

DC and Puerto Rico. The 51st state and the 51st state. Wait.

No. Um, ignore what I just said. Neither DC nor Puerto Rico are the 51st state of these United States. But folks have floated both as potential additions, receiving celebrations from Civil Rights advocates, and boos from graphic design artists. I mean seriously, look what adding a star or two does to the American flag. Goodness gracious. Oh, well that one seems reasonable. What's the fuss?

While the issue of becoming the 51st state seems to be the only similarity, DC and Puerto Rico actually have more in common than you might think.

But before we get into it, this video is sponsored in part by Athletic Greens.

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Ok, back to DC and Puerto Rico. Let's uh *knock out those similarities first.*

First of all, both are unique parts of the United States. Puerto Rico is a commonwealth and an unincorporated territory of the United States¹. DC is the Federal District created in Article 1 Section 8 of the United States Constitution². Even though both are not states, both have sizable numbers of people who want full statehood, perhaps more unanimously in DC than in Puerto Rico, where the issue remains divisive. The last non-binding referendum there on the matter resulted in only 52% support for Puerto Rican statehood³. In short, both have status within the United States that is more settled by time than opinion.

People born in both places are American citizens, and can freely work and travel within the United States.

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Puerto-Rico>

² <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution-conan/article-1/section-8/clause-17>

³ <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2021/03/puerto-rico-statehood-us-politics-democrats.html>

The biggest religion in both is Christianity. 65% of Washingtonians⁴ and 89% of Puerto Ricans identify as Christian, with 56% of Puerto Ricans identifying as Roman Catholic specifically⁵.

Both are relatively sunny. Puerto Rico has sunny days most of the year⁶. While shows like House of Cards would lead one to believe that DC is a sad, dark, cloudy place, it actually averages 203 sunny days each year⁷.

Both are also known for colorful row houses, with the row houses in San Juan coming in more colorful than DC's⁸, in my estimation. By the way, San Juan is Puerto Rico's capital and largest city.

Both are really pretty. No one could deny the spectacle of San Juan's El Morro Fortress overlooking the ocean⁹. But many of you might be surprised to know that DC, away from the political hearings, is pretty too. The Cherry Blossoms in the Tidal Basin in spring are just wow...yeah look at the bro¹⁰.

Both have awesome flags. Hey speaking of which, this video is a collaboration with my friend Will from the channel Exploring History. He just released a video about the fascinating history of the DC flag. Go check it out on his channel after you're done watching this video eh?

Ok, so how about some differences? Yeah there are A LOT.

First of all, Puerto Rico is an archipelago...it has multiple islands yo, some of which are not even inhabited.

⁴ <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/metro-area/washington-dc-metro-area/>

⁵

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/29/key-findings-about-puerto-rico/#:~:text=Puerto%20Ricans%20are%20overwhelmingly%20Christian,identified%20as%20born%20Dagain%20Christians.>

⁶ <https://welcome.topuertorico.org/reference/tempera.shtml>

⁷

https://www.bestplaces.net/climate/city/district_of_columbia/washington#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20t here%20are%20203%20sunny%20days%20per%20year%20in%20Washington.&text=Washington%20gets%20some%20kind%20of,have%20to%20get%20at%20least%20.

⁸

https://www.google.com/search?q=dc+row+houses&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwi7-5upmqj2AhVQPN8KHfdjB4oQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=dc+row+houses&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAzIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgYIABAFEB4yBggAEAUQHjIGCAAQBRAeMgQIABAYMgQIABAYOgcIIXDvAxAnOgQIABBDoggIABCxAXCDAToICAAQgAQQsQM6CwgAEIAEELEDEIMBOgQIABAEUPr5A1j0hARguoUEaAFwAHgAgAGjAYgB5wqSAQM5LjWYAAQCgAQGgAQtn3Mtd2l6LWltZ8ABAQ&scIent=img&ei=YssfYrvCG9D4_Ab3x53QCA&bih=959&biw=958&rlz=1C1CHBF_enDE733DE733

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https://www.google.com/search?q=san+juan+el+morro&rlz=1C1CHBF_enDE733DE733&sxsrf=APq-WBu tyExZe9GJ6PLYdpT1hVQuZf_2Bg:1646250604040&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjG4Nuzmaj2AhXZmnIEHhKDA sQ_AUoAXoECAEQAw&biw=958&bih=959&dpr=1

¹⁰ <https://www.storyblocks.com/video/search/dc+cherry+>

Puerto Rico is over 3,500 square miles, while DC is only 68 square miles. DC used to be larger when Virginia's 15 square mile contribution, Alexandria County, was part of it¹¹. However, in 1847, folks in Alexandria Contry demanded that it go back to Virginia, and it did¹².

DC borders two states, Virginia and Maryland...oh don't forget to check out my Virginia and Maryland video, by the way...while Puerto Rico borders, well, the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea. Or car i be uhn sea, sorry!

Puerto Rico has a bigger population (3,263,584) than DC (670,000). But DC's population is much more dense, with 9,856 people per square mile. Puerto Rico has 1,088 per square mile.

Puerto Rico has coastal plains contrasted by mountains, like the Cordillera Central¹³. DC is in a so-called 'topographic bowl', according to the National Parks Service¹⁴. The National Mall is located in the bottom of the floodplain, partially contributing to DC's nickname, the Swamp. Get it? We need to "Drain the Swamp?" Anyway, the Smithsonian Magazine actually points to this swamp imagery as a 'myth', and points out that over farming around the Potomac created some crazy erosion in the 1800s¹⁵.

Speaking of farming, DC used to be mostly farmland¹⁶. Today, yeah there isn't much farming in DC, aside from community gardens. Puerto Rico clearly has more space, and therefore more farming. But according to the 2017 Census for Agriculture, the 8,230 farms in Puerto Rico totalled 37.5% lower in number than in the previous census¹⁷. The top commodities there included milk, field crops, and cattle.

Puerto Rico has pretty stable warm temperatures year-round, about 80-85 F as highs, with minimal season change and high humidity¹⁸. But DC has four distinct seasons, with a few days of snowfall per year on average, and hot, humid summers.

It rains more in Puerto Rico than DC¹⁹. Puerto Rico has a higher risk of natural disasters too, with hurricanes being an annual risk. While a couple of Atlantic hurricanes have hit DC²¹ before, the bigger risk to residents there might be humans, aka the fact that DC is always top of the list

¹¹

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/District_of_Columbia_retrocession#:~:text=The%20sentiment%20for%20retr,ocession%20started.a%20committee%20to%20that%20end

¹² <https://boundarystones.weta.org/2016/07/08/alexandria-retrocession-1846>

¹³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cordillera_Central_\(Puerto_Rico\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cordillera_Central_(Puerto_Rico))

¹⁴ <https://www.nps.gov/cwdw/learn/nature/natural-history-and-physical-setting.htm>

¹⁵

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/draining-swamp-guide-outsiders-and-career-politicians-180962448/>

¹⁶ Empire of Mud, JD Dickey

¹⁷ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2020/census_puertorico.pdf

¹⁸ <https://pedalchile.com/blog/florida-vs-pr>

¹⁹

²⁰ <https://weather-and-climate.com/average-monthly-Rainfall-Temperature-Sunshine-in-Puerto-Rico>

²¹ <https://wtop.com/local/2018/09/hurricane-history-dcs-worst-tropical-disasters/>

with New York and Los Angeles as a target for COUNTRIES that are potential American enemies, like North Korea.

DC has the Potomac River, and two of its tributaries, the Anacosti River, for which a neighborhood is named, and Rock Creek (for which DC's largest park is named)²². Puerto Rico, being bigger, has more rivers. Specifically, more than 5,000 miles of rivers²³. The longest is the La Plata River²⁴²⁵.

DC leans Democratic politically²⁶. Well, considering the fact that residents there have voted for the Democratic Party candidate in every presidential election since the first one they voted in, back in 1964, and in the 21st century have voted upwards of 90% for Democratic presidential candidates. Ok, so it might be considered less of a political lean, and more of whatever this dance move from Michael Jackson was called. DC by the way, is the only non-state to be given electoral votes in presidential elections. Puerto Rico gets none. Zero. You get nothing! You lose! Good day sir! You're a crook. See my video on the Insular Cases for more context on this injustice.

Puerto Rico does participate in the presidential primaries for the Democrat and Republican parties. But politicians in Puerto Rico associate with their own political parties for elections²⁷. The two largest parties are the New Progressive Party and the Popular Democratic Party. The two parties are often distinguished by their position on statehood for Puerto Rico²⁸, with the New Progressive Party supporting that Puerto Rico becomes a state, and the Popular Democratic Party supporting the maintenance of Puerto Rico's current status. There's also the Puerto Rican Independence Party, which advocates, you guessed it, a third option: Puerto Rican independence from the United States²⁹.

Puerto Rico also sends one non-voting member to the US House of Representatives, and they serve a four-year term, the only member of the House to do so. DC also has one non-voting member of the House.

So does Puerto Rico lean left or right? Well, the current non-voting representative to the House of Representatives is affiliated with the Republican Party. The previous non-voting member was Pedro Pierluisi, who is now the governor of Puerto Rico. He associated with the Democratic Caucus while he was in the House. In other words, Puerto Rico's political leanings are a little more up in the air. They are generally more socially conservative than Democratic Party voters,

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Washington,_D.C.

²³ <https://www.rivers.gov/puerto-rico.php>

²⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%ADo_de_la_Plata_\(Puerto_Rico\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%ADo_de_la_Plata_(Puerto_Rico))

²⁵ <https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/r%C3%ADo-de-la-plata/m0b4kv4?hl=en>

²⁶ https://www.270towin.com/states/District_of_Columbia

²⁷

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_party_strength_in_Puerto_Rico#:~:text=Today%2C%20that%20strength%20is%20primarily,States%20with%20self%2Dgovernment%2C%20and

²⁸ <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2021/03/puerto-rico-statehood-us-politics-democrats.html>

²⁹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Progressive_Party_\(Puerto_Rico\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Progressive_Party_(Puerto_Rico))

so might be seen as up-for-grabs were they ever to achieve statehood. That is, assuming future Republican visitors don't throw paper towels at them after Hurricanes.

For DC, there is no question. If it were to become a state, its representatives for the House and Senate would be Democrats.

Ok, let's get into some history now...

Puerto Rico was called Borinquén (bore in kin) by the Taíno (tay no), who inhabited the island long before the Spanish came³⁰. The current name, Puerto Rico, or "rich port" is of course Spanish in origin, and refers to all the gold nuggets that Christopher Columbus and the Spanish found in the river³¹ once they arrived. Washington, District of Columbia was originally referred to as the Federal District in the US Constitution, and was written before modern day DC was even selected as the location of the US capital. Once founded, the whole of the district was named District of Columbia, after...well would you look at that? Christopher Columbus, while the portion specifically for the Federal buildings, like the White House and Capitol, was known as the City of Washington, after George Washington, who personally selected the spot³².

Puerto Rico's original population was made up of the Taíno. Columbus arrived in 1493 and everything changed. The new Spanish colony would also receive an infusion of African peoples who were imported as slaves. Jump ahead to 1898, and the United States took Puerto Rico from Spain during the Spanish-American War. In the 1900s, Puerto Ricans received citizenship, and on July 25, 1952 became the self-governing commonwealth we know it as today. Puerto Ricans actually have two citizenships, one of the United States and one of Puerto Rico.

As I mentioned, Washington D.C. was selected as the location of the federal district through the Compromise of 1790, a deal cut by Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, and popularly known in the song 'The Room Where it Happens'. The British invaded and briefly captured Washington during the War of 1812. They burned down many government buildings, including what is today known as the White House and part of the Capitol building³³. Though the slave trade was banned in DC as part of the Compromise of 1850 (sing), there were thousands of enslaved people in Washington DC at the start of the American Civil War in 1861. There was also a large population of free people of color. Through the defense of DC, or in the process of fleeing the South, seeking employment, refuge etc. - DC's black population swelled by the end of the war. It led some whites to sarcastically call DC the 'Black Man's Paradise' well into the 1900s³⁴. Today, DC is a vivid and interesting city, with the backdrop of national politics, for better or for worse.

³⁰ <https://www.history.com/topics/us-states/puerto-rico-history>

³¹ <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/puerto-rico-history-and-heritage-13990189/>

³² <https://www.britannica.com/place/Washington-DC/History>

³³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burning_of_Washington

³⁴

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/fifty-years-ago-some-called-dc-the-colored-mans-paradise-then-paradise-erupted/2018/03/22/6ae9ec1c-208e-11e8-94da-ebf9d112159c_story.html

DC's population is actually quite diverse³⁵, with equal parts white and black, around 46%³⁶. There's also a sizeable Hispanic and Latino population, and you can especially see this in both the Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods³⁷.

Puerto Rico, and this may be no surprise to you, is almost 99% Hispanic or Latino, according to the latest census numbers³⁸. While most Puerto Ricans have Spanish ancestry due to colonization, recent research shows a minority still carry genetic traces of the indigenous Taíno people, long thought extinct³⁹⁴⁰. And yeah, Spanish is the main language spoken in Puerto Rico. Bueno?

58% of Washingtonians have at least a bachelor's degree, and that is wildly above the national average of 32%. In Puerto Rico, 26% hold a bachelor's, which uh yeah is below the national average. This is no laughing matter, as disparities like this are systemic. One example to demonstrate this is that DC spends \$22,406 per student in school⁴¹, while Puerto Rico spends just \$6,400⁴².

The median household income in DC (\$86,420) is more than FOUR TIMES higher than in Puerto Rico(\$20,539). Then again the cost of living is also about three times higher in DC than Puerto Rico.⁴³ Puerto Rico, predictably, has a dramatically higher poverty rate, 43% vs just 15% in DC. If Puerto Rico WAS a state, it would be the poorest state. But it's important to point out that 43% is the poverty line established for the mainland⁴⁴, so it's not necessarily an apples and oranges comparison. The minimum wage is nearly twice as high in DC (\$15.20 vs \$8.50).⁴⁵⁴⁶

Washingtonians definitely pay more in taxes, with both Federal and DC income taxes⁴⁷. Bona Fide residents of Puerto Rico with income exclusively from inside Puerto Rico don't even have to file federal income taxes⁴⁸. Ah, so THAT may be why many there don't want to become a state. Hmmm.

³⁵ https://www.american.edu/spa/metro-policy/images/DCRacialComposition_NEW.jpg

³⁶ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/DC>

³⁷ https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2018/12/14/latino_immigrants_0.pdf

³⁸ www.census.gov/quickfacts/PR

³⁹ <https://www.newsweek.com/taino-caribbean-indigenous-people-extinct-812729>

⁴⁰

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/23/science/dna-caribbean-islands.html#:~:text=A%20study%20published%20Wednesday%20in,is%20more%20like%20six%20percent>.

⁴¹

<https://www.route-fifty.com/tech-data/2021/06/public-school-spending-student-5-biggest-increase-11-years/174596/>

⁴² <https://www.pr51st.com/education-in-puerto-rico/>

⁴³

https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/compare_cities.jsp?country1=Puerto+Rico&city1=San+Juan&country2=United+States&city2=Washington%2C+DC#:~:text=Cost%20of%20Living%20Comparison%20Between%20San%20Juan%20and%20Washington%2C%20DC,to%20compare%20cost%20of%20living.

⁴⁴ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/PR>

⁴⁵ <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Washington>

⁴⁶ https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country_result.jsp?country=Puerto+Rico

⁴⁷ <https://otr.cfo.dc.gov/page/dc-individual-and-fiduciary-income-tax-rates>

⁴⁸ <https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc901>

And even if one files from Puerto Rico, any income sourced in Puerto Rico doesn't need to be reported to the IRS. Cool beans. Puerto Rico's tax authority also doesn't tax investment dividends or capital gains⁴⁹.

DC was originally governed by a Commissioner selected by Congress. Today, it is governed by a Mayor and a District Council. The self-governance is granted by Congress, and could theoretically be taken away. Puerto Rico is also self-governing, with a governor and bicameral legislature⁵⁰.

Washington DC has professional sports teams, for real. First, there's the NFL football team, the newly renamed Washington Commanders, the NBA basketball team the Washington Wizards, the NHL hockey team the Capitals, the MLS soccer team DC United, and the WNBA basketball team the Mystics. Oh, and how could I forget the Nationals, the perfectly named MLB baseball team. And though I couldn't find any professional sports team in Puerto Rico, MANY professional athletes in various sports are from Puerto Rico⁵¹, especially in baseball.

Puerto Rico's economy used to be based in agriculture, but now its main industries include manufacturing, finance, tourism, and trade⁵². The main industry in DC, if you can call it that, is the Federal Government, followed by education and tourism⁵³.

Puerto Rico is probably more business friendly than DC. And it's often listed as one of the best places to be an entrepreneur⁵⁴.

Puerto Rico has lower water quality than DC. In fact, a 2017 report found that Puerto Rico had the worst drinking water in the United States⁵⁵. Though the DC region is always trying to improve the natural waters of the Potomac, the drinking water is already quite good⁵⁶.

If air matters to you more than water, visit Puerto Rico. While DC's air quality is considered fair⁵⁷, Puerto Rico's air is considered excellent⁵⁸. But who needs air and water amirite?

⁴⁹

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertwood/2019/09/09/move-to-puerto-rico-slash-your-taxes-to-zero-not-exactly/?sh=53a865181362>

⁵⁰ <https://welcome.topuertorico.org/government.shtml>

⁵¹ <https://www.ranker.com/list/famous-athletes-from-puerto-rico/reference>

⁵² <https://www.britannica.com/place/Puerto-Rico/The-economy>

⁵³ <https://www.forbes.com/places/dc/washington/?sh=a9ddd2b2d83f>

⁵⁴

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/theyec/2020/06/08/how-entrepreneurs-can-save-on-taxes-in-puerto-rico/?sh=65c6a2684cfc>

⁵⁵

<https://pedalchile.com/blog/puerto-rico-water#:~:text=Puerto%20Rico's%20tap%20water%20has,levels%20of%20recommended%20drinking%20standards.>

⁵⁶ <https://www.dewater.com/testresults>

⁵⁷ <https://www.accuweather.com/en/us/washington/20006/air-quality-index/327659>

⁵⁸ <https://www.accuweather.com/en/pr/san-juan/00901/air-quality-index/275478>

It takes about 2 and a half to 3 hours to drive from one side of Puerto Rico to the other⁵⁹, much more than the 45 minutes or so to cross DC⁶⁰ - that is, unless you get caught in DC's famous traffic, then maybe it WOULD take 3 hours.

DC's most famous adult beverage is the Rickey. Puerto Rico's is the piña colada, which in fact was invented there.

Puerto Rico got a lot of attention during the arrival and aftermath of Hurricane Maria in 2017. The handling of the disaster and rebuilding was seen as a national scandal. Generally, Puerto Rico tends to only make the news when there are presidential primaries, or when the issue of statehood comes up.

DC, on the other hand, is in a constant state of national attention, especially with all the media outlets there. The National Cathedral is often shown for funerals of notable political figures, and the monuments appear in an endless number of shows and movies. Outside of the National Mall is also a vibrant city, which is generally ignored in popular imagination.

Speaking of underappreciated in the popular imagination, Puerto Rico is a gem often overlooked by Americans. Perhaps the reason why Washingtonians and Puerto Ricans are often overlooked? Well, they can't vote...at least in federal elections anyway. But that could change soon IF
Both become states.

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<https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Ceiba/Mayag%C3%BCez,+Puerto+Rico/@18.4137607,-67.0416518,9z/data=!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x8c04bd3b4a9c7cdf:0x35e14be80b55c395!2m2!1d-65.6483018!2d18.2641688!1m5!1m1!1s0x8c02b24a5d501493:0xc5634c2783152042!2m2!1d-67.1451517!2d18.2013463!3e0>

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<https://www.google.com/maps/dir/38.855909,-76.9588777/Friendship+Heights/@38.9431132,-77.0959493,12z/data=!4m9!4m8!1m0!1m5!1m1!1s0x89b7c990d0d7dbcf:0xb12132c97db01069!2m2!1d-77.0860717!2d38.9609331!3e0>