

Paraná



Since seceding from São Paulo state in 1853, Paraná has been endlessly compared with its larger neighbor to the north. Indeed, Paraná shares with São Paulo a slew of superlatives, rating among Brazil's highest standards of living, most productive economies and best educated populations.

Paraná's enviable position near the top of these lists is due to many factors. But one is undoubtedly its history of small family farms as opposed to the plantation economy that dominated in northern Brazil, resulting in a relatively equitable, democratic social order. Add to that a thoughtful approach to economic development and a progressive stance on social issues, and you have the pleasant, prosperous place to live that Paraná is today. With its efficient public transportation, innovative architecture and outstanding urban parks, the capital, Curitiba, exemplifies the state's successes.

The state boasts many geological and ecological wonders. Ilha do Mel and Parque Nacional do Superagüi include large swaths of unspoiled rain forest and pristine coastline. Sunbathers and surfers sigh for these beaches, among the least developed and most idyllic in southern Brazil. From the coast, the stunning Serra do Mar stretches up to a high inland plane.

And straddling Brazil's border with Argentina is perhaps Paraná's most amazing asset. The power and the splendor of Iguazu Falls have always earned the awe and admiration of travelers, from indigenous tribes to Jesuit missionaries to modern-day tourists.

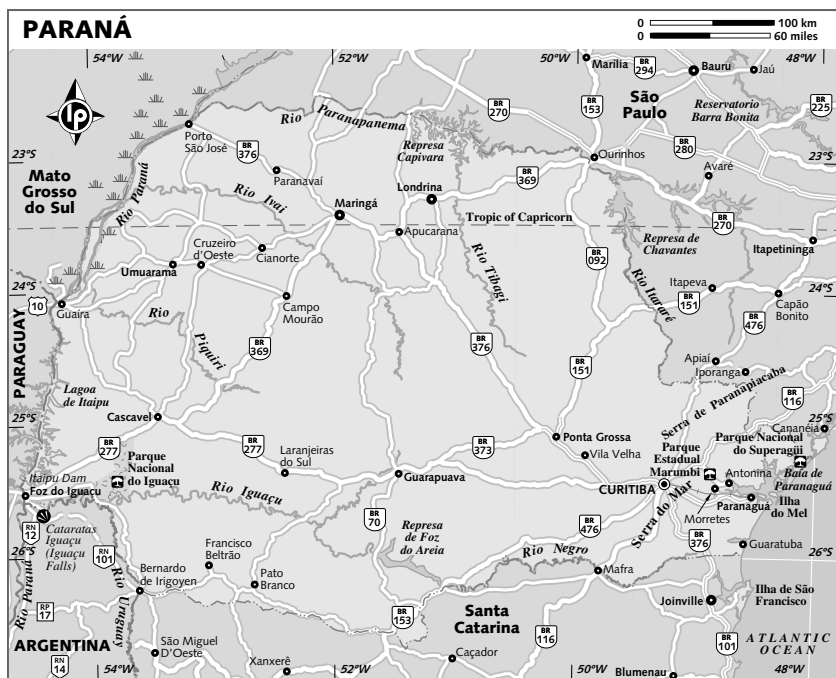
HIGHLIGHTS

- Hear the roar and feel the spray from the **Garganta do Diabolo** (p332), the mother of all waterfalls, at Iguazu Falls
- Dance the fandango (folk dance) in the remote village of **Barra do Superagüi** (p328), in Parque Nacional do Superagüi
- Watch the sunset from **Farol das Conchas** (p325), the lighthouse on Ilha do Mel
- Marvel at the ancient 'stone city' of **Vila Velha** (p322)
- Appreciate art and eye-popping architecture at the **Museu Oscar Niemeyer** (p318) in Curitiba



■ POPULATION: 10.7 MILLION

■ AREA: 199,300 SQ KM



History

Like much of southern Brazil, Paraná was neglected by the Portuguese colonists; even a brief gold rush in the 17th century withered when bigger finds were discovered in Minas Gerais. When Paraná seceded from São Paulo in 1853, the economy was based on cattle and *erva matê* (tea), and the government encouraged Italian immigration to develop the economy. Waves of Germans, Ukrainians and Poles followed. With immigration and railroad construction, Curitiba developed into one of the country's richest cities.

Climate

Both the coast and the Iguazu Falls are semitropical regions dominated by the Mata Atlântica (Atlantic rain forest). Summers are hot and humid; winters are mild. Curitiba, which lies on an upland plain, is significantly cooler than the coast.

National Parks

Parque Nacional do Superagüi (p328) is part of a huge, 4700-sq-km reserve of the Mata Atlântica, including a few largely uninhabited

islands and miles of mangrove swamps. The famous falls are surrounded by the 1550-sq-km Parque Nacional do Iguaçu (p332).

Getting There & Around

Curitiba is the state's transportation hub, with bus and air services to every major city in Brazil. A passenger train links Curitiba with the coastal town of Paranaguá. Foz do Iguaçu also has a small international airport and direct bus service to São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and every big city in the South.

CURITIBA

☎ 0xx41 / pop 1.85 million

Curitiba is not particularly sophisticated nor 'sexy,' but its residents enjoy a quality of life unparalleled in other parts of the country. With the help of a vibrant local economy, the modern city has managed to preserve historic buildings and green space.

In the 1970s and '80s, the city launched progressive incentives to get people out of their cars, lowering bus prices and improving service. The strategy worked: today it's easier to get around Curitiba than any other