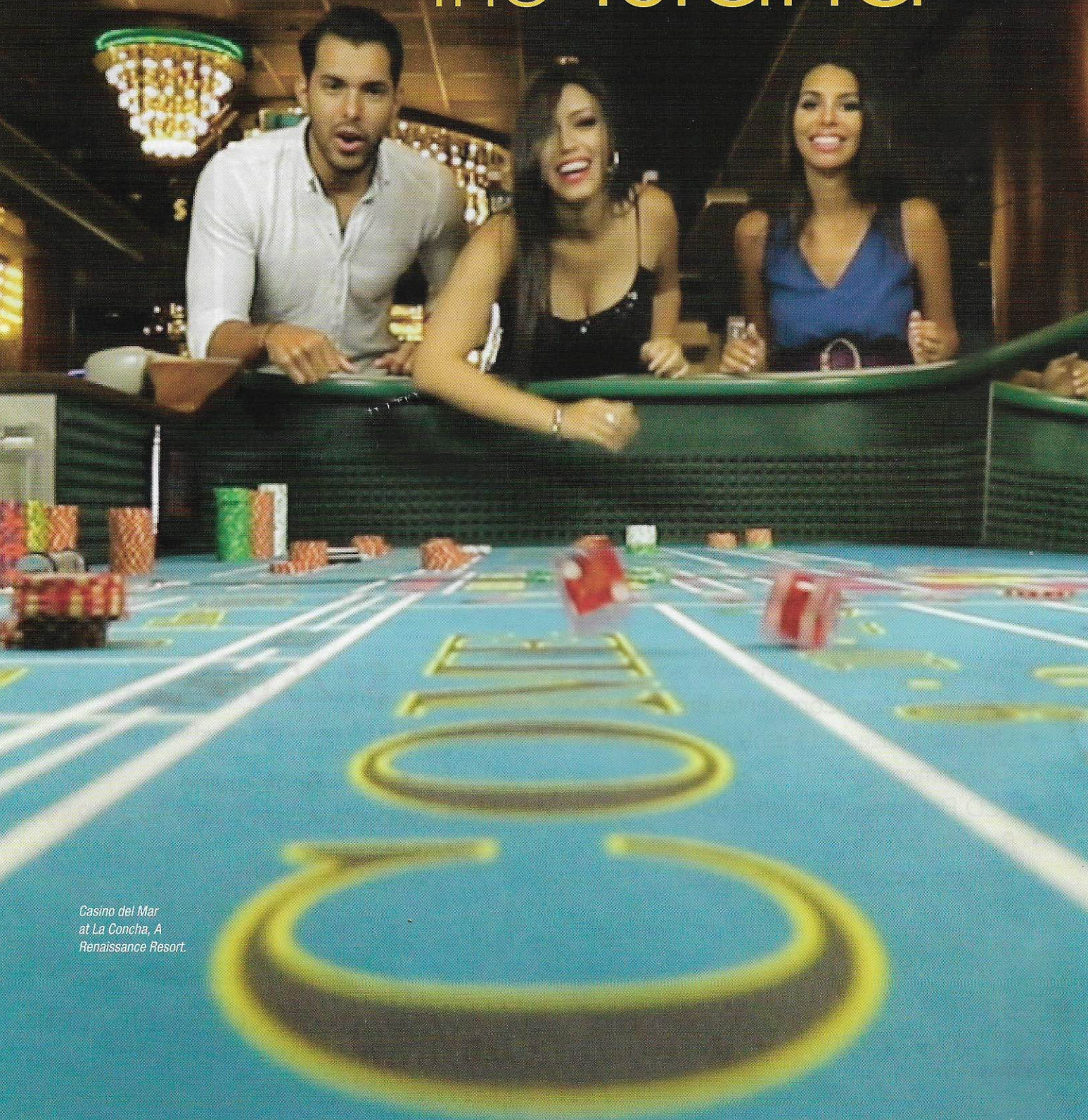


Luck of the Island



Casino del Mar
at La Concha, A
Renaissance Resort.



The Ritz-Carlton San Juan Hotel, Spa & Casino maintains the iconic brand's signature level of swanky sophistication.

Glitz! Glamour! Games! Gambling! It's time for a night out at Puerto Rico's world-class casinos for newbies or those who have a few sessions under your belt.

By **AMY GORDON**

On the Island of Enchantment, casinos are much more than just a place to try your luck; they are entertainment destinations in their own right. It's where world-class dining, legendary hospitality, live shows, and interactive gaming come together to create an unforgettable atmosphere of local fun and flavor.

To further improve the island's gaming industry, multi-site progressive slots called *Jackpot del Encanto* were introduced to 13 casinos. These new slots allow customers to opt for a bigger prize of \$20,000 or higher with betting a minimum of 40 cents and a maximum of \$2.

Puerto Rico's casinos are all conveniently located in or adjacent to some of the island's most noteworthy hotels and resorts that are located along the gorgeous Caribbean coastline, and the most concentrated selection is found in San Juan and its surrounding suburbs. Isla Verde, a popular spot for visitors, is a fantastic area to start. This picturesque beachfront paradise is home to several high-rise hotels, many of which include casinos. A beacon of luxury, The Ritz-Carlton San Juan Hotel, Spa & Casino maintains the iconic brand's signature level of swanky sophistication. The on-site The Casino includes traditional

table games, more than 250 slot machines, and even luxury bingo seven days a week. At night, the chic bar and lounge next to the casino entrance pumps out live music and entertainment, and gamers can dine at cosmopolitan restaurants like Il Molino New York and BLT Steak.

At Casino del Sol at Courtyard by Marriott Isla Verde Beach Resort, guests can play the ponies with off-track betting during local horseraces. The casino also includes slot machines and tables, and the Picante Lounge features live Latin music and dancing, as well as cocktails and bites.

The intimate Oasis Casino at Embassy Suites San Juan Hotel is home to slot machines, seven gaming tables, and special promotions like bingo, multi-level progressive jackpots, and computerized player tracking systems.

In the exclusive oceanfront haven of Condado, the main drag of Ashford Avenue features upscale hotels, elegant eateries, local dive bars and, of course, spectacular casinos. San Juan Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino includes more than 360 machines for players of all risk levels, ranging from penny slots to \$25 buy-ins. The massive casino floor also houses 26 table



Casino Metro at Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel & Casino is home to San Juan's largest casino.

games with the highest betting limits in Puerto Rico. Players can try their luck at blackjack, mini baccarat, Caribbean stud poker, Texas hold 'em, craps, roulette, and more. The casino even offers free gaming lessons daily from 6-7 p.m. as well as a weekly poker tournament on Thursdays.

Down the road, Casino del Mar at

La Concha, A Renaissance Resort also invites guests and passersby to try their luck for nonstop 24/7 fun at the tables and the slots. With three types of blackjack, craps, poker, and baccarat, as well as the only local roulette table with a Luminar system and display and plasma screens broadcasting everything from the biggest games to breaking

news, there's always something exciting happening here. If you want to take a break from the casino's spellbinding energy and get a bite to eat, you can visit Perla seafood restaurant that features a wine cellar with more than 4,000 bottles and over 1,000 labels; Solera, for tapas by poolside; Komakai Sushi Bar, to taste delicious sushi, sashimi and

signature rolls; or stop by Serafina for a lively Italian dining experience.

Don't shuffle out of town without spending time at Casino Metro at Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel & Casino, home to San Juan's largest casino. The site boasts more than 400 slot machines from pennies to dollars and from reel to video



The Oasis Casino at Embassy Suites San Juan Hotel is home to seven gaming tables.



The Metro Lounge is perfect for music, dancing, and signature cocktails.



El Tropical Casino at Hyatt Place Bayamon has over 350 slots with denominations from 1 cent to \$25.


games; and some of the hottest new games. It also the only casino in San Juan that features the island's *Jackpot del Encanto*. Casino Metro also offers 16 table games, including pai gow poker, three-card poker, baccarat, blackjack and the first and only electronic roulette table on the island. In between hands, players can enjoy live entertainment at its Metro Stage Live showcasing some of the top local acts or take an excursion to the Metro Lounge for music, dancing, signature cocktails, and more. Casino Metro is also home to the Ultimate Fighting Championship in Puerto Rico, where every month the fights are aired for free via pay-per-view.

El Tropical Casino at Hyatt Place Bayamon also offer distinctive atmospheres for players to hit, stick, fold, or go all in at the tables and get mesmerized by the spinning wheels and ringing bells of the slot machines. It has over 350 slots with denominations from 1 cent to \$25 including the Tropical Casino properties' exclusive Dragon Spin and Tropical Jackpot, which provides bonus and progressive rewards. The progressive level payout is awarded to the customer at that specific Tropical

Casino where the winning slot is situated, while the shared grand prize (where the payout increases as a group starting at \$10,000 with a guarantee payout before it reaches \$15,000) can be awarded at any of the Tropical Casinos. It also has table games such as Blazing 7's blackjack, craps and roulette. When you're not in the mood for any more gambling, guests can visit the Sun Lounge to listen to live music, sing some karaoke or have some cocktails, wine or craft beer.


Roughly 20 miles from San Juan in the northern coastal valley is the Wyndham Grand Rio Mar Beach Resort & Spa, which resides on the outskirts of El Yunque National Rainforest. This comprehensive resort is home to 10 on-site restaurants and lounges, two championship golf courses, a full-service spa and a killer casino. Between meals, guests can indulge their gaming fantasies at Rio Mar Casino and when the action gets too hot at the tables, they can head into the Players Club sports bar, which features multiple plasma TV screens and a lively, festive ambiance.

Located on Puerto Rico's picturesque south coast, overlooking




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The Casino at Costa Caribe Resort Ponce Hilton showcases more than 330 slots.



Guests can indulge their gaming fantasies at Rio Mar Casino at Wyndham Grand Rio Mar Beach Resort & Spa in Rio Grande.

historic Ponce's crystal Caribbean waters and rugged, majestic mountains are the Hilton Ponce, the Ponce Plaza Hotel, and the Holiday Inn Ponce; all of which have high-energy casinos.

The Casino at Costa Caribe Resort

Ponce Hilton is open 24/7 and showcases more than 330 slots, blackjack, poker, roulette and craps tables. The fun continues at its El Bohio Sports and Pool Bar and La Cava Restaurant, a swanky eclectic venue perfect for sharing appetizers along with a glass of your favorite wine or cocktail. The Casino de la Plaza at the Ponce Plaza Hotel has an exciting range of table games including blackjack, craps table, roulette, and bingo. The Casino has over 260 state-of-the-art slot machines and offers weekly entertainment. Though, when your stomach starts rumbling louder than a slot machine that hit a jackpot, it's time to take a break and indulge your culinary taste at the award winning Lola Eclectic Cuisine and grab a nightcap at VIVA Bar.

And the Tropical Casino at the Holiday Inn Ponce also delights gamblers, gamers, and guests alike. Besides having over 300 slots that includes the exclusive Dragon Spin

and Tropical Jackpot, it also exhilarates its guests with table games like Blazing 7's blackjack, roulette, mini baccarat, Caribbean stud poker available 24/7. It has an exciting monthly events calendar, provides live music and karaoke on weekends as well as special dates and has bingo along with weekly raffles that include cars, cruises, and much more.

If heading west, then the charming town of Mayaguez, the third largest city in Puerto Rico, is a must-see location. It is considered the capital of the west coast, and Mayaguez is known for its ports, theater of arts, and houses the only zoo in Puerto Rico.

While you're there, stop and visit the Holiday Inn Mayaguez and test your luck at its Tropical Casino. This fun-filled gaming and entertainment facility, which offers its guests over 360 slots including the exclusive Dragon Spin and Tropical Jackpot,

also raffles up to \$12,000 worth in prizes which includes giving away cars at least six times a year and to provide some local culture it invites artisans twice a year to sell local goods at its casino entrance. You can't forget to mention that there is a Fat Tuesday's right next door, a fun spot to embrace the Mardi Gras philosophy with a frozen daiquiris in hand.

No matter where you choose to let it ride, be sure to visit your casino's guest services desk to snag a frequent player's rewards card. Just show the host or hostess your driver's license and you can start accumulating points to spend on food and beverage, take advantage of discounted hotel rates, and participate in special promotions and giveaways.

Whether you're high-stakes player or a cautious beginner, there's no better Caribbean island to test your luck than in Puerto Rico. **B**