

Cars

Shipping your vehicle

The Hacienda (Puerto Rico's Internal Revenue Service) charges taxes on vehicles shipped to PR. The tax is quite high and can be thousands of dollars, based on the age and value of the vehicle. Boats, personal watercraft, and motor homes (RV's) are not deemed to be articles of personal use or HHGs and will be subject to Puerto Rico's tax law, even if packed with your household goods. If you have a company or association with such resources, check with them for help with paperwork and tax issues for shipping a vehicle. If there is a title lien on the vehicle, check with the lienholder as soon as possible about any restrictions on shipping the vehicle to PR.

Once your vehicle arrives on island, you will need to bring your registration and ACAA sticker to pick it up. You may be asked to bring your social security card before then (so don't pack it in your household goods).

If you are shipping your vehicle through Crowley, follow these instructions:

1. Go to the Crowley Terminal and pick-up a copy of the Bill of Lading.
2. Go to the vehicle lot; locate your vehicle and pick-up the vehicle appraisal. (See the roving guard if documentation is not affixed to the vehicle).
3. Go to the Hacienda Office (local tax office) in Old San Juan with the documents provided by Crowley along with the following documents:
 1. Copy of official orders assigning you to Puerto Rico.
 2. Driver's license.
4. The Hacienda office personnel will prepare import documents.
5. Proceed to the cashier and pay the tire recycle tax, (which is \$8.25) and purchase an ACAA sticker (Insurance) for \$35.00. It is strongly recommended that you bring cash.
6. Once you have paid, return to the counter where you began to process the exemption, they will finalize your exemption.
7. Proceed back to Crowley with these documents, and your vehicle will be released.

If you are shipping your vehicle through Trailer Bridge or Sea Star Lines, follow these instructions:

1. Go to Trailer Bridge car division and pick up a copy of the Bill of Lading and appraisal.
2. Follow steps 3 – 7 from the Crowley Procedure above.
3. Proceed back to Trailer Bridge with the documents, and your vehicle will be released.

ACCA/Marbete

The ACCA sticker can be purchased at the Hacienda. Bring your driver's license, proof of insurance, vehicle registration, and \$35.00 (cash only).* Some insurance companies will give you a rebate if you provide proof that you have purchased the ACCA sticker. If you are eligible to keep the state license plates on the vehicle, you will not need a marbete sticker.

Vehicles registered in PR must have a "Marbete" sticker instead which also proves insurance. Marbete stickers expire annually but not all expire in July.

Hacienda

For any trip to the Hacienda, dress well (business casual should be ok—you will be sent away if you are in shorts, tank tops, flip flops etc.) and bring a smile and patience; a "please help me" look might be beneficial as well. When asking for help, even if you feel a sense of urgency and frustration, it will likely help to begin with 'good morning, how are you' before getting down to business. Before you get in a line, ask what the line is for—it may be different than the DMV experience you have had before, in that when you get to the front the person there may not be able to take care of everything; you may get a stamp and be directed to a different line, where you get a different stamp and come back to the first line.

Vehicle Insurance

You will need to have your private insurance or The Compulsory Insurance from the government of PR. Check with your current insurer or the internet. If you are in a fender-bender, in addition to following the directions of the police officer, you will need to report to the police station within a few hours (ideally, right away) with jurisdiction for the location of the accident for a determination of fault. If you are making a claim through the compulsory insurance system, what you need to do is to get an estimate from a body shop, get an appointment with the ACS, and show them the vehicle and estimate. They will provide a check to the shop, which may be lower than the estimate. (Ask the shop in advance if they will do the work for the amount of the check determined by ACS so you don't have to eat the difference). Then you get the work done, paying with the check from ACS. If you bring the vehicle back to ACS and show that the work was done, they will give you another \$100.

The big-name insurance companies which do offer insurance in PR have to follow regulatory procedures which may seem odd.

Buying a used vehicle in PR (“Island Car”)

Many families decide to buy an “island car” to use during their time here, with the intention of selling it before they leave. If the vehicle you decide to purchase is already registered in PR, you will not need to pay taxes; however, you should contact your legal advisor about the peculiarities of buying and selling a vehicle in PR if you are considering doing so. For instance, you should get proof that the seller has paid any fines (otherwise you will have to pay the fines before you can register the vehicle). For this reason, part of buying a car usually involves the buyer and seller going together to the Hacienda to get the statement.

To Rent or not to Rent a car

Check if your credit card offers insurance OR consider purchasing the extra insurance from the rental company. It can help you feel settled to drive around to start to get your bearings before your car arrives. You can reserve a rental before you even get to the island through national chains and discount clubs as well as local companies. Several have a presence at both of the big airports (Marin San Juan International and Isla Grande) as well as areas that cater to tourists such as Isla Verde and Condado). (Check with any associations you may be a member of for rental discounts). FYI, Target car rental is not associated with the mainland retailer of the same name and symbol. Some hotels include a rental car in their package. If you get a Temporary Lodging Allowance, understand whether it will or will not cover the cost of a rental car.

Maintenance and repair

There are national chains and local auto repair parts suppliers and repair shops.