

itinerary

southern highlights

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This unforgettable two-week roundtrip reveals some of Southeast Brazil's most famous natural wonders: from crossing the majestic Serra do Mar mountain range by train to rafting beneath one of the world's largest and most impressive cataracts: the Iguassu Falls. The tourist will also be shown some of Brazil's best kept natural secrets: the deep Itaimbezinho canyon and the historical coastal town of Paraty with its archipelagos of densely forested islands, crystal-clear waters and secluded white, sandy beaches.



IGUASSU FALLS

Iguassu means "great river" in the indigenous Guarani language and there could hardly be a more fitting name. After rising in the Brazilian highlands near Curitiba, the Iguassu river runs westward on a 1,100km journey, receiving some 30 tributaries on its course to the plateau where, just before merging with the great Paraná river, it plunges thunderously over an 80m high cliff in virgin forest.

The Iguassu falls are the most spectacular in South America. A total of 275 falls cascade over a precipice that is 3km wide, sending up an endless wall of spray laced with rainbows. Iguassu is also the meeting point of three countries: Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. Straddling the Iguassu River, the twin National Parks of Foz do Iguassu were set up to preserve the region's precious rainforest environment.

DAY 1 | IGUASSU FALLS

On arrival at the airport, meet-and-greet with our local bilingual guide and transfer in private air-conditioned vehicle to the hotel. Depending on the time of arrival, an afternoon visit to the Argentinean side of the Iguassu Falls may be possible. The excursion offers lovely views over the Iguassu Canyon on the way to the National Park. The upper walkways are visited, allowing a birds-eye view of the falls and adjoining rainforest. A highlight of this trip is a visit to a suspended platform at the edge of The Devil's Throat. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 2 | IGUASSU FALLS

Morning visit to the Brazilian side of the Iguassu Falls: The excursion begins at the Iguassu National Park Visitors' Centre with a drive through the park's lush sub-tropical vegetation.

Near the falls, visitors leave the vehicle and proceed on foot along a trail that leads into the canyon and a spectacular panoramic viewpoint over the falls. The awe-inspiring trip along a walkway, which takes visitors right into the Devil's Throat, leads to a glass elevator which transports them up the cliff-face for a view of the upper falls. The Iguassu National Park makes up the most significant remnant of rainforest in the southern cone, which together with the Falls has been declared a National Heritage site by UNESCO.

In the afternoon, white water-rafting below the Iguassu Falls (*optional*): The adventure takes visitors to the bank of the River Iguassu on foot, a specially-equipped motorboat then taking visitors to the falls. It's a thrilling sensation, bringing the adventurous tourist close to the thundering waters. As the boat negotiates the rough waters and penetrates the mist of the falls, passengers should be prepared to get wet. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 3 | IGUASSU FALLS

Full-day tour of the ruins of the Jesuit missions: This excursion takes tourists 250 kilometres from the Iguassu Falls to the region of "The Missions", the scene of a fascinating but tragic episode in history retold in a film of the same name. The road into the region winds through the picturesque Argentine countryside of tea plantations and exceptionally well preserved subtropical rainforest, an open-cast gemstone mine being visited en route. It was in this region that, during the 17th century, the Jesuits founded the Guarani Republic, an ill-fated experiment in creating a utopian society in South America. Tragically, the brutal policies of colonial Spain and Portugal condemned the Guarani Republic to destruction, many lives being lost.

A visit will be made to the ruins of San Ignacio, which are among the most well preserved of this period, retaining their baroque features and innumerable stone sculptures. An ageing ghost town of communal houses, churches and buildings overgrown by the jungle stands in mute testimony to the grandeur of the Guarani dream.

In the evening will be the option to participate at a dinner and musical show that combines Broadway with folklore and typical dances, demonstrating the exuberant culture of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 04 | IGUASSU FALLS - PORTO ALEGRE (ITAIMBEZINHO CANYON)

In the morning, there is a visit to the Bird Park (*optional*), which is located at the entrance of the Iguassu National Park and is fully integrated with its natural surroundings. The enclosures house more than 900 birds and 150 species. During the walk in the beautiful Mata Atlantica (Atlantic Rainforest) the visitor has the opportunity to interact with many spectacular native and exotic bird species, some of which are endangered. Toucans swoop low over tourists wandering along the special paths and, besides the different bird species, snakes, caimans, marmosets and beautiful butterflies can be seen. Afternoon transfer along a scenic route to the airport for the short flight to Porto Alegre. Meet and greet with a local guide and drop-off at the hotel. In the evening, a dazzling night tour of Porto Alegre, the restaurants, bars and

shows offering many ways of enjoying this vibrant city. After a panoramic view of Porto Alegre's night skyline, a generous grill dinner and folklore show entertain tourists. Overnight at selected hotel.

PORTO ALEGRE & ITAIMBEZINHO CANYON

Porto Alegre, Brazil's sixth largest city is the country's main political and commercial centre south of São Paulo. Porto Alegre is the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, the southernmost state of Brazil, bordering on Uruguay and Argentina, with which it shares several cultural features. Creeping along the eastern border of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina, the majestic Itaimbezinho canyon is one of Brazil's largest and most impressive canyons. The canyon's lush vegetation and rugged scenery is protected deep in the heart of the Aparados da Serra National Park (PNAS).



A towering plateau sits as a giant trophy on the state's eastern boundary and its imposing cliffs plunge into abysses of densely forested canyons and lowlands. The name "Aparados da Serra" means "rugged transition between the high grassland plateau region and the coastal plain region".

DAY 05 | PORTO ALEGRE (ITAIMBEZINHO CANYON)

Full-day excursion to the Itaimbezinho canyon in the Aparados da Serra National Park: The excursion to this challenging but spectacularly beautiful geomorphologic region starts from Porto Alegre and passes through the town of Taguara, winding up onto the high Campos de Serra Plateau, where the tourist is rewarded with a spectacular panoramic view over the Itaimbezinho canyon. Along the way, the tour stops at various viewpoints and sites of interest. A stop is also made for a typical "Gaúcho lunch" in São Francisco de Paulo. After lunch, the excursion continues for an afternoon sightseeing tour and [easy] hikes along trails through the majestic landscape of the National Park before returning to Porto Alegre. Overnight at selected hotel.

DAY 06 | PORTO ALEGRE

Full-day tour of Gramado and Canela (*optional*): Gramado is a small tourist town in the mountainous Germanic region known as the Serra Gaúcha, in Rio Grande do Sul. The majority of the town's population is German-Brazilian. Famous for its hydrangeas, chocolate factory and occasional snow, Gramado and its nearby sister city Canela are definitely two towns well worth a visit. In Gramado, the highlights include the Knorr Park - one of Gramado's wealthier neighbourhoods - and the Black Lake. Visitors will have plenty of opportunities to buy crafts and Gramado's main product - chocolate. From here, the tour proceeds to Canela, another major tourist attraction located high up in the Gaúcha mountain range. Having become popular for its neighbouring Parque do Caracol nature reserve and waterfalls, Canela offers excellent opportunities for ecotourism and adventure tourism such as climbing and whitewater rafting. In Canela itself, the main tourist attractions include Lourdes Church. Overnight at hotel.

DAY 07 | PORTO ALEGRE / CURITIBA

Check-out of hotel and transfer for the short flight to Curitiba. Arrival and transfer to hotel. The rest of the afternoon is free for leisure. In the evening, a city tour combined with a dinner in Santa Felicidade. A night tour is perhaps one of the best ways to explore this dynamic city, combining a range of the cultural and historical highlights with a spectacular dinner. Over the past 65 years, Curitiba has grown rapidly from a town with a population of 140,000 to a vibrant city of more than 1½ million residents. Modernisation has managed to keep pace with this fast population growth, whilst at the same time preserving the city's

historical heritage. The tour starts with a visit to the brightly lit Botanical Gardens and then proceeds to the Ópera de Arame, decorated with peculiar metallic structures characteristic of Curitiba's modern architecture. One of the most attractive parks in town is certainly Parque Tanguá, decorated with colourful flower gardens, cascades and illuminated ponds and fountains. After a brief stop at Brazil's first university (The Federal University of Paraná), the tour heads for Santa Felicidade, the old Italian quarter 8km from the city centre, famous for its fine food, grill restaurants and delicious wines. Dinner will be served at one of these quality restaurants, visitors returning to their hotels through cobbled streets lined by Curitiba's historical buildings. Overnight at selected hotel.



DAY 08 | CURITIBA

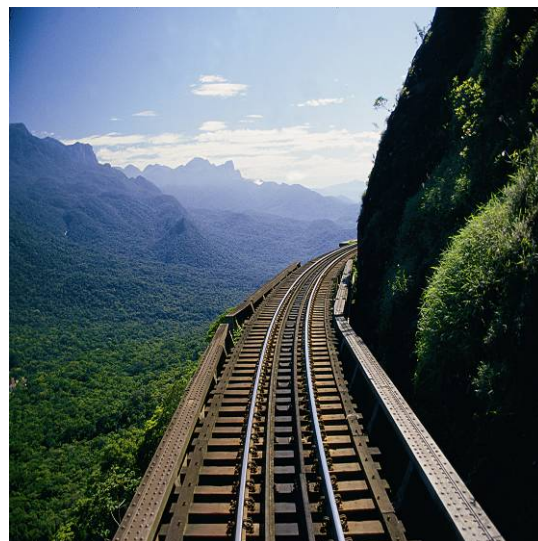
A train takes tourists safely up into the Serra do Mar for an unforgettable 2½-hour journey over mountain passes, across valleys and through tunnels to Morretes. After a short tour of this small town, the excursion continues by bus through the vast Serra do Mar Mountain range to the city of Antonina, where the historical centre, municipal theatre and Pilar Church are among the sites visited.

From this privileged location, tourists are rewarded with panoramic views of the impressive Antonina bay. The bus then returns to Morretes for a "Barreado" lunch (a traditional coastal dish with fish, shrimp and banana rum). The return trip to Curitiba crosses the Serra da Graciosa, another rugged mountain range that has been officially declared an environmental protection area. Overnight at hotel in Curitiba.

DAY 09 | CURITIBA

A full-day guided excursion to the Itajaí Valley (*optional*) leaves Curitiba for a scenic drive to Joinville, founded in 1852 and known as the city of princes, having been home to Prince François Ferdinand Phillipe, Prince of Joinville and son of Louis Phillipe, King of France. Although German influences have since prevailed, it is to this diverse colonial history that Joinville owes its historical and cultural wealth.

A visit is also made to Expoville to see the São Francisco Xavier Church, the Immigration Museum, Palmeiras Street and the city centre. The excursion's next stop is Blumenau, also colonised by Germans and famous for its festivities and tradition in crystal jewellery and ornaments.



Highlights include the PROEB Events Pavilion (the venue for the annual beer festival) and the Church of Saint Paul the Apostle, lunch being served at one of a choice of excellent restaurants in the district. Balneário Camború, the next attraction, is the largest tourist resort on the southern coastal plains. This region, also known as the Pearl of The South, has several beauty spots such as the "Morro do Cristo Luz" and a score of magnificent beaches. Located at the mouth of the Itajaí-Açu River, the city of Portuária is the gateway to the climax of the tour: the Itajaí valley. Amongst the sites visited in Portuária are the port of Itajaí and the Santíssimo Sacramento Church. Overnight at hotel.

DAY 10 | CURITIBA / PARATY

Morning transfer to the airport for the short flight to São Paulo, where visitors are picked up at the airport for the long but very scenic drive along the coast to the historical town of Paraty. Late afternoon arrival at the hotel, with an evening free for leisure after the long trip. Overnight at selected hotel.



DAY 11 | PARATY

After breakfast, visitors are picked up from the hotel and taken to the harbour to board a large schooner, which sets sail and heads to an archipelago of densely forested islands, crystal-clear waters and secluded white beaches. Having arrived at this paradise, the schooner makes three one-hour stops for sunbathing, swimming and snorkelling in the emerald-green waters. Amongst the islands visited are Comprida, Algodão, Cotia and Praia Vermelha. Late afternoon arrival back at the port. Overnight at hotel.

DAY 12 | PARATY / RIO DE JANEIRO

Morning at leisure in Paraty or on the beach. In the afternoon, transfer to Rio de Janeiro along the Costa Verde or Green Coast, a fitting name for this spectacular region where the forest-covered mountains of Serra do Mar march down to the sea, forming numerous bays and islands. The largest is Ilha Grande, a tropical paradise once favoured by pirates and abounding with exotic wildlife, hidden beaches and the ruins of an old prison. After a late afternoon arrival and check-in, there will be some free time to relax around the hotel and beachfront following the long journey.

In the evening, there will be a delicious grill dinner, followed by a fantastic show with 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 (*optional*). Overnight at selected hotel in Rio.



RIO DE JANEIRO

With a dreamlike beauty that exceeds even the greatest of expectations, Rio is a city that has to be seen to be believed. From its two famed peaks, the Sugar Loaf and Corcovado Mountain, atop which stands the statue of Christ the Redeemer with outstretched arms, Rio de Janeiro is truly “The Wondrous City”, her spectacular landforms embracing sandy beaches, glittering bays, fine residential districts and towering forest-covered mountains. The landscape is so dramatic that even the largest areas of modern high-rise are still dwarfed by the overwhelming grandeur of numerous peaks and the largest urban tropical forest in the world, itself a monument to environmental preservation.

DAY 13 | RIO DE JANEIRO

Designed for those who have a full day available and wish to visit both of Rio’s main attractions, this tour is basically a combination of the City Tour with The Sugarloaf plus Corcovado with Maracanã Stadium and the Sambódromo.

The first stage of the tour takes in a number of sites of interest in downtown Rio de Janeiro, namely the contemporary Metropolitan Cathedral, with its vast stained-glass windows and Aterro do Flamengo, a calm, spacious park with lawns and blossoming trees, offering lovely views of Rio and The Sugarloaf. The tour then proceeds through the old Urca neighborhood 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 over Rio de Janeiro from the top, sunsets being particularly spectacular.

Perched atop the Corcovado (Hunchback) Mountain 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. From the top there are breathtaking views of Copacabana, Ipanema, Leblon, the Botanical Gardens, Jockey Club and Rodrigo Freitas Lagoon.

A rack railway takes the visitor up to the foot of the statue, the train leaving the Cosme Velho district and climbing the steep slopes of 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. The tour includes a delicious lunch at a steak house. Overnight at hotel.

DAY 14 | BACK HOME

Depending on the flight departure time, there will be some free time in Rio de Janeiro. Transfer to Rio de Janeiro Airport for the flight back home.

INCLUDED:

- Iguassu Falls 3 nights at selected hotel.
- Porto Alegre (Itaimbezinho Canyon) 3 nights at selected hotel
- Curitiba 3 nights at selected hotel
- Paraty 2 nights at selected hotel
- Rio de Janeiro 2 nights at selected hotel
- Transfers as specified 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.