



Brazil

Stretching from the Andes to the Atlantic, Brazil contains most of the Amazon jungle, endless beaches, the mighty Iguassu Falls, and the largest wetland in the world, the Pantanal. The country's sheer size is vital to bear in mind when planning a visit. Brazil buzzes with energy and a sense of fun, which reaches a crescendo every February as Carnival brings everything to a standstill.

Climate and when to go

Average temperatures increase from south to north, and humidity can be high especially near the coast. In the Amazon the wettest months are March to May, in the north-east May and June, and in the south December to March. Even in Rio it can get surprisingly cold in July and August, so for guaranteed warmth at this time head for the north-east.





The Amazon

The largest and densest rainforest in the world boasts more plant and animal species than any other jungle, creating a paradise for would-be explorers, naturalists and wildlife enthusiasts. Whilst growing economic activity in the region has resulted in much environmental damage, particularly the indiscriminate use of mercury by gold prospectors and large scale deforestation, there is a growing awareness among many Brazilians that the Amazon is a unique resource in need of protection. For the most rewarding insight to the wonders of the jungle we recommend a stay in one of several lodges, the majority of which are within easy reach of the city of **Manaus**, which flourished during the 19th century rubber boom. In the 18th century Alexander von Humboldt and Alfred Wallace both launched scientific expeditions into the interior and the mysterious disappearance of the British explorer, Colonel Fawcett, still baffles the world's press.



The Amazon

The North-east: Bahia

Salvador, the capital of Bahia state, overlooks the vast Todos os Santos Bay. The city is split into two levels connected by lifts and a network of steep back streets which lead up to the Pelourinho, with some of the best-preserved colonial architecture in the Americas. It has numerous interesting churches and the rich cultural heritage of the African-influenced religion, Candomblé. Bahia has some wonderful beaches with a range of accommodation to suit all tastes - secluded beaches and family run *pousadas* in Morro de São Paulo, comfortable resorts around Praia do Forte and Porto Seguro and romantic hideaways near Ilheus.

5 hours' drive or a short flight inland is the **Chapada Diamantina**, a beautiful area of caves, streams and mesas with excellent trekking and comfortable country inns in the old colonial mining village of Lençóis.



Amazon river boat



Chapada Diamantina



Sunset on the upper Amazon



The Pelourinho, Salvador



MANARY PRAIA



 On Ponta Negra beach, Natal. Friendly, small, beach front hotel with excellent restaurant and pool. All rooms have balconies, most have sea views. Own tour agency specialising in ecological trips to the interior; buggy safaris on sand dunes, surfing, windsurfing.

POUSADA ZÉ MARIA



One of the most comfortable pousadas on Noronha. Rooms, spread out amongst the gardens, have spacious verandas and stunning views over the Morro do Pico rock and the Atlantic ocean. Pool and restaurant. Swimming, diving, snorkelling, dolphin watching.

The North-east: Natal and Recife

Natal is a busy city whose suburbs have some lovely beaches and good hotels. Its proximity to the lively fishing village of Pipa and the sand dunes at Genipabu, just to the north, make a stay of a number of days worthwhile. Inland, you can visit the fascinating Cariri region, once home to the megafauna of the Pleistocene era: mastodons, giant sloths and sabre-toothed tigers. Enormous boulders perch on rounded granite hills, dinosaurs have left fossilised footprints in ancient lake beds, and there are signs of human occupation dating back tens of thousands of years.

Both Olinda, near Recife, and São Luis further north in Maranhão offer wonderfully preserved, and in part restored, examples of Brazilian Baroque. Recife is laid out along a beach, similar to Rio, while more secluded beaches are found further south at Porto de Galinhas and beyond.



Genipabú



Lajedo do Pai Mateus

350km off the Atlantic coast, Fernando de Noronha is an archipelago of 21 islands, formed by volcanic activity about 12 million years ago. The main island is 15km long and its principal feature is the huge Morro do Pico rock which rises impossibly from the green landscape. 70% of the archipelago is a National Marine Park, generally accepted as one of the most untouched and unique marine systems in the world. The island is ringed by a variety of lovely and deserted beaches, the calmest of which are on the leeward side. There are many sites of interest on land, but a unique feature of the island is the presence of spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*), around 1,200 of which congregate nearly every morning in Golfinho Bay and whose aerial displays are a delight to watch. Noronha is a paradise for divers of all standards, with an average temperature of 26°C and visibility up to 50m. Sea turtles, dolphins and even the occasional shark can be seen in addition to a wonderful display of tropical fish. Pousadas (none of which are actually on the beach) can be booked up months in advance, particularly during holiday periods (July, August, Christmas, Easter and Carnival).



Fernando de Noronha



The Central region: Rio, São Paulo and Minas Gerais

While **Brasilia** is the official capital, and is fascinating for anyone with an interest in modern architecture, Brazil's spiritual capital is **Rio de Janeiro**, with surely one of the most beautiful settings in the world. The Corcovado and Sugar Loaf mountains overshadow the city and the beaches include famous Copacabana and fashionable Ipanema. Tourists flock here in February or March for the annual Carnival, probably the most spectacular in the world.

Petrópolis, in the hills above Rio, was emperor Dom Pedro II's summer retreat and his modest palace is now an interesting museum. While the town is scruffy, there are some lovely small inns nearby.

Two and a half hours north of Rio is the fashionable beach resort of **Armação de Búzios**, 27 sandy coves spread around a peninsula. Búzios itself has a vibrant nightlife, excellent bars and restaurants, and some lovely *pousadas*. 240km south of Rio, along a pretty coastal road, is the 17th century colonial port of **Paraty**, whose cobbled centre has been declared a national historic monument.

Inland from Rio is the state of Minas Gerais, with many pretty colonial towns such as **Ouro Preto** and **Tiradentes**. Minas was a major source of wealth during the colonial era due to its mineral riches.

São Paulo, Brazil's largest city, has some interesting markets (such as the Hippie market in the Praça da Republica) and a snake farm at Butantã, where much of the world's serum used to be produced. It is the commercial capital of Brazil, as São Paulo state is where most of the country's agricultural and industrial wealth is concentrated.



Kitchen gardens at Alcobaça



Rio de Janeiro

SOLAR DA PONTE



 In Tiradentes, a 4 hour drive from Rio or Belo Horizonte. A colonial mansion, just over the bridge from the main cobbled square. Pool, pretty gardens, and afternoon teas. Activities include walking and riding, or a ride on the old narrow gauge steam train that runs to São João del Rei.

COPACABANA PALACE



An historic hotel on Rio's Copacabana beach with plenty of character and excellent service, owned by Orient-Express. Tennis court, lovely pool.



FAZENDA RIO NEGRO



 On the Rio Negro, an hour's private flight from Campo Grande. The main building dates from 1920 and has 5 rooms. A separate guest house has 5 further rooms, all with air-conditioning and private bathrooms. Wildlife tours, canoeing, fishing and swimming.

MUTÚM



Northern Pantanal, 4 hours from Cuiabá. On the Rio Mutúm, between lakes Siá Mariana and Chacororé, an area rich in bird and wildlife. 16 rooms, a private pier, extensive gardens and a lovely pool. Guided excursions by canoe, horse, motorboat and on foot.

CAIMAN LODGE



147 miles west of Campo Grande, a 53,000 hectare ranch. Main ranch house and three satellite lodges, two of which are built on stilts with viewing towers over the savanna. All rooms have air-conditioning. Wildlife excursions, pool. Well run, although only part of the farm is true Pantanal.

The Pantanal

Like the Llanos in neighbouring Venezuela, the northern **Pantanal** is home to a dazzling array of wildlife. This huge seasonal wetland attracts 300 species of birds (including hyacinth macaws, jabiru storks, ibis, guans, parakeets and parrots), and a wide range of animal life, making it a paradise for naturalists. There are two distinct seasons: in the rainy season (December to March, wettest in February) the region floods and access becomes restricted. The beginning of the dry season (May to August) is the best time to see birds, thousands of which nest in the trees, filling the air with their mating calls, while the white sand river beaches are exposed for caimans to bask in the sun. Capybaras (giant guinea pig) are

everywhere, and with luck one can see marsh deer, giant river otters, and even the elusive tapir and jaguar. The best way to see the Pantanal is to stay on a *fazenda* (farm). Domestic airlines serve the two cities which lie on the edge of the Pantanal - Cuiabá and Campo Grande.

In the southern Pantanal, 300km from Campo Grande in the limestone *Serra da Bodoquena* hills, is the small town of **Bonito**. Tourism was first developed here about 15 years ago when settlers and residents realised the attraction of the caves and crystal-clear rivers. You can snorkel with massive *dourado*, float down rivers and over small waterfalls, or admire stalactites in limestone caves.



Caiman, Pantanal



Mimosa river, near Bonito



The South: Waterfalls, whales and Atlantic rainforest

Curitiba lies at 900m on the Serra do Mar plateau, and is a good base from which to explore the Atlantic rainforest. One of the most spectacular train journeys in South America descends for 4 hours through the forest to the coastal port of **Paranaguá**. Morretes, where the train stops, is a pretty, sleepy village renowned for its *barreado*, a stew cooked for 24 hours.

Since the release of the film 'The Mission', the majestic **Iguassu Falls** have become even more popular with visitors. The river Iguacu emerges from forested banks to plunge over a series of cliffs and create a breathtaking spectacle, higher than Niagara and wider than the Victoria Falls. There are only two hotels next to the falls themselves, and a good network of walkways. An excellent Bird Park houses many exotic bird and butterfly species, which can easily be observed at close range.

In the state of **Santa Catarina** (whose attractive capital, **Florianópolis**, is on an

island) there are huge tracts of well-preserved Atlantic rainforest. From July to early October awesome **southern right whales**, which grow up to 17 metres in length, come to this beautiful coastline to breed. The world's second most endangered whale is now returning to shores where once it was hunted close to extinction. At Laguna, once capital of Guiseppe Garibaldi's ill-fated separatist republic, fishermen work with dolphins to herd shoals towards their nets. **Praia do Rosa** is a favoured destination for surfers, while inland the monumental escarpment of the **Serra Geral** rears upwards, misty cliffs topped with ancient monkey puzzle trees.

HOTEL DAS CATARATAS



The only hotel right by the Brazilian side of the Iguassu Falls. Elegant colonial building, with large gardens and pool. Brazilian walkways start in front of the hotel. Boat trips under the falls, abseiling and wildlife trails nearby.



Serra Geral



Pedra Furada, Serra Geral



Praia do Rosa



Blue-and-yellow macaw, Iguacu Bird Park



Iguassu Falls



Brazil Itineraries

RIO, THE AMAZON, SALVADOR, AND IGUASSU



A good introduction to this vast country, from the steaming jungles of the Amazon to the majesty of the Iguassu Falls.

Rio de Janeiro

Days 1-2: 2 nights at the Hotel Orla Copacabana on Copacabana beach, with a small rooftop pool. Visit the statue of Christ the Redeemer on Corcovado mountain, and the Sugar Loaf by cable car.

The Amazon

Days 3-5: Fly to Manaus and met for a 3½ hour transfer by road and river (crossing the Meeting of the Waters) to the Amazon Lodge, where you stay for 3 nights. Rooms are simple but comfortable, and bathrooms are shared. The whole lodge is made from local hardwood with thatched roofs. Jungle excursions tend to be adventurous and there is a real pioneering feel to the camp. The native guides have an infinite knowledge of the jungle.

PARATY, WHALES, AND THE PANTANAL



The highlights of southern Brazil: wildlife, plunging waterfalls, caves, sparkling rivers, Atlantic rainforest and beaches. Whales usually present from July to early October.

Paraty

Days 1-3: Three hours' drive south of Rio de Janeiro is Pousada Pinguaba, a charming small hotel on a beautiful and isolated stretch of coastline 30km from the colonial town of Paraty. A 3 night stay gives you time to relax, or perhaps take a schooner around the nearby islands.

Curitiba and Paranaguá

Days 4-5: Driven to São Paulo for a flight to Curitiba, bordering Atlantic rainforest. Stay 2 nights in the Hotel Bourbon and take the Paranaguá train for the most spectacular ride in Brazil, with stunning views of waterfalls and gorges as the train rumbles over dizzy viaducts and bridges.

Salvador

Days 6-7: Fly to Salvador for 2 nights at the Pousada Das Flores, a typical colonial house a short walk from the Pelourinho. Breakfast is taken on a pretty balcony and there is a cosy lounge.

Morro de São Paulo

Days 8-11: A 20 minute flight brings you to the island of Tinharé and Morro de São Paulo village, laid out along 5 beaches. 3 nights at Vila Guaiamú, set back from the quiet 3rd beach, with cabañas in tropical gardens. Return to Salvador and the Pousada das Flores for a night.

Iguassu Falls

Days 12-15: Fly to Iguacu for 3 nights at the Hotel Das Cataratas, overlooking the falls (see page 23). A tour of the walkways on the Argentine side and the thrilling Macuco boat ride to the base of the falls are included. Fly to São Paulo for onward connections.

Note: There are several other lodges we recommend in the Brazilian Amazon and while the Amazon Lodge is always popular with our clients, you may prefer to choose one with slightly more creature comforts!



Rio de Janeiro



Morro de São Paulo



Iguassu Falls

Florianópolis

Days 6-8: Fly to Florianópolis for a 3 night stay at the Pousada Vida Sol e Mar, on Praia do Rosa beach, which attracts the biggest concentration of southern right whales along this coastline. Enjoy whale-watching by boat or from the shore (in season) and visit the towns of Imbituba and Laguna, where you can watch dolphins and fishermen.

Bonito

Days 9-11: Fly, via São Paulo, to Campo Grande. Driven (3-4 hours) to Bonito and stay for 3 nights at the Pousada Olho d'Água, with six hectares of garden and a pool. Various excursions to waterfalls and caves, a river rafting trip and opportunities to snorkel the crystal-clear rivers are included.

The Pantanal

Days 12-15: Driven north (2-3 hours) to Aquidauana for a spectacular 30 minute flight by small plane to Fazenda Rio Negro (see page 22), on the banks of the Rio Negro. 3 nights gives you time to see the plentiful wildlife. Fly back to Campo Grande in time for a flight to São Paulo and onward connections.



Pousada Pinguaba



Southern right whale



Clear-water river near Bonito



OLINDA, FERNANDO DE NORONHA AND NATAL



An unspoilt marine archipelago, colonial architecture, prehistoric monoliths, towering sand dunes and beautiful beaches.

Recife and Olinda

Days 1-2: Driven from Recife airport to colonial Olinda for 2 nights at the Pousada do Amparo, a pretty 18th century house in Olinda's narrow cobbled streets.

Fernando de Noronha

Days 3-6: Fly to Fernando de Noronha for 4 nights at the Pousada Zé Maria, a delightful property in the centre of the island with 20 rooms, good restaurant and a pool (see page 20). Noronha has a relaxed atmosphere with excellent beaches and the snorkelling and diving

is superb. The archipelago has an interesting history and the easiest way to get around is to hire a buggy.

Natal and the Cariri region

Days 7-12: Fly to Natal and driven to the Hotel Manary Praia (see page 20) for a 2 night stay. Enjoy an exhilarating dune buggy tour to Genipabu, and the following day begin a 2 night excursion into the interior via Ingá, Brazil's largest ancient monolith. Continue to Fazenda Pai Mateus, a simple farm in the Cariri region, and explore one of the most fascinating prehistoric landscapes in South America. Return to Natal and continue to the lively fishing village of Pipa for 2 nights at the Pousada Toca da Coruja, with lovely bungalows set around tropical gardens. The beach is a 10 minute walk away. Driven to Natal airport for onward connections.



Olinda



Spinner dolphin, Noronha



MINAS, BÚZIOS, SALVADOR AND THE CHAPADA DIAMANTINA



A fascinating journey through less-visited parts of Brazil, concentrating on the colonial past of the country, when the most sought-after prizes were black gold, green gold and diamonds!

Minas Gerais

Days 1-3: Driven (3-4 hours) from Belo Horizonte airport south to the charming small colonial town of Tiradentes. Spend 3 nights at the Solar da Ponte, just steps away from the cobbled central square (see page 21).

Petrópolis

Days 4-5: Driven for 4 hours through rolling hills to Petrópolis. 2 nights at the charming Pousada da Alcobaça, with 11 rooms, a large pool, sauna, and spectacular gardens with many interesting plants and trees from all over the world. The

owner is particularly proud of her kitchen (with reason!) where she and her staff prepare delicious food. The kitchen garden covers several acres and produces vegetables which are sold locally.

Búzios

Days 6-8: Driven (3 hours) to Búzios for 3 nights at the Pousada Casas Brancas, with a small swimming pool and a stunning setting overlooking the bay. Free days to enjoy this friendly resort, with over 20 sandy beaches.

Salvador and the Chapada Diamantina

Days 9-14: Driven (2 hours) to Rio for a flight to Salvador and a night at the Pousada do Boqueirão, a converted Italian-owned town house close to the Pelourinho, full of character and with views over the bay. The following day fly to Lençóis for 3 nights at the Pousada Canto das Aguas, a pretty colonial hotel in the heart of the town. Free days to explore this fascinating area with waterfalls, rock formations, streams and majestic table-top plateaux. Driven (5 hours) back to Salvador, via Poço Encantado, for one more night. Driven to Salvador airport for onward connections.

Note that Salvador/Lençóis flights are not daily.



Pousada da Alcobaça



Pousada Casas Brancas



Chapada Diamantina



Poço Encantado

See pages 26 and 27 for more Brazil itineraries



Grand Tours



NORTHERN GRAND TOUR - PERU, BOLIVIA AND BRAZIL



Combining three countries, this itinerary offers a very good introduction to South America. Best April to November.

Lima, Peru

Day 1: Your first night is spent at the 5 star Miraflores Park Plaza, overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Cusco and the Sacred Valley

Day 2: Fly to Cusco for a night at the historic Hotel Libertador, former palace of Francisco Pizarro.

Days 3-7: The Orient-Express run Hiram Bingham train is the most luxurious way to travel to Machu Picchu. Stay one night at the Machu Picchu Sanctuary Lodge, the only hotel right by the ruins, with extra time to explore on your own. Return by train as far as Ollantaytambo, from where you are driven to the lovely Hotel Sol y Luna, in the heart of the Sacred Valley, for 2 nights. This is a good base for mountain biking, riding, or white-water rafting. Driven back to Cusco for a further 2 nights at the Hotel Libertador.

Lake Titicaca

Days 8-10: Take a fascinating and comfortable bus journey to Puno, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, stopping at small Andean villages en-route. Spend a night at the Posada del Inca, just outside the town by the lake shore. The following day travel by boat (5 hours) to the island of Suasi for 2 nights at the Albergue Campestre Suasi, a beautiful small hotel (see page 56).

La Paz, Bolivia

Days 11-12: A short boat ride takes you to the mainland, from where you drive along the eastern side of Lake Titicaca to La Paz, the world's highest capital. Stay for 2 nights at the Hotel Europa, with good service and facilities, and take a tour of the city and nearby Moon valley.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Days 13-16: Fly to Rio de Janeiro, where you stay at the Hotel Caesar Park, one of Rio's top hotels on Ipanema beach. Spend 3 nights in this vibrant city, including a tour to the Statue of Christ and the Sugar Loaf. Driven to the airport for onward connections.



Rio de Janeiro



Moon Valley, La Paz



The Hiram Bingham train



Machu Picchu

Photo: Bob Moore HonFRPS



SOUTHERN CONE GRAND TOUR - BRAZIL, ARGENTINA AND CHILE



A once-in-a-lifetime trip around South America's Southern Cone countries. We have used the very best hotels throughout, with outstanding service and locations.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Days 1-3: The first 3 nights are spent at Rio's stylish Copacabana Palace (see page 21). Take a full day tour of the Sugar Loaf and Statue of Christ, and visit the Atlantic rainforest of the Tijuca National Park.

Iguassu Falls

Days 4-6: Fly to Iguacu for 3 nights at the colonial Hotel Das Cataratas (see page 23). Visit the Argentine side of the falls and take the thrilling Macuco boat trip along the gorge itself.

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Days 7-9: Fly to Buenos Aires for 3 nights at the elegant Alvear Palace, an historic hotel in the heart of the Recoleta district. A half day city tour is included.

Calafate and the glaciers

Days 10-12: Fly south to Calafate for a transfer to the elegant Hostería Alta Vista, on the road to the Perito Moreno glacier (see page 12). 3 nights gives you plenty of time to explore the area.

Torres del Paine National Park, Chile

Days 13-16: Driven (6 hours) to the Chilean border and on into the National Park, for 4 nights at the contemporary and extremely comfortable Explora hotel. All meals and a wide choice of excursions are included (see page 29).

Chilean Lake District

Days 17-18: Shared transfer to Punta Arenas for a flight north to Puerto Montt and 2 nights at the Hotel Petrohue, on the shores of Lake Todos los Santos. Rooms are spacious and the pale wood used throughout gives a light, fresh feel. Free day to explore the surrounding area.

Argentine Lake District

Days 19-23: Depart on the famous lake crossing to Argentina, by boat across three lakes and by bus through temperate rainforest. Two nights at the Hotel Llao Llao (see page 11), in an idyllic position overlooking mountains and lakes. Pick up a hire car and drive north to the village of Villa La Angostura for a further 2 nights at the lovely Hostería Las Balsas, on the shores of lake Nahuel Huapi. The area is one of outstanding beauty: snow-capped volcanoes, cascading rivers and dense forest. Return the car at Bariloche airport and fly to Buenos Aires for onward connections.



Lanin National Park



Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires



Iguassu Falls



Perito Moreno glacier