Revealing Rio de Janeiro

Rio offers just about everything that any traveller could possibly be looking for from a holiday (except perhaps, snow): natural beauty in a fantastic setting, diverse cultures, appealing beaches, lively people, passionate sports & adventure activities, colonial charm, modern sophistication, great music and appetising cuisine.

Rio de Janeiro has the most spectacular setting of all the South American cities, dominated by the twin peaks of Sugarloaf and Corcovado with its statue of Christ the Redeemer and wonderful views of Guanabara Bay. The world-famous beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema are the life and soul of the city and have so much going on. Rio is vibrant, immensely friendly and great fun. It is also considerably safer than you might think.

We hope these pages provide you with some useful ideas to help you plan your trip. Our travel specialists will book flights, hotels and ground arrangements according to your needs, preferences and budget combining first-hand experience and expertise, a personal service and value for money for reliable, trouble-free holidays to Rio de Janeiro – the Marvellous City!

Practical Information

There are direct flights with British Airways from Heathrow and regional flights from other airports via Paris and Amsterdam. Other airlines route via Madrid, Frankfurt and Sao Paulo.

British Nationals with a full valid passport (and at least 6 months to run) do not require a visa.

Climate is warm all year round. There might be a bit of rain between November to March (but this does not stop Cariocas from enjoying New Year and Carnival celebrations).

Vaccinations: Nothing compulsory

Top Tip: Take a few US dollars in small denominations for use as tips.
Visitors to Rio were travelling to the top of Corcovado Mountain long before the foundation stone of the famous statue of Christ was even laid in 1922. The Corcovado Train was inaugurated by Emperor Dom Pedro II in 1884. Electric trains replaced steam in 1910. Each year 600,000 visitors travel to Corcovado.

In 1817, a 39 year old British nanny called Henrietta Carstairs became the first person to climb to the top of Sugarloaf, taking with her a Union Flag (as you do). Today, there are around 60 different climbing routes, but most visitors prefer to take the double cable-car via Morro de Urca.

For a bird’s eye view over the city, how about a helicopter flight? With a capacity from 3 to 6 passengers, you can choose a flight duration from 6 minutes up to an hour. Safety is paramount, with specialised pilots, a full schedule of maintenance and supervision of ground staff for take-off and landings.

The highly-acclaimed Museum of Tomorrow opened in December 2015 in Rio’s transformed Port area. It is essentially a science museum, not of objects and instruments but of ideas, looking at the planet over the next 50 years in a world of climate change and population growth, increasing life span, technological innovation and pressures on biodiversity, sustainability integration and co-existence. The museum is open from Tuesdays to Sundays, 10am - 6pm.

A great way to spend an evening is to visit a few of our favourite bars and clubs, enjoying a beer and a light snack along the way, to live life as a local in a relaxing but lively way. We recommend the Academia da Cachaça and Bar Bracarense, Bar Jobi and Bar Veloso. The Lapa district is full of nightspots with everything from samba and bossa nova to techno and hiphop. Rio Scenarium is an eclectic club full of curiosities.

The Metropolitan Cathedral of Rio de Janeiro is dedicated to the patron saint of the city, Saint Sebastian. In designing the cathedral, the architect Edgar Fonseca, was inspired by the Mayan pyramids of Mexico and Central America. Although it might appear rather rundown and drab from the outside, it is definitely worth a visit for the play of light from the stained-glass windows inside.

A masterclass of demonstration, preparation and consumption to learn some of Brazil’s favourite dishes – either a black-bean feijoada (beef and pork stew) or a moqueca (seafood hotpot). The cooking class explores how African and Portuguese influences are reflected in Brazil’s contemporary cuisine and includes instructions for preparing the perfect caipirinha.

A good way to explore the Marvellous City is on two wheels. The 7km cycle ride round the lagoon is flat and appealing but you could also follow the cycle paths along the beaches, which make it easy and safe to get around. On our bicycle tours there is much more flexibility to visit a street market, or to stop for a beer at a local bar.

The Guaratiba Biological Reserve is an ideal location to learn stand-up paddle-boarding in the peaceful mangrove wetlands about an hour south of the city. You can easily combine this with a seafood lunch and a stop at one of the quiet beaches along the attractive coastal road making for a great day out.
Carnivals

Carnivals are celebrated throughout Brazil in the run-up to Lent, but Rio’s spectacular event is probably the most famous in the world. Twenty-five samba schools compete for the championship and work goes on throughout the year to get floats and costumes ready for the annual extravaganza which takes place in the city’s purpose-built Sambadrome. The Champions’ Parade takes place a week later. Early booking is essential but hotel costs are high. Dates: 8 - 12 Feb 2018; 1 - 4 Mar 2019

Football

Brazil is synonymous with football and, depending on the time of year, we may be able to arrange tickets for a match. The famous Maracanã Stadium was built to open the 1950 World Cup. In the 1990s, the site was modified to become an all-seater stadium and now holds 78,000 people. The Maracanã hosted the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2015 Rio Olympics.

Markets

The Sunday “Hippy” market in Ipanema is a good place to look for art works and handicrafts and to mingle and interact with artists and stall-holders. On the first Saturday of each month there is an antiques market at Rua do Lavradio in Lapa. The Jockey Club hosts a popular market every other weekend with live music and dance. Hunt for bargains in the small shops around Rua Alfandega in the Centre.

Visit a Favela

Over a million people (out of a total population of around 6.5 million) live in Rio’s favelas. The vast majority are good, decent hard-working people but the powerful gangland leaders and drug lords have made them notorious and some of them totally unsafe. A few, such as Vidigal, have been pacified. A tour in conjunction with a local favela guide provides an interesting insight into another side of life in the city.

The Caipirinha: a cocktail is born

The key ingredient for making a caipirinha is cachaça, a Brazilian aguardiente (firewater) distilled from fermented sugarcane juice which has a history dating back to the 16th century when Portuguese plantation owners served it as a drink to fortify slaves. Over the years distillation methods improved and cachaça began to appear on dinner tables in colonial Brazil. There is some evidence that cachaça was mixed with garlic, lime and honey as medication for the common cold and whilst there is some suggestion that the caipirinha might have had its origins with the great ‘flu pandemic after the Great War, recent research by Diuner Mello, a historian from Paraty, has uncovered a document by a civil engineer Joao Pinto Gomes Lamego which describes a recipe for the cocktail to counter a cholera epidemic from 1856: “…by necessity we began mixing medium aguardiente with water, sugar and limes, because it was prohibited to drink straight water.”

The Caipriniha: a cocktail is born

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Hotels

From three star comfort just a couple of blocks from the beaches of Copacabana and Ipanama to five star luxury, there are hotels to suit all tastes and budgets. In general terms, Ocean Front rooms overlooking the beaches are more expensive than rooms with a lateral (side view) or which look out onto apartments, hills or the favelas at the back. You must book early for key events such as Rock in Rio, New Year or Carnivals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belmond Copacabana Palace, Copacabana</td>
<td>Rio’s most famous hotel is unquestionably one of the best, with superb attention to detail and wonderful service from dedicated staff. Located on Copacabana, the hotel has a world-class Michelin-starred restaurant (Mee) with pan-Asian cuisine, the vision of chef Ken Hom and led by Executive Chef Kazuo Harada.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melia Gran Hotel Nacional, Sao Conrado</td>
<td>This hotel was designed by Oscar Niemeyer with gardens by Burle Marx and has recently reopened after an extensive refurbishment, providing luxury and comfort in front of Sao Conrado beach. Excellent pool and public areas, good-sized rooms. Helpful, friendly staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sofitel Santa Teresa, Santa Teresa</td>
<td>The charming neighbourhood of Santa Teresa is an ideal location for those who want a bit of peace and quiet with easy access to the centre, Lapa and the main beaches. The Santa Teresa is a Sofitel hotel and has 44 large rooms and suites, unobtrusive service and notable spa facilities for a bit of pampering after exploring the city.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Porto Bay Rio Internacional, Copacabana</td>
<td>This popular 4* hotel on Copacabana is an excellent choice for first time visitors to Rio de Janeiro. In addition to hotels in Buzios and Sao Paulo, the Porto Bay group have six hotels on Madeira, two in Lisbon and one in the Algarve. Good value.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miramar by Windsor, Copacabana</td>
<td>The Miramar offers a good choice of room types, lovely public areas, superb dining and excellent breakfasts. Great views from the roof-top bar and pool. The Windsor group has 14 hotels in Rio and two in Brasilia for consistently reliable service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emiliano, Copacabana</td>
<td>One of Rio’s newest hotels, the Emiliano aims to combine elegance and simplicity of design with quality of service, excellent facilities and contemporary cuisine. The Emiliano is towards the Fortress end of Copacabana so within easy walking distance of Ipanama.</td>
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<tr>
<td>South American Copacabana</td>
<td>This mid-range hotel is just a couple of blocks from both Copacabana and Ipanama, representing good value. The hotel looks a little run-down on the outside but is fine inside and the staff are generally quite helpful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copa Sul</td>
<td>Friendly mid-range hotel on Avenida NS de Copacabana, just one block back from the beach. The hotel has a choice of standard, superior and de luxe rooms. Helpful staff on hand to give you advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praia Ipanema</td>
<td>An excellent choice for travellers who prefer to stay on Ipanama. Choice of standard, superior, de luxe rooms and suites. Great views from the rooftop both of the beach and the lagoon.</td>
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Further afield:

**Attractions near Rio de Janeiro**

**Petropolis**
The beautiful mountain town of Petropolis is just 68km (42 miles) from Rio, a drive of about 2 hours. It was the summer capital of Brazil and is named after Pedro I, the first emperor of Brazil. The Imperial Palace is an elegant neo-classical building which houses the Royal Family Crown Jewels, including the imperial crown with 639 diamonds and 77 pearls.

**Buzios**
Buzios was a small fishing village for a couple of hundred years until Brigitte Bardot arrived in 1964. There are 25 beaches dotted around the peninsula, 192 km (120 miles) east of Rio, with fantastic sailing, surfing, diving, snorkelling, stand-up paddleboarding, kite surfing, jet-skiing and wind-surfing. Great bars and restaurants.

**Paraty**
Paraty is a delightful colonial town in the bay of Ilha Grande about 4 hours’ drive south of Rio. Paraty flourished as the principal port for the export of gold in the 17th century. You can easily pick up a boat to visit the beaches on nearby islands, some of which have simple bars and cafes, some are practically deserted. Stay in a lovely old Pousada with a touch of charm.

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**The Iguassu Falls**
A 2½-hour flight from Rio de Janeiro will take you to the Iguassu Falls, one of the greatest wonders of the natural world. It is worth spending at least two nights here to give you time to explore the falls from both the Argentine and Brazilian sides. We thoroughly recommend staying at the Belmond Das Cataratas hotel next to the falls on the Brazilian side but we are happy to advise on other hotels.

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**Onward Travel**
There are flights from Iguassu to Lima for extensions to Machu Pacchu in Peru. You can also fly from the airport on the Argentine side to Buenos Aires. From Rio there are good connections to other destinations in Brazil. Our Brazil Revealed website has further information about the country, suggested tailor-made itineraries and small-group escorted tours, cruises, climate details together with useful facts for travellers and links to other South America Revealed websites.

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**Further Information**

**Nicaragua Revealed**
Central America’s best kept secret offers something for everyone: amazing landscapes, colourful tropical birds and exotic wildlife, colonial heritage at Granada, adventure activities such as zip-lining, fantastic islands and unspoiled beaches. An emerging country for discerning travellers.

www.nicaraguarevealed.co.uk

**Myanmar Revealed**
Myanmar lies on the crossroad of two of the world’s great civilizations – China and India – and its culture is influenced by both with added native traits and characteristics. The country has begun to open up in recent years, welcoming visitors who are keen to discover the country for themselves.

www.myanmarrevealed.co.uk

**About us**
Revealed Travel has considerable expertise in putting together customer-focused tailor-made holidays and tours throughout Central & South America and South-East Asia: A personal service and value for money from travel experts who know their stuff!

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