

Rio de Janeiro State



Say the name Rio de Janeiro and people automatically think of the city. But there's another Rio out there, the stunningly beautiful state of Rio de Janeiro, home to some of Brazil's most alluring destinations, all within a three-hour drive of the Cidade Maravilhosa (Marvelous City).

To the east, the Costa do Sol is a land of dunes and lagoons, white sands and limpid deep-blue and jade-green waters. Saquarema delights surfers with some of Brazil's best breaks. Arraiá do Cabo has paradisiacal beaches and picturesque harbors tucked between steep promontories. And Búzios, chic but casual, sparkles day and night, with lots of sunshine and nightspots.

Just north of Rio, a jagged mountain wall forms the backdrop for the imperial city of Petrópolis and the climbers' paradise of PN Serra dos Órgãos. Nearby Teresópolis and Nova Friburgo straddle an equally picturesque landscape dotted with dairies, Swiss chalets and peaks whose names hint at their fantastic shapes: Friar's Wart, Finger of God, Woman of Stone.

West along the Costa Verde lies one of Brazil's true gems, the colonial town of Paraty, whose backdrop of green forest, waterfalls and flowering trees is as dazzling as the town's colorful 18th-century architecture. Offshore, the vast traffic-free island of Ilha Grande offers over 100km of hiking trails leading to more than 100 of Brazil's most secluded beaches. To the northwest is Brazil's oldest national park, PN de Itatiaia, where stark high country plateaus and rocky spires intermingle with lush, low country jungle. Bordering the park, the towns of Visconde de Mauá and Penedo welcome visitors with rustic cabins and fresh-grilled trout.

HIGHLIGHTS

- On **Ilha Grande** (p187), surf the south shore's wild waves, or chill at the floating bar in a tranquil cove nearby
- Snorkel, swim and slide down waterfalls, then learn to cook gourmet Brazilian food in picturesque, colonial **Paraty** (p191)
- Rappel up rocky Pico das Agulhas Negras in **Parque Nacional de Itatiaia** (p201)
- Stroll at sunset, or party all night on breezy beachfront Orla Bardot in **Búzios** (p215)
- Try honey *cachaça* (high-proof sugarcane alcohol) and Alpine-style goat cheese amid spectacular mountain scenery along the **Teresópolis–Friburgo Scenic Circuit** (p207)



■ POPULATION: 16 MILLION

■ AREA: 43,696 SQ KM

