

Destination Details – San Juan Hotels



San Juan Hotel & Resort Comparison

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Getting ready to start your next cruise adventure from San Juan, PR? Trying to decide where to stay? Here are the three top resorts in San Juan, what separates them from each other and what folks have said you have stayed there. You'll also find a breakdown of how each of these 3 resorts fits for folks enjoying time in San Juan pre or post their cruise.

Here's a **clear snapshot of what guests consistently say** about the three most compared San Juan resorts:

- Caribe Hilton
- The Royal Sonesta San Juan
- Fairmont El San Juan Hotel

Quick Links

[What Guests Say: Caribe Hilton vs Royal Sonesta vs Fairmont El San Juan](#)

[Best for Pre/Post Cruise: Caribe Hilton vs. Royal Sonesta vs Fairmont El San Juan](#)

[Price Comparison: Caribe Hilton vs Royal Sonesta vs Fairmont El San Juan](#)

[Other popular options commonly used by cruise passengers in San Juan](#)

What Guests Say: Caribe Hilton vs Royal Sonesta vs Fairmont El San Juan

Hotel	What Guests LOVE	Most Common Complaints	Overall Vibe
Caribe Hilton	Beautiful tropical grounds, private beach cove, multiple pools, historic resort	Rooms can feel dated, service inconsistent, expensive food	Classic Caribbean resort
Royal Sonesta	Best beach in San Juan, modern rooms, relaxed atmosphere	Fewer dining options, less nightlife	Calm upscale beachfront
Fairmont El San Juan	Lively resort, great nightlife, stylish lobby & casino	Loud/party vibe on weekends, pricey	Luxury social resort

Detailed Guest Feedback

Caribe Hilton

What guests like

- Gorgeous landscaped grounds and ocean views
- Multiple pools and family-friendly activities
- Close to Old San Juan

Travelers say it has a **“classic tropical resort feel.”**

Common complaints

- Rooms in some wings feel **older or dated**
- Service can be **inconsistent**
- On-site food is **expensive and sometimes underwhelming**

Recent reviews say the hotel has **great outdoor spaces but mixed room quality and value perception.**

Reddit example:

“Beds were comfy...grounds were beautiful...food was just ok for the price.”

Bottom line:

Best for **families or travelers who want a big traditional resort with lots of space.**

Royal Sonesta San Juan

What guests like

- Excellent **Isla Verde beach location**
- Modern, well-kept rooms
- Easy access from rooms to pool and beach
- Generally quieter than neighboring resorts

Guests frequently say it feels **more relaxed and polished.**

Traveler comment:

“Much prefer Sonesta. It’s quieter and easier to get to the pool and beach.”

Common complaints

- Not as many restaurants or entertainment options
- Less nightlife or “buzz” compared with Fairmont

Bottom line:

Best for **couples and travelers wanting a calm beachfront resort.**

Fairmont El San Juan

What guests like

- Stunning historic lobby and design
- Casino, bars, and nightlife
- Multiple restaurants and lively pool scene

Experts and travel writers consistently rank it **among the top hotels in San Juan.**

Guests describe it as **the most “fun” resort in Isla Verde.**

Common complaints

- Can be **very loud on weekends**
- Higher prices for food and drinks
- Busy public spaces

Traveler comment:

“If you want action and music, the Fairmont is great.”

Bottom line:

Best for **social travelers who want nightlife, bars, and a vibrant atmosphere.**

Quick Decision Guide

Choose **Caribe Hilton** if you want:

- Classic resort feel
- Large grounds and pools
- Close to Old San Juan

Choose **Royal Sonesta** if you want:

- Best beach experience
- Quiet luxury
- Modern rooms

Choose **Fairmont El San Juan** if you want:

- Nightlife and casino
 - Stylish atmosphere
 - A lively resort scene
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✔ **Simple ranking based on guest sentiment**

1. **Royal Sonesta** – best balance of quality + beach + calm vibe
2. **Fairmont El San Juan** – best energy and entertainment
3. **Caribe Hilton** – biggest resort but more mixed reviews

Best for Pre/Post Cruise: Caribe Hilton vs. Royal Sonesta vs Fairmont El San Juan

🏆 **Best Overall for Cruise Convenience**

Caribe Hilton

Why cruisers like it

- About **1.8 miles from the cruise terminal** (~8-minute drive)
- Often offers **cruise shuttle options and luggage storage**
- Located between **Old San Juan and Condado**, making sightseeing easy

Pros for cruise travelers

- Quick transfer to port
- Large resort with restaurants if you arrive late
- Great pools and beach for relaxing before sailing

Potential downside

- Large resort → check-in lines sometimes slow

Best for:

Travelers who want **a resort experience but still be very close to the port.**

🥈 Second Best**Fairmont El San Juan Hotel****Why people stay here**

- Only **~10–15 minutes to the cruise port by taxi or Uber**
- Close to the **airport**, making flight connections easy
- Lots of restaurants, bars, and nightlife

Pros

- Great if flying in late the night before
- Lively resort with many dining options

Cons

- Not as close to the port as Caribe Hilton
- Weekend crowds and nightlife can be loud

Best for:

Travelers who want **a fun resort night before the cruise.**

🥉 Third (Still Excellent, Just Farther)**The Royal Sonesta San Juan****Why guests choose it**

- Beautiful **Isla Verde beachfront**
- Modern rooms and quieter atmosphere

Pros

- One of the **best beaches in San Juan**
- Relaxed upscale vibe

Cons for cruisers

- Slightly **farther from the cruise port (15–20 minutes)**
- Fewer on-site dining options late at night

Best for:

Travelers staying **2–3 nights before the cruise** who want a beach vacation first.

Quick Cruise Traveler Ranking

Rank	Hotel	Why
★ 1	Caribe Hilton	Closest resort + easy port access
★ 2	Fairmont El San Juan	Great if flying in night before
★ 3	Royal Sonesta	Best beach but farther from port

💡 Cruise pro tip:

San Juan actually has **two cruise terminals** (Old San Juan Pier and Pan American Pier). Almost all major hotels are **10–15 minutes away by Uber/taxi**, typically **\$10–\$20**, so convenience differences are fairly small.

Price Comparison: Caribe Hilton vs Royal Sonesta vs Fairmont El San Juan

Hotel	Typical Low Price	Average Nightly Price	High Season Price	Notes
Caribe Hilton	~\$177	\$230–\$350	\$400+	Usually the most affordable of the three
The Royal Sonesta San Juan	~\$197	\$300–\$480	\$600+	Often the most expensive due to beach location
Fairmont El San Juan Hotel	~\$188	\$300–\$450	\$550+	Luxury resort with nightlife & casino

Sources show starting rates around **\$177 for Caribe Hilton**, **\$188 for Fairmont El San Juan**, and **about \$197 for Royal Sonesta**, though prices commonly rise much higher depending on dates.

For example, some listings show **Royal Sonesta around \$560–\$725 total per night with taxes during peak dates**, illustrating how quickly prices increase in busy seasons.

Realistic Price Example (Typical Cruise Pre-Stay Night)

Hotel	Expected Total With Taxes & Fees
Caribe Hilton	~\$280–\$420
Fairmont El San Juan	~\$350–\$500
Royal Sonesta	~\$400–\$650

One reason **Royal Sonesta can appear pricier** is that it adds a **resort fee of roughly 22% of the room rate**, which increases the total nightly cost.

Value Comparison

Best value:

- 🏆¹ Caribe Hilton — usually the lowest price for a full resort experience.

Best mid-range luxury:

- 🏆² Fairmont El San Juan — similar price to Sonesta but more restaurants and nightlife.

Most expensive (often):

- 🏆³ Royal Sonesta — premium for the **best swimming beach in San Juan**.
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✅ Simple takeaway

- Budget-friendly resort → **Caribe Hilton**
- Best luxury vibe + nightlife → **Fairmont El San Juan**
- Best beach but highest price → **Royal Sonesta**

Other Popular Options for Cruise Passengers in San Juan

1. Hotel Rumbao, A Tribute Portfolio Hotel

Why cruisers love it

- Located **steps from the Old San Juan cruise terminal**
- Waterfront views overlooking the harbor
- Walkable to restaurants, shops, and historic sites

Best for:

Travelers who want to **walk to the ship** and explore Old San Juan the night before.

2. Sheraton Puerto Rico Resort & Casino

Why cruisers stay here

- Very close to the **Pan American cruise terminal**
- Large modern hotel with a rooftop pool
- Easy taxi/Uber to Old San Juan attractions

Best for:

Passengers sailing from the **Pan American Pier** (many Carnival and Royal Caribbean departures).

3. Hyatt House San Juan

Why it's popular

- All-suite rooms with kitchens and space for luggage
- Complimentary breakfast
- Located in the Convention District near cruise terminals

Best for:

Families or travelers who want **more room and value for a pre-cruise night**.

4. CasaBlanca Hotel

Why cruisers pick it

- Boutique hotel **in the heart of Old San Juan**
- Only a **few minutes walk to the cruise docks**
- Charming historic atmosphere

Best for:

Travelers who want **Old San Juan charm and walkability.**

5. Condado Vanderbilt Hotel

Why cruisers choose it

- One of the **most luxurious hotels in San Juan**
- Beautiful oceanfront pools and restaurants
- About **10 minutes from cruise terminals**

Best for:

Travelers turning their cruise into a **luxury pre- or post-cruise stay.**

Quick Cruise Traveler Tip

San Juan cruise passengers typically pick one of **three locations:**

Area	Why People Stay
Old San Juan	Walk to cruise ships
Convention District	Closest to Pan American Pier
Condado/Isla Verde	Beach resorts for longer stays