

## **The Trouble With Bad Bunny's Puerto Rico Takeover, adapted from *The Atlantic*, September 20, 2025**

SINCE AT LEAST the 11th century in Europe, when troubadour musicians crisscrossed the continent singing songs of love and chivalry, one thing has remained fairly consistent: the artist travels; the audience stays put. Of course, there have been exceptions, in which fans made pilgrimages to see their favorite musicians live. Thousands descended on Woodstock in 1969, and thousands more still attend Coachella and other festivals; surging numbers of people have also in recent years been participating in “concert tourism”—hopping flights to catch touring artists such as Taylor Swift in other cities, where tickets might be cheaper.

The Puerto Rican artist Bad Bunny's proposition, though, felt like a fresh one: not a tour or festival, but an intentional invitation for fans to come directly to his doorstep for repeated performances in the same place. Bad Bunny plans to tour his latest album starting later this year. But first, he decided to camp out at the El Choli arena in Puerto Rico for 10 weeks this summer, performing tracks from across his entire repertoire. Drove of fans visited Puerto Rico for the shows.

Combining a vacation and a Bad Bunny concert was an enticing opportunity for many devotees, who hoped to soak up the island that's so central to his artistic identity. When I visited San Juan to see one of the shows last month, I spoke with attendees who'd flown in from locations such as Florida, New Jersey, and Ohio, as well as from other countries such as Colombia. I heard a common sentiment—that watching a musician in his own element, as he wanted them to, sounded like a one-of-a-kind escapade. Call it a new brand of concert tourism: a hyper-immersive live-music experience on an artist's home turf. During the residency, fans could take pictures where Bad Bunny bagged groceries before finding fame. They could swim in the beaches he sings about, see the foliage from his latest album cover in full bloom, and go to a quasi-museum of Bad Bunny paraphernalia at a San Juan mall, replete with behind-the-scenes lore and exorbitantly priced merch.

Yet Bad Bunny's decision to host his shows in San Juan amounts to a travel prerequisite which entails complexity for a place like Puerto Rico, already struggling with water shortages, the aftermath of Hurricane Erin, and rising housing prices due in part to the development of luxury rentals for tourists. Puerto Rico is just one of many places that are caught in a tourism trade-off: weighing the economic benefits and jobs that the industry can bring against its possible threats to cultural preservation, the environment, and housing markets, among other concerns.

Bad Bunny is clearly aware of this tension. In his music, he often sings about tourism with a compassionate but critical eye, as in the song in which he compares a lover to a vacationer who “only saw the best of me, and not how I was suffering.” And although his residency drew in roughly 600,000 people from outside of Puerto Rico this summer, he reserved the first three weeks of shows exclusively for Puerto Rico residents. Concertgoers from outside the island could only attend later. That the residency offered a cultural getaway as an add-on experience for his fandom, however, reveals the trickiness of combining art with tourism.