

itinerary

northeast special



SALVADOR (2 NIGHTS)

Brazil's first capital sits on a peninsula overlooking the bay that gave the state its name: Bahia. For Brazilians, Bahia is synonymous both with a more relaxed pace of life and a special intensity in all that Brazil represents: colour, music and religiousness. This is undoubtedly a consequence of Salvador being Brazil's strongest link with Africa, having been the principal port of entry for slaves. Eighty percent of the inhabitants are of Afro-Brazilian origin and are very proud of their roots. The best capoeira (a terpsichorean martial art) of Brazil is found in Salvador, whilst Candomblé, the Afro-Brazilian religious cult, permeates the city.

The Pelourinho, which means whipping post, as the old town centre is called, hosts a wealth of Baroque churches and colonial-style architecture. It is also the focus of Salvador's famous and exuberant nightlife with countless restaurants, bars and nightclubs; and forms the splendid backdrop to carnival celebrations that are more lively and last longer than anywhere else in Brazil. Bahia's artistic talents are well known and include the musicians Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa and Gilberto Gil, now the Brazilian Minister of Culture.



DAY 1 | SALVADOR

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 in vicinity of the hotel and beachfront after the long journey. Overnight at hotel Vila Galé Salvador.

DAY 2 | SALVADOR

Half day panoramic and city tour. This charming excursion 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. Overnight at hotel Vila Galé Salvador.



CHAPADA DIAMANTINA (3 NIGHTS)

The Chapada Diamantina (Diamond Highlands) is a continuation of the Espinhaço Mountain Range in the state of Bahia. Located 400 kilometres to the west of Salvador, these highlands are an immense oasis with flowered hills, luxuriant valleys and perennial rivers amid the barrenness of the backlands.

Visitors who climb the lush slopes feel as if they are in a make-believe world: 84,000 square kilometres peppered with crystal-clear waterfalls, gorges, caves, dens and rocky hills. The Chapada is best explored with a local guide: some of the most beautiful sites can only be reached on foot. In the middle of the Chapada lies Lençóis, a precious town, nowadays small and cosy, but once Brazil's diamond centre. Just as all mining centres, it grew and developed in a confused and disorganized manner.

Its name originates from the large number of cloth tents that characterized the first settlers' camps. Seen when coming down from the surrounding hills, these tents had the appearance of sheets lying on the rocks to dry. In its heyday, Lençóis was of great importance to the European jewel trade, a busy town where French was spoken. Today Lençóis still retains its rich architecture and a distinctive regional culture.

DAY 03 - 06 | LENCOIS (CHAPADA DIAMANTINA)



Example Description:

Day 1 - Pick-up at the hotel in the morning and private transfer for the 5-6-hour ride to Lençóis . Upon arrival drop-off at Pousada Canto das Águas. Afternoon free to discover this cosy little town.

Day 2 - Two half day treks in the area surrounding Lençóis. Walking along the riverbeds of the Grizante and the Lençóis, the visitor will discover the Spring Waterfall, admire chambers made of coloured sand, and take a delicious natural massage bath in the Serrano river.

The other trek takes the visitor across the Sossego canyon to the Sossego waterfall, returning via the Rebeirão do Meio creek.

Day 3 - The cave region is situated about 75 km from Lençóis. The tour starts at the Lapa Doce cave, with beautiful stalagmites and stalagmites, continuing via the Pratinha cave, where an underground river with crystal-clear water provides a delicious bath. Sunbeams shining into the Azul cave display a spectrum of colours, a unique natural phenomenon. In the afternoon, the visitor climbs the Morro de Pai Inácio, a landmark of the Chapada Diamantina, to enjoy a beautiful sunset.

Day 4 - In the morning pick-up for the ride to the airport of Salvador for flight to São Luis in the afternoon.

Included: 3 hotel nights in Pousada Canto das Aguas, private transfers Salvador-Lencois-Salvador airport, excursions as per description above, all entrance fees, bi-lingual expert guide assistance for all services (transfers + excursions).

SÃO LUIS - LENÇOIS MARANHENSES (4 NIGHTS)

With a population of 700 thousand, the capital of Maranhão State is a city of unique historical and cultural interest. The second largest state in Northeast Brazil, Maranhão in fact represents a transition between the Northeast and Amazonia in several respects. The south and east are largely semi-arid sertão and vast areas of babaçu palm, whilst the north and northeast are covered with equatorial forest and enjoy regular rainfall. The city of São Luís itself is a mixture of Amazonian riverport and northeastern seaport blessed with fine beaches. Culturally speaking, nowhere in Brazil is the mixture of European, African and indigenous traditions so intense or so richly reflected in folklore.

Built on an island between two rivers, overlooking the bay of São Marcos, central São Luís is compact, enabling the city's main attractions to be appreciated on foot. The colonial architecture of São Luís is considered to be among the finest in Brazil, especially in its extensive use of Portuguese tiles, present in a splendid array of designs and colours. 370km east of São Luís, the Lençóis Maranhenses National Park is a coastal desert of towering dunes, where high rainfall has created more than 200 square km of lençóis (bedsheets) speckled with crystal clear freshwater lagoons. Access to this spectacular ecosystem and its unique fauna can be obtained through the town of Barreirinhas.

DAY 06 | LENCOIS - SALVADOR AIRPORT - SÃO LUIS

Transfer from Lencois to the airport in Salvador for flight to São Luis. Arrival at the airport in São Luis, meet-and-greet with our local, bilingual guide and transfer in private, air conditioned vehicle to the hotel. Overnight at hotel Pestana São Luis.

DAY 07 - 09 | LENÇÓIS MARANHENSES



There is nothing in the world quite like it. A desert of white sand dunes with very little vegetation, crystal-clear fresh water lagoons and largely unstudied wildlife, extending for an area of 155 thousand hectares, making it the largest national park in northeastern Brazil. In spite of the fact that it has the dimensions of the city of São Paulo, it is only inhabited by 100 families. The Lençóis Maranhenses in the state of Maranhão is considered to be one of the seven wonders of nature, but to discover it one needs a sense of adventure.

The gateway to the park is the city of Barreirinhas, 380 kilometers from São Luís. From there the Lençóis Maranhenses can be further explored by jeep or boat excursion down the Preguiças river. Whatever the difficulties involved, it's worth it, for here you will get to know one of the few unspoilt natural paradises left to mankind.

Example Descriptions

Day 1 - Pick-up at the hotel and transfer by van to Barreirinhas (approximately 3½ hours). Arrival and accommodation at the pousada. Afternoon visit to the grand Lençóis (lakes and sand dunes). Overnight at Pousada Porto Preguiças.

Day 2 - Very early in the morning, departure for a boat trip down the Preguiças river that skirts the desert until it meets the sea, visiting the fishermen's settlements of Vassouras, Mandacaru and Caburé. Return to Barreirinhas. Overnight at Pousada Porto Preguiças.

Day 3 - Morning for leisure. In the afternoon transfer back to São Luís.

Includes: 2 nights accommodation in small pousadas in Barreirinhas, transportation to/from Lençóis Maranhenses by road from São Luis, boat tour on the Preguiças river, Jeep Tour to the Lençóis.

DAY 09 | SÃO LUIS

After arrival in São Luis overnight at hotel Pestana São Luis.

NATAL / PIPA (5 NIGHTS)

With a population of 600 thousand, Natal is the capital of the small northeastern state of Rio Grande do Norte, a kind of miniature Ceará, where the semi-arid sertão meets the sea in a spectacular dune-lined coast. The city sits on the banks of the Rio Potengi, where at the end of the 16th century the Portuguese built the Reis Magos fortress following sixty years of resistance from the Potiguar indians. Although the historical centre of the city is confined to the small

Cidade Alta, the spectacular beaches, together with the year-round sunshine and trade winds, have made Natal the focus of an enormous boom in tourism over the last ten years

To the south along the majestic highway that hugs the coast between sand dune nature reserve and Atlantic rollers is the beach of Ponta Negra. Here, tourists and locals enjoy the beauty and effervescence of this bayside resort overlooked by a gigantic partly vegetated sand dune. In nearby Pirangi do Norte, the world`s largest cashew tree covers 7,000 sq m and produces a ton of fruit per year with its huge network of intertwined branches. 80km south of Natal is the lively cliff-lined beach resort of Pipa, where youngsters from as far away as Recife congregate to enjoy the nature and nightlife of one of the Northeast`s main attractions. A unique cliff-top nature trail and the presence of dolphins add to Pipa`s charm, whilst the nearby beaches of Barra de Cunhaú and Baía Formosa are peaceful beauty spots.

DAY 10 | SÃO LUÍS - NATAL

In the late morning pick-up at the hotel and transfer to the airport for flight to Natal. Arrival at the airport in Natal, meet-and-greet with our local, bilingual guide and transfer in private, air conditioned vehicle to the hotel. Overnight at hotel Rifóles Praia.



DAY 11 | NATAL

Day for leisure or as **optional** a full day excursion Genipabu beach by buggy. Genipabu, located 5km north of Natal, is an unspoilt spot where sheets of gold and white sands have built up impressively high dunes interspersed by narrow strips of scrub vegetation and shallow lagoons. Tourists are picked up from their hotel by a buggy specially adapted for the sands of Genipabu, heading north across the Potengi River by ferry and passing Reis Magos Fort and Redinha Beach. The buggy enables excellent sightseeing around Genipabu beach and its dunescape. From here, the tour proceeds further north to see seven more beaches and three freshwater lagoons. Stops are made along the way for photos or a swim. Overnight at hotel Rifóles Praia.

DAY 12 | NATAL - BEACH OF PIPA

Morning pick-up at the hotel and transfer to Pipa beach (90KM). The beauty of the powerful waves that crash on Pipa beach was unveiled to the wider public in the 1970s by a group of surfers. This terrific beach, with its overhanging cliffs and Dolphin Bay, attracts many locals and is considered to be a coastal paradise. Apart from enjoying this exquisite beach, a number of optional tours (walking, biking or horseback) are available.

DAY 13 - 15 | BEACH OF PIPA

Time for leisure at one of the most beautiful coastlines and beaches of Brazil. 3 Overnights at hotel Pousada Berro do Jegu.

DAY 15 | PIPA - NATAL

Transfer to the airport of Natal for flight back to Europe or additional stay in Fernando de Noronha (optional).

*OPTIONAL EXTENSION

DAY 15 - 18 | FERNANDO DE NORONHA



345km off the coast of Northeast Brazil, Fernando de Noronha consists of 21 islands with a total area of 26 square kilometres, all that remains of a volcanic eruption which took place over 10 million years ago. Called The Emerald of The Atlantic, the archipelago breathes nature through every pore, having been declared a National Marine Park in 1989. Secluded beaches and a variety of tropical flora and fauna reward visitors who undertake the trip.

As many species of exotic coloured fish and thousands of sea turtles inhabit the corals, scuba-diving and snorkelling are highly recommended. Although swimming with the dolphins is not permitted (the archipelago is home to the Atlantic Ocean's only school of Spinner Dolphins), they can be admired as they swim alongside the boat or spotted from unspoilt beaches such as Praia da Quixaba, Praia do Leão and Praia do Bode. The top of Morro do Pico affords a lovely view of the 21 islands. As environmental protection is a top priority, no high-rise hotels have been built on the island and visitors are obliged to pay an environmental protection tax. However, the bounties of this idyllic isle can be enjoyed in any degree of comfort.

Transfers in and out on the island. Three overnights at the hotel Pousada do Marcílio

DAY 18 | FERNANDO DE NORONHA - BACK TO HOME

After return to Natal or Recife waiting for international return flight to Europe.

INCLUDED:

- Salvador 2 nights at selected hotel.
- Chapada Diamantina 3 nights at selected hotel.
- São Luís 2 nights at selected hotel.
- Lençóis Maranhenses 2 nights at selected hotel.
- Natal 2 nights at selected hotel.
- Pipa Beach 3 nights at selected hotel.
- Fernando de Noronha (optional package extension) 3 nights at selected hotel.
- Airport transfers with English-speaking guides in air-conditioned vehicles.
- All excursions and packages listed above with English-speaking guides.
- Breakfast plus all meals as specified.
- Hotel taxes and service charges.

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.