



Rio de Janeiro City

OXX21 / POP 6.35 MILLION

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Best Places to Eat

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Why Go?

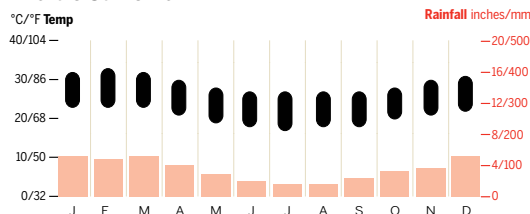
Planted between lush, forest-covered mountains and breathtaking beaches, the Cidade Maravilhosa (Marvelous City) has many charms at its disposal.

Although *joie de vivre* is a French invention (as is the bikini), the *cariocas* (residents of Rio) made it their own. How else to explain the lust for life and zeal with which the city's inhabitants celebrate their days? While large-scale festivities such as Carnaval make Rio famous, there are countless occasions for revelry: Saturdays at Ipanema Beach, *festas* (parties) in Lapa, football at Maracanã, and impromptu *rodas de samba* (samba circles) on the sidewalks of Leblon, Copacabana or any other corner of the city.

Rio's spectacular landscape is another of its virtues. Verdant mountains and golden beaches fronting a deep blue sea offer a range of adventures: surfing great breaks, hiking through Floresta da Tijuca's rainforest or rock climbing up the face of Pão de Açúcar (Sugarloaf Mountain).

When to Go

Rio de Janeiro



Dec–Feb Steamy beach days and a packed festival calendar, including the Carnaval buildup.

Apr–May Cooler but sunny days, fewer crowds and lower prices.

Jun Low season, lower temperatures and little rainfall, but lively, especially during Festas Juninas.

History

Portuguese explorer Gonçalo Coelho was the first European to land in Rio. In January 1502 he entered a huge bay, which he allegedly mistook for a river, thus bequeathing the future city its lasting moniker. Portuguese settlement proceeded in fits and starts, but by the 17th century Rio was Brazil's third-most important settlement (after Salvador da Bahia and Recife-Olinda). African slaves streamed in and the sugar plantations thrived. Even more slaves arrived to work in the gold mines of Minas Gerais during the 18th century.

In 1807 the Portuguese prince regent (later known as Dom João VI) and his entire court of 15,000 set sail for Brazil to escape the impending invasion of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Dom João fell in love with Brazil. He declared Rio the capital of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarve. He became the only European monarch to rule from a New World colony.

At the end of the 19th century the city's population exploded as a result of European immigration and internal migration (mostly of ex-slaves from the declining coffee and sugar regions).

The early 1920s to the late 1950s were Rio's golden age. With the inauguration of the grand hotels, Rio became a romantic, exotic destination for Hollywood celebrities and high society.

During the 1960s, modern skyscrapers rose in the city, and some of Rio's most beautiful buildings were lost. During the same period, the favelas (slums, informal communities) of Rio grew to critical mass, with immigrants from poverty-stricken areas of the Northeast swelling the number of Rio's urban poor. The Cidade Maravilhosa began to lose its gloss as crime and violence increased.

As Rio entered the new millennium, social problems continued to plague the city, with violence claiming thousands of lives – particularly in the favelas. Rio's middle and upper classes seemed mostly resigned to life behind gated and guarded condos, while poverty and violence surged in the slums nearby.

While violence and poverty still remain worrying problems in Rio, things have improved in the past decade. Favela pacification (a program that removed drug lords and installed a permanent police presence in some favelas) has brought down the level of violence, while sanitation and transport have

also improved in some favelas. In the build-up to the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympics, large investments have been used to revitalize Rio's waterfront port, vastly expand its metro system and create new museums and cultural spaces around town.

Sights

The once mighty 'capital of the Brazilian empire' (as one Portuguese king called it), Rio has much more than just pretty beaches. From the bohemian lanes of old Santa Theresa to the village charm of Urca, Rio's colonial streets, magnificent churches and leafy plazas provide urban wanderers with days of exploration.

Rio's historic center, its lake (Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas), the lush Jardim Botânico (Botanical Gardens) and the Atlantic rainforest that trims many parts of the city make for some fascinating discovery. There are also fantastic overlooks from Pão de Açúcar and Cristo Redentor, tranquil islands in the bay, wildly beautiful beaches to the west, and vibrant markets, with vendors peddling everything from vintage samba recordings to tangy *jabuticaba* (a native fruit).

Ipanema & Leblon

Truly among the world's most enchanting addresses, Ipanema and Leblon are blessed with a magnificent beach, and open-air cafes, bars and restaurants scattered along tree-lined streets. Here you'll find a mix of wealthy *cariocas*, young and old, gay and straight.

Ipanema Beach

BEACH

(Map p54; Av Vieira Souto) One long stretch of sun-drenched sand, Ipanema Beach is demarcated by *postos* (posts), which mark off subcultures as diverse as the city itself. *Posto 9*, right off Rua Vinícius de Moraes, is where Rio's most lithe and tanned bodies migrate. The area is also known as Cemitério dos Elefantes because of the handful of old leftists, hippies and artists who sometimes hang out there. In front of Rua Farne de Amoedo is Praia Farne, the stomping ground for gay society.

Praia de Leblon

BEACH

(Map p54) Separated from Ipanema by the gardens and canal of Jardim de Alah, Leblon Beach attracts families and has a slightly more sedate vibe than its eastern counterpart. Parents with little ones may want to