

itinerary

culture & history

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The largest country in Latin America, Brazil covers an area comparable to that of continental USA or Europe. Brazil's immense size and wealth has made it a stage for battles waged between the Portuguese, Dutch and French who sought colonial occupation of this land of bounty. Much of Brazil's turbulent but rich past has been preserved, as evidenced by its charming historical towns and diverse culture. Traveling through time to Brazil's colonial era and vibrant cultural displays, this unforgettable journey reveals the astounding historical diversity of this land and the origins of its people.



DAY 1 | RIO DE JANEIRO

Arrival at the airport, meet-and-greet with our local bilingual guide and transfer in private air-conditioned vehicle to the hotel. After check-in, free time to relax around the hotel and beachfront following the long journey. Rio by Night (Show & Dinner). There will be a delicious grill dinner accompanied by a variety of spectacles ranging from authentic samba to folklore and rhythms such as capoeira, lambada and even a taste of Carnival, with samba school drummers and dancers in lavish costume presenting the best of Brazil in alluring, glittering shows. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 2 | RIO DE JANEIRO



Full-day City tour (with lunch). A fascinating full-day tour takes the visitor to the top of the two most majestic landmarks of Rio de Janeiro: The Sugar Loaf and Corcovado Mountain. After a tour of downtown Rio de Janeiro, the tour proceeds through the old Urca neighbourhood towards the Sugarloaf, where a cable-car starts the steep, exhilarating 215m climb up Morro da Urca. From here, the cable-car travels high above the rugged, vegetated terrain to the Sugarloaf's 395m summit.

Visitors can enjoy wonderful panoramic views of Rio de Janeiro from the top. The next visit is Corcovado Mountain: Perched atop the Corcovado (Hunchback) at an altitude of 710m, the statue of Christ the Redeemer is certainly one of the world's best-known and most-visited monuments. Clad with a soapstone mosaic, the statue is also one of Rio's finest Art Nouveau monuments and at night becomes a shining landmark visible from all over the city. A rack railway takes the visitor up to the foot of the statue, climbing the steep slopes through the Tijuca Forest. Located around the base of Corcovado and with many springs and waterfalls, this dense forest was proclaimed a National Park in the early sixties. After descending, the tour stops at Mário Filho Stadium, known worldwide as Maracanã, and the Sambódromo, designed by Oscar Niemeyer and the stage for the largest and most flamboyant carnival celebrations in Brazil. Evening free to explore Rio's vibrant city centre. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 3 | RIO DE JANEIRO

In the morning a half day historic city tour will be done (6 hours, Lunch optional).

Rio de Janeiro is one of the world's most historically and culturally significant cities, its rich heritage being reflected in the countless monuments within the metropolitan area. Rio is still the second largest city in Brazil and a must for any tourist intending to visit the south of the country.

Including visits to some of Rio's most impressive monuments, the city tour starts with the Mosteiro de São Bento, a UNESCO World Heritage Monument and probably the most beautiful example of Brazilian Baroque and Rococo. With a simple, sober façade and magnificent carvings and paintings within, the monastery is still in operation, holding traditional services each Sunday with monks performing Gregorian chants. The tour then stops at Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Candelária (1775), the biggest colonial church in Rio, founded in 1609 by Portuguese immigrants. The interior of the church is in neoclassical style, the cupola having been finished only in 1898.



The Centro Cultural do Banco do Brasil is an imposing domed building that dates back to the late 19th century. It has a cinema with high-quality art films, contemporary theatre and a large exhibition of fine arts and photography. Built in 1743, the modest Paço Imperial was the headquarters of the Portuguese government. It was here that Dom João VI established his court in 1808; Dom Pedro I announced his refusal to join his father back in Portugal in 1822 and Princess Isabel proclaimed the end of slavery in Brazil in 1888. The building still retains its original colonial structure after numerous restorations, the most recent being its conversion into an arts centre.

The tour proceeds to the Confeitaria Colombo, the oldest coffee shop in Rio de Janeiro, opened as a meeting point for intellectuals and aristocrats. Built in 1894 and refurbished in 1914, it is a living portrait of Rio's Belle Époque, retaining much of its Art Nouveau charm, with famous Belgian mirrors in hardwood frames and lovingly preserved Italian marble benches. The tour rounds off with a stop at the marvellous Museu Nacional de Belas Artes (The National Museum of Fine Arts), where the works of Brazil's greatest artists are on display.

During the afternoon time for leisure. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 4 | RIO DE JANEIRO - PARATY

Morning tour of Guanabara Bay by boat: Guanabara Bay is the second largest bay on the Brazilian coastline, its shores having been densely vegetated with Atlantic Rainforest and inhabited by native tribes. Aboard a schooner, passengers are treated to fabulous views of the Rio coastline, passing the ruins of various fortresses that overlook the entrance to the bay. The visitor will also see the extraordinary Contemporary Art Museum designed by Oscar Niemeyer to house the paintings and sculptures of Brazil's foremost modern art collectors. Further sights include the Rio-Niterói Bridge that spans the bay and the Fiscal Island with its green Neo-Gothic palace, designed by Adolfo Del Vecchio.

During the afternoon private transfer with guide to Paraty. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 5 | PARATY



After breakfast, visitors are picked up at the hotel for a short excursion of Paraty's town centre. Full of history and legend, this guided city tour introduces Paraty's charming planned colonial architecture, a legacy of the late 17th century when it became a port for the shipment of gold from Minas Gerais. The churches and cobbled streets against a backdrop of lushly forested hills, plus dozens of secluded beaches nearby, make this small colonial town well worth a visit. Sites visited include the Culture House and the Santa Rita church, which was constructed in 1722 and functions today as Paraty's sacred art museum. In the afternoon time for leisure and to explore the beauty of Paraty.

Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 6 | PARATY - OURO PRETO

Private transfer along the Green Coast to Rio de Janeiro Airport for the flight to Belo Horizonte and onward transfer through the remote Serra do Espinhaço mountain range to Ouro Preto.

Mid-afternoon arrival at the hotel in Ouro Preto. Afternoon and evening free to explore Ouro Preto's old town centre. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 7 | OURO PRETO

Full day excursion of Ouro Preto and Mariana: Ouro Preto, previously known as Vila Rica and the former capital of the state of Minas Gerais, was named after the black metal that was found in 1693 (alluvial gold mixed with iron ore). Ouro Preto represents the largest homogeneous collection of Baroque in the world. Some of the masterpieces of Brazilian Baroque are the churches São Francisco de Assis (1771) and Nossa Senhora do Pilar (1730), one of Minas Gerais' most exuberant temples, both of which will be visited. Ouro Preto was also the site of a violent revolt (the Inconfidência Mineira of 1789) against the Portuguese, caused by unpopular taxes on gold. From Ouro Preto, the tour continues to Mariana, a pleasant little mining town only 12 km away, the birthplace of Athaíde. Once it was the administrative centre of the gold mines of central Minas. After lunch, the excursion visits the Cathedral Basílica da Sé, where weekly organ concerts of Baroque music are played on a 1701 German organ. Overnight at selected hotel.



DAY 8 | OURO PRETO

Full-day excursion (with lunch) combining visits to three towns: Congonhas, São João del Rei and Tiradentes. The town of Congonhas is adorned by Antônio Francisco Lisboa's two greatest sculpture masterpieces: The Twelve Prophets, in the Basílica do Bom Jesus de Matosinhos, carved in soapstone; and 66 painted wooden statues, located in six chapels along the way to the main church and depicting Christ's Passion. Antônio Francisco Lisboa (1730-1814) is Brazil's most famous Baroque artist. He was also called Aleijadinho (The Little Cripple) because he lost the use of his hands and legs at the age of 30. However, with hammer and chisel strapped to his arms, he managed to make beautiful sculptures.

The tour continues with a visit to São João del Rei. This city dates back to the 18th century and flourished thanks to the discovery of gold in the region, the expression of which can be seen in the opulent urban and religious architecture. In 1774 Aleijadinho's work began here too, with the São Francisco church. It is an exquisite Baroque church, full of curves and carvings, and the town's treasure. Tiradentes, a city with a turbulent past and a major collection of Baroque art, received its name from the martyred hero of the Inconfidência Mineira (Minas Conspiracy) of 1789, against the Portuguese. His original name was Joaquim da Silva Xavier. Together with six conspirators, he plotted the independence of Brazil, but spies exposed the plan, which led to Xavier's execution. There will be a visit to the Santo Antônio church, with its stone facade carved by Aleijadinho and the Museu do Padre Toledo, who was one of the leaders of the Minas Conspiracy. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 9 | OURO PRETO - RECIFE

Morning transfer to the airport for the flight to Recife. Arrival at the airport and transfer in private, air-conditioned vehicle to a hotel on the Recife beachfront or in the historical town of Olinda. Rest of the afternoon and evening is free to relax within the vicinity of the hotel or on the beach. Overnight at selected hotel.



DAY 10 | RECIFE

Full-day tour of Recife and Olinda (with lunch): The city tour starts with a drive along the ultra-modern seafront of Boa Viagem and then proceeds to Old Recife. This district was founded by the Dutch, as evidenced by the tall, narrow four-storey houses that resemble those of Amsterdam. As the sugar economy declined over the 19th century, Recife lost its prominence, although the Pernambuco State capital is still an important regional centre, with more than 3 million inhabitants. The tour continues with a visit to the exotic world of the artist Francisco Brennand and Casa da Cultura, once a prison but now with each cell converted into a craft shop. Following a buffet lunch at Parraxaxá, a restaurant specialized in regional dishes, the tour proceeds to Olinda, a breathtaking colonial town that overlooks Recife and the Atlantic Ocean. Olinda's historical wealth won it a place on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1982. The tour includes several unique attractions, such as the Mosteiro de São Bento, built in 1582, lavishly decorated with gold and excellent woodcarvings; Igreja da Sé, where local handicrafts are sold and the former slave market. Just walking down the cobbled streets of this enchanting town and enjoying magnificent views over the pale blue ocean is a true delight. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 11 | RECIFE - SALVADOR

Morning transfer to the airport for flight to Salvador. Arrival at the airport in Salvador, meet-and-greet with our local bilingual guide and transfer in private air-conditioned vehicle to the hotel. After check-in, free time to relax around the hotel and historic Salvador (Pelourinho).
By Night (Show & Dinner). This excursion gives the tourist an opportunity to enjoy a wonderful dinner and spectacular evening show, set in a beautiful 18th century architectural complex comprising a main house (Casa Grande), a chapel and outlying slave quarters, making it one of the most traditional entertainment spots in Salvador. As the tourists help themselves to a self-service buffet of typical traditional Bahian cuisine, a folklore show presents some of the major Afro-Brazilian cultural performances, such as the fishermen's dance, a special Capoeira performance and many others. Towards the end of the show, souvenirs are sold by the performing Capoeira artists. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 12 | SALVADOR

Full-day City tour (with lunch). Combination of a historical and panoramic tour of Salvador, this charming excursion first takes the tourist into the historical heart of Salvador - The Cidade Alta, revealing some of the first streets laid in Bahia. The excursion begins at "Farol da Barra", a lighthouse that now functions as the city's nautical museum. The excursion then proceeds in the direction of "Porto da Barra", from where visitors can see the Santa Maria and São Diogo forts. From here, the tour moves on to Salvador's more traditional neighborhoods, namely Corredor da Vitória, Campo Grande and Piedade.

By far the most significant site visited during the excursion is the Pelourinho, the historical center of Salvador and a true World Heritage site, considered by UNESCO as a highlight of XVII and XVIII century colonial architecture. Clinging to the steep terrain, the picturesque colonial

houses and churches (such as the Igreja do São Francisco) of the Pelourinho, artistically decorated in a myriad of colors, make this enchanting part of town a must for anyone visiting Bahia. Lunch is served at one of a choice of restaurants in the Pelourinho, depending on the visitors' tastes. After lunch, the excursion proceeds to offer the tourist various beautiful panoramic views of the city, plus the famous Bonfim church, which hosts a range of religious events, the most important perhaps being the "Lavagem do Bonfim" or washing of the steps. Visitors then go to Mercado Modelo, Bahia's largest arts and crafts center, where two of the most traditional restaurants are also located: Maria de São Pedro and Camafeu de Oxossi. Over the years, these acclaimed restaurants have attracted many local and foreign celebrities. Overnight at selected hotel.



DAY 13 | SALVADOR

Half-day tour Mystic Bahia. The slave trade during the 18th and 19th centuries brought great numbers of African slaves to Northeast Brazil, mainly as labourers in the growing sugar industry. This influx has had enormous repercussions on the development of the local culture, especially in Bahia, where the majority of imported slaves were concentrated. After the abolition of the slave trade, most of the slaves remained in Bahia, their cultural and religious practices giving Brazil its unique multicultural flavour. In search of this Afro-Brazilian heritage, the excursion starts with a visit to the Orixá community at Tororó Dam, followed by the Terreiro Ilê Apo Ofonjá, where Candomblé celebrations take place. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 14 | BACK TO HOME

Transfer to the airport for connecting flights back home.

INCLUDED:

- Rio de Janeiro 3 nights at selected hotel
- Paraty 2 nights at selected hotel
- Ouro Preto 3 nights at selected hotel
- Recife 2 nights at selected hotel
- Salvador 3 nights at selected hotel
- Transfers as specified in air-conditioned vehicles.
- All excursions and packages listed above with English-speaking guides
- Hotel taxes and service charges
- Breakfast plus all meals as specified.

NOT INCLUDED:

- All domestic and long-haul flights, airport taxes etc.
- All meals and excursions not listed above

The itinerary is available with different categories of hotel selected on the basis of customer preference.

Due to the vastness of the country, the best way to visit Brazil is by using a "Visit Brazil Air Pass" which allows you to fly between cities.

PLEASE NOTE: The destinations, hotels and excursions presented in this itinerary may be altered according to customer preference. All tours are presented as LAND ONLY (no airfare is included). All tour programs are subject to your acceptance of our Terms and Conditions on reservation. Please review Terms & Conditions.