

Sergipe & Alagoas



Overshadowed by big Bahia to the south, Sergipe and Alagoas are often overlooked by travelers. Those seeking off-the-beaten-path gems would do well to explore these tiny states.

Although Sergipe's provincial capital has few attractions of its own, Aracaju is a great place to arrange a scenic tour up the Rio São Francisco, which at times is unrivalled in beauty. Aracaju is also a gateway to several sleepy colonial towns, where the sound of horse and cart still clatters through the streets, and the scattering of 17th-century churches attests to the area's prominence in Brazil's early settlement days.

Even more enticing than Sergipe is the state of Alagoas, which is known by the cognoscenti for its beautiful coastline. Highlights here include bumping around quaint coastal towns planted among swaying palms and vast stretches of isolated white-sand beaches. Alagoas' laid-back capital, Maceió, overlooks emerald green water and offers fine dining and nightlife – many travelers spend evenings at beachside bars dining on local seafood specialties as the moon rises over the sea.

North and south of Maceió lie surfing beaches, tiny fishing villages and the dazzling, ever-present coastline, with a mix of rustic lodgings and lovely, high-end pousadas (guesthouses). Inland travel offers its own rewards: Penedo, along the Rio São Francisco, is a charming riverfront town with picturesque churches, hilly cobblestone streets and a welcoming atmosphere that's hard to leave behind. If you visit just one inland town in the Northeast, Penedo is an excellent choice.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Playing in the surf and sipping refreshing *agua de côco* (coconut juice) on enchanting **Praia do Gunga** (p513)
- Dancing to the addictive rhythms of *forró* music in an old-school bar in **Maceió** (p511)
- Dining on fresh seafood at a riverside restaurant in colonial **Penedo** (p516)
- Snorkeling the coral reefs and exploring the breathtaking coastline outside of **Barra de Santo Antônio** (p516)



■ POPULATION: 5 MILLION

■ AREA: 49,980 SQ KM

