a guided walking and hiking tour and swimming in the **Rain Forest** also known as El Yunque, home to over 240 plant species receiving billions of gallons of rainfall each year. El Yunque is the **sole** tropical rain forest in the U.S. National Forest System. The forest's relatively small 28,000 acre size belies its year-round tropical climate and immense biodiversity.

**\*Federal law prohibits the larger motor coach buses from passing the Rain Forest's El Portal Visitor's Center. For this reason you will be transferred to smaller buses at the Visitor's Center.**

There will be stops at Coca Falls and Yokahu Tower which command a view of the entire northeast coast of Puerto Rico followed by a picnic style lunch. Recently, El Yunque became one of the nominees for the Seven Wonders of the World Contest.

Arrive at El Yunque Rain Forest. Narrated walking tour of El Yunque Rain Forest.

There will be a picnic style lunch in the Rain Forest

For the physically fit, there's a downhill hike to Las Minas Falls. The hike is approximately 45 minutes going downhill and a 55-minute return hike – all uphill. There is a beautiful waterfall and swimming hole at Las Minas, so bring along your bathing suit because you'll have a chance to wade in the cool refreshing water.

**Note: For those wishing a less moderate workout, there is an optional leisurely 20 -30 minute walk on the Bano Grande Trail. (Notification must be in advance.**

After El Yunque, there will be dinner (on your own) on the way to the Bioluminescent Bay at .At the Bio Bay at Las Croabas., your guides will instruct you on the safety and protocols of bio bay kayaking. They will guide you through the mangroves to Laguna Grande where you'll see the water begin to sparkle when disturbed. Laguna Grande is one of only several bio bays in the world where this spectacular illuminating phenomenon can be observed.

Return to your hotel for pizza, arriving at approximately 10:00 P.M.



## Day 4 – Cultural Exchange at a Private Independent School – Old San Juan Tour and Performance

7:30 A.M. Full cooked-to-order scrumptious breakfast buffet in the resort’s dining room

8:30 A.M. Transfer to a nearby private independent school for a hands-on cultural exchange activity hosted by honor society students. Students will have the opportunity to learn to dance the Bomba and learn to play traditional Puerto Rican instruments associated with the Bomba as well. Cultural exchange also includes a typical Christmas meal. **The school activity is only for students and teachers.**



11:00 A.M. Depart for Old San Juan, Buffet Lunch en route to the “Old City.”



1:00 pm Begin guided, narrated, walking tour of **Old San Juan, oldest settlement within Puerto Rico and the U.S.**

This narrated tour will be led by licensed bilingual tour guides who will introduce you to San Juan and its 400 years of Spanish Colonial history. Declared a “World Heritage Site” by UNESCO, this beautifully preserved area comprising of seven square blocks is a blend of both the Old and New Worlds. There will be stops at Fort San Cristobal, Puerto Rico’s Capitol Building (El Capitolio), El Morro, Antiguo Casino, San Juan Museum, Convento de San Tomás, Iglesia San José,, Pablo Casals Museum\*, Casa Blanca and more.



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\*Casals lived on the island for about the last 17 years of his life. His mother and last wife were born here.

At the conclusion of your guided walking tour of Old San Juan, there will be time for strolling and shopping on your own in the “Old City”

5:00 pm Meet at Plaza las Armas for a 5:30 pm choral performance at Plaza las Armas located directly in front of San Juan City Hall.

Following your performance board buses for a buffet dinner at your hotel followed by free time

## Day 5 Thursday March 15, 2017 — Performances at a local independent schools

7:30 A.M. Full cooked-to-order breakfast buffet at the resort

Meet your guides and buses and depart for a music performance in a local independent school's auditorium in front of a receptive audience of 800 students and teachers.

11:00 A.M. Transfer to a nearby restaurant for a buffet lunch

12:30 A.M. Meet your guides and buses and depart for a music performance in a local independent school's auditorium.

Upon the conclusion of your second performance, you will be transferred back to your hotel for free time and supper followed by Salsa Lessons

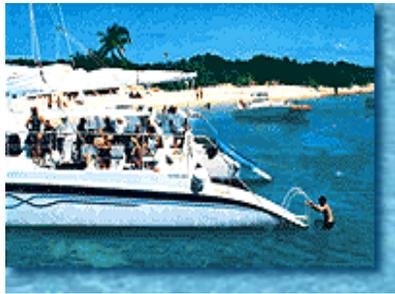




## Day 6 Catamaran swimming and snorkeling, chillin' Excursion

7:00 A.M. Full cooked-to-order breakfast buffet at the resort

7:45 A.M. Meet with your Tour Director at conclusion of both performances and board buses for your catamaran excursion at the **Ceiba Marina** to a private island for sun, sail, swim, snorkel and relaxation



10:00 A.M. Board your catamaran  
*You will enjoy the beautiful views of Puerto Rico's east coast, including stunning views of the "El Yunque" mountains and the Fajardo coastline. You will sail to the paradise island of Icacos, an uninhabited Spanish Virgin Island, where sparkling beaches and crystal clear snorkeling waters await your arrival.*

Buffet lunch provided on board the catamaran

The catamaran excursion usually lasts approximately 4.5 hours

**3:30 P.M. Depart for hotel, arriving at approx. 5:00 P.M.**

**6:00-7:00 P.M. Buffet farewell Dinner at Resort**

Free Time at Resort



## Day 7 — Departure

Morning: Scrumptious buffet cooked to order breakfast at Hotel;

Prepare for your trip home. Bid adios to “La Isla del Encanto”. (Puerto Rico)

Approx. - Load buses and Depart for San Juan International Airport

Depart for San Juan International Airport (SJU)

***Included** in this price are accommodations (four pers. per room), Single, Double, Triple rooms available upon request. All breakfasts, lunch and dinner meals, all recreational activities, all ground transportation in itinerary; historical and cultural tours; services of tour director; entrance fees, speakers, and guides. This does not include airfare.*

*Cost will be based on a minimum of 35 participants*

*Single room for music director*

*Double Rooms for Chaperones*

***Not included** are airfares, visas and travel documents, namely passport fees, client-elected single/double /triple room supplement charges, baggage handler (porter) fees, personal expenses, insurances, alcoholic beverages, specialty drinks, additional excursions/meals/entrance fees not on the itinerary and gratuities for tour escorts, guides and drivers and additional security.*

***GRATUITIES:** for tour guides and drivers – add \$2.00 per day per traveler, for each guide and driver.*



**PREP TOURS INC**

**A TRUSTED COMPANY**

**PEACE OF MIND - PREP TOURS –KNOW WHERE YOUR CHILDREN ARE**

- A PREP TOURS representative will be with you 24/7 during your entire stay in Puerto Rico
- PREP TOURS uses insured vehicles licensed, regulated & inspected by the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC), as well as the Puerto Rico Department of Public Works.
- Our drivers/tour operators are licensed and certified by the Department of Public Works and the PRTC. Our drivers/tour operators are drug screened and possess good conduct certificates (background checks) issued by the Puerto Rico Police Department.
- PREP TOURS co-owner and founder, Paul Borkowski, is a retired N.Y.C. Dept. of Correction Captain with nearly 25 years of experience in safety and security.

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PREP TOURS co-owners and founders, Nancy Escabi, Paul M. Borkowski and Paul A. Borkowski are long time island residents.

- Nancy is Head of School at a prominent independent school on the island and has chaired Middle States accreditation teams on the island. As PREP TOURS co-owner, Nancy arranges cultural exchange activities for schools visiting the island.
- Paul is a retired N.Y.C. Department of Correction Captain with nearly 25 years of experience in safety, security, tourism and transportation. He possesses a strong educational and practical background in Puerto Rican Studies and has lectured on all levels of Education. He is a licensed Tour Operator and certified Tour Guide.
- Paul Jr. studies at the University of Puerto Rico pursuing a B.S. in Business Administration. Upon graduation, Paul, a licensed Tour Operator, plans entering Law School.
- Together, their unique backgrounds allow them to work with group leaders to design a tour that meets the demands of today's school administrations, music directors, parents and students in today's ever changing world of student educational travel.



## **PREP TOURS' Welcomes Dr. Juan Carlos Vega to the PREP TOURS' TEAM**

**Dr. Juan Carlos Vega (b. Puerto Rico) is a talented, accomplished music educator and performer with diverse international experience. He holds the Doctor of Musical Arts in Music Education from Boston University; a Master of Education in Music of Cambridge College in Cambridge, MA; a Bachelor degree in Music Education of the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, and a Piano Performance Certificate (Pop Piano) from Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA. His teaching experiences include being the creator and founder of the Music School Program at the Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola in San Juan, Puerto Rico.**

**Dr. Vega currently works as Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music. He is a member of The College Music Society, where is serving as Chair of the Cultural Inclusion Committee. Vega is also actively participating in numerous professional associations, including the International Society for Music Education, the National Association for Music Education, and the Technology Institute for Music Education. Aside from teaching he serves as primary music leader for Allied Music Solutions at an array of events in Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, and the United States. As a performer on multiple tours and festivals, he has served as pianist, keyboardist, arranger, conductor, and producer among other musical involvements. His musical groups (choirs, bands, and orchestras, among other ensembles) have performed in the United States and Europe namely New York, Chicago, Boston, Miami, Los Angeles, Paris, London, Italy and Spain, among many other destinations all over the world.**

**Dr. Vega authored *A Brief History of Music in Puerto Rico* (2001; translation from Spanish) and other publications, and in 2005 produced the album *Popssical: Classical goes Latin*.**

**He currently resides in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, and is fluent in Spanish and English. In his spare time, Juan Carlos enjoys travel, music, and as an avid baseball fan goes to MLB games whenever possible.**

The recent Fordham University Choir Tour was developed and designed by PREP TOURS who was with the Group 24x7.

# THE OBSERVER

Fordham Observer

## **La Isla del Encanto: Fordham Choir Tours Puerto Rico**

Apr 9, 2017



During Fordham's 2017 Spring break, members of the University Choir traveled to Puerto Rico (KYLE J. KILKENNY/The Observer).

**By KYLE J. KILKENNY**

Staff Writer

During Fordham's recent Spring recess, the University Choir traveled to Puerto Rico to share music, culture and life lessons with local citizens and students. This marked another exciting activity for the choir who, during the current school year, has performed at Saint Patrick's Cathedral for Fordham's Dodransbicentennial Mass celebrated by Cardinal Timothy Dolan in October, added a third performance to Fordham's Annual Festival of Lessons and Carols in December and most recently, performed at the world's most famous concert hall, Carnegie Hall. To say the University Choir is having a "banner year" would be an understatement, and the group's seven days in Puerto Rico were no exception.

The trip was a part of an ongoing University Choir tradition, to share a combination of music and service to communities not only across the country, but around the world. In recent years, the choir has traveled to Ireland, the United Kingdom and California. The choir, led by longtime director

Robert Minotti, has groups at both Fordham College at Lincoln Center (FCLC), also known as the Lincoln Center Chamber Singers, and the Bronx's Fordham College at Rose Hill (FCRH). While these groups typically rehearse separately, they perform together multiple times during the academic year. The annual Choir Tour allows FCLC and FCRH students to get to know each other and form long-lasting friendships.

Though Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States, it offers visitors a unique Caribbean experience they would not find in the mainland U.S. I, along with the rest of the choir, immediately felt immersed in the rhythm of the island—from the delicious food to the happy and welcoming locals. “I learned about a new place and culture,” Lydia Culp, FCLC '19, said about the tour. She continued, “Even better, while I didn't know the language, I was able to bond with students over a mutual love for music, which transcends the barriers of language and culture.” These “students” were not only our fellow Rams from the Rose Hill campus, but also our fellow choir members whom we met throughout our week in Puerto Rico. The University Choir met and performed with accomplished Puerto Rican choirs from Pontifical Catholic University in Ponce, Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola in San Juan and the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey.

The trip was not only an introduction to “La Isla del Encanto” for many students, but also a homecoming for Rose Hill sophomore, Victor Rodriguez. “The most rewarding thing was seeing how my fellow Fordham students were genuinely impacted by it all,” Rodriguez, FCRH '19, a native of San Juan and proud graduate of Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola, an all-male Jesuit high school located in San Juan, said. “I can't put into words the emotions I felt standing with fellow Puerto Ricans and sharing our songs and stories with a group of my kind and open-minded Fordham peers,” he continued. “It's the kind of feeling I want to share with the world.”

Aside from Minotti, the choir was joined by Joan Cavanagh, director of campus ministry at Fordham's Westchester campus, and longtime accompanist Kenneth Farnum, a proud Fordham alum. With Rodriguez's guidance and passion for sharing his island's culture, both Fordham students and staff received an experience they will not soon forget. Maya Banitt, FCLC '19, would agree, sharing with me, “[This] was an experience I am eternally grateful for. Not only did I bond more closely with members of the choir, but I also made many new friends among the students we got to sing for in Puerto Rico.” Whether we were showing off our new salsa dancing skills, trying new foods and pastries, or even yours truly teaching our Puerto Rican brothers and sisters how to properly dance to the “YMCA,” the members of the University Choir made the most of every day during this enriching experience.

Perhaps the most amazing part of the trip was how kind and welcoming the citizens of Puerto Rico were to the University Choir. Through our interactions with students and senior citizens alike, we were reminded throughout the week that as New Yorkers and as Fordham students, we have a great deal to be thankful for. Though Puerto Ricans are considered natural-born U.S. citizens, the unfair taxation of citizens without representation in the United States Congress (Puerto Rico is granted one non-voting member in the House of Representatives) or Electoral College has historically put Puerto Ricans at a disadvantage. Under a new administration in Washington, public universities and other programs afforded to U.S. citizens have found themselves on the chopping block. As the week progressed, Fordham students were encouraged to remember the struggles of our fellow Americans—the citizens of Puerto Rico—and work towards helping sustain and maintain programs so near and dear to their heart.

“I feel like these experiences are extremely necessary given Puerto Rico’s current political and economic status,” Rodriguez said of the tour. “I want everyone to internalize that as fellow U.S. Citizens, all the beauty and pain that they saw is their privilege, responsibility and burden too.”