



## Our Puerto Rico



photo by Brad Clinesmith

Puerto Rico has been in the news a lot since Hurricane Maria struck the island on Sept. 20. The storm, with 150 mph winds, tore apart homes and business, destroyed power plants and crops, and left about 3 million people without shelter, clean water and food.

As people in the United States learned about the disaster, it was reported that many didn't realize that Puerto Rico is a **commonwealth** of the U.S. What does that mean?

Puerto Ricans are citizens and can move freely to the continental United States. But while they live in Puerto Rico, they cannot vote in presidential elections, and they do not pay federal income taxes.

Like most states, Puerto Rico has a governor, a House of Representatives and a Senate, and a Supreme Court.

This week, The Mini Page learns more about the commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

### Who are Puerto Ricans?

Puerto Ricans come from many different backgrounds. The Spaniards who landed there in the late 1400s found thousands of native people. The **Taino** (tah-EE-noh) Indians lived in villages and raised sweet potatoes and corn, among other foods. They became slaves to the Spanish conquerors.

Many of the Tainos died from starvation or disease. Later, as more Spaniards arrived, African slaves were brought to the island to work on sugar plantations.

They were followed by Chinese and

European immigrants. About 50 years ago, many Cubans immigrated to Puerto Rico.

About 3.5 million people live on the island. Most live in cities. They speak Spanish, and many also speak English. Another 5 million Puerto Ricans live in the continental U.S.

### Joining the U.S.

When the Spanish-American War ended in 1898, Spain **surrendered**, or gave up, Puerto Rico to the United States. Later, many Puerto Ricans wanted to become U.S. citizens.

In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed an act that made Puerto Ricans U.S. citizens. In 1952, Puerto Rico became a commonwealth of the United States.

### Living in Puerto Rico

Education is very important. Almost all Puerto Ricans can read and write by age 15. Family also plays a big role in their lives. Friends and family members help each other.

People on the island work in manufacturing, tourism, real estate and other services. Farmers grow many fruits and vegetables, including bananas, grapefruit, lettuce, onions, pumpkins, beans and herbs.



photo courtesy USDA

These girls from San Juan are enjoying lunch during a summer program.

### Mini Fact:

The area called Old San Juan is known for its brightly colored homes.



photo by Allen Allison, Bishop Museum

Puerto Rico's mascot is the coqui frog. They sing so loud at night that they can be heard all over the commonwealth. Exotic birds and lizards can be seen almost everywhere on the island.

### Geography

The island has mountains, beaches, rain forests, deserts and rivers. The mountains are found in the **interior**, or middle, of the island, and stretch from one end to the other. The largest, Cerro de Punta, is about 4,400 feet tall.

In the northwest region are **karst** areas. Karst is land that forms where limestone has dissolved. The landscape is bumpy and has sinkholes and caves.



photo courtesy FEMA

Hurricane Maria ripped apart buildings and destroyed roads in Puerto Rico.

### Helping storm victims

Immediately after the hurricane, people in Puerto Rico desperately needed four things: fuel for generators, so they'd have electricity; clean water; food; and medicine.

Now, two months later, people on the island are still in need. If your family would like to help, visit [puertorisorises.com/donations.html](http://puertorisorises.com/donations.html) to find out how to donate necessary items. This group has contacts and events in many cities across the U.S.

You can also visit [unidosporpuertorico.com/en](http://unidosporpuertorico.com/en) (United for Puerto Rico) for more ideas about how to help.

## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of Puerto Rico are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



CITIZENS,	E D U C A T I O N I S L A N D
COMMONWEALTH, COQUI,	P H T L A E W N O M M O C O S
CROPS, EDUCATION,	A S P U E R T O R I C O S N P
ELECTRICITY, GOVERNOR,	D I R E D N E R R U S V T I O
HURRICANE, IMMIGRANTS,	T N Y T I C I R T C E L E A R
ISLAND, KARST,	S A I M M I G R A N T S Z T C
MANUFACTURING, MARIA,	R P G N I R U T C A F U N A M
PUERTO RICO, SPANISH,	A S U G S N E Z I T I C H L G
SURRENDER, TAINO.	K R O N R E V O G I U Q O C X
	A I R A M H U R R I C A N E X

## Cook's Corner

### Banana Ice Cream With Toasted Walnuts

#### You'll need:

- 1/2 cup walnut pieces
- 1 tablespoon dark corn syrup
- 2 very ripe bananas

- 2 cups light vanilla ice cream, softened
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract



\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

#### What to do:

1. Place walnuts in a small, dry skillet over medium heat. Cook for 3 minutes, shaking the pan frequently, until walnuts are golden brown and toasted.
2. Add corn syrup and stir to coat walnuts. Remove from heat.
3. In a large bowl, using a potato masher or fork, mash bananas into a fine puree. Add ice cream and vanilla extract and mix well. Freeze briefly to firm up, if necessary.
4. Spoon ice cream into bowls and top with walnuts. Serves 4.

Adapted from "The Robin Takes 5 Cookbook for Busy Families" with permission from Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com).

## 7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

1. large meal (5) \_\_\_\_\_
2. space rock (6) \_\_\_\_\_
3. 5-cent coin (6) \_\_\_\_\_
4. large body of salt water (5) \_\_\_\_\_
5. ability to remember things (6) \_\_\_\_\_
6. break into small pieces (7) \_\_\_\_\_
7. fast (5) \_\_\_\_\_

RY	OR	MO	CK
CRUM	ME	NICK	FEA
ME	EL	ST	OCE
AN	QUI	TE	BLE

Answers: feast, meteor, nickel, nickel, ocean, memory, crumble, quick.

## Mini Jokes



**Cecelia:** Where do frogs make notes?  
**Victoria:** On lily pads!

## Eco Note



Frogs and other amphibians are the most endangered groups of animals on Earth. We have lost 170 species in the last 10 years, and another 1,900 species are threatened. Frogs are vulnerable to changes in their environment. They have suffered pollution, destruction of their habitat, infectious diseases and fungus. But all these are made worse by global warming. Frogs are an important part of the web of life, and their health is a good indicator of the health of the environment.

adapted from [climatekids.nasa.gov](http://climatekids.nasa.gov)

## For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about how Puerto Rico is recovering from Hurricane Maria.

**Teachers:** For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: [bit.ly/MPstandards](http://bit.ly/MPstandards). And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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