



# Paraná

POP 10.4 MILLION

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## Why Go?

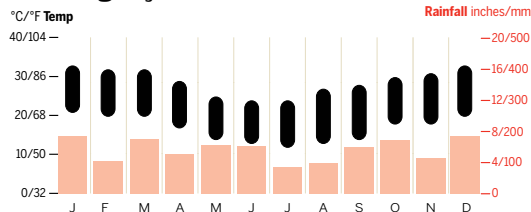
Since its 1853 succession from São Paulo state, Paraná has been endlessly compared with its larger neighbor to the north. Indeed, the two share a slew of superlatives, rating among Brazil's highest standards of living and best educated populations.

With its efficient public transportation, innovative architecture and outstanding urban parks, the capital, Curitiba, exemplifies the state's successes. Though no tourism magnet, the city's air of European culture and excellent restaurants make for a nice dose of Brazil at its most developed. Sunbathers and surfers sigh for Ilha do Mel and Parque Nacional do Superagüi, where large swaths of unspoiled rainforest and pristine coastline make for some of the least developed and most idyllic beaches in southern Brazil.

But it's Iguaçu Falls that has always earned the wonder and admiration of travelers, from indigenous tribes to Jesuit missionaries to modern-day tourists. The awe it inspires cannot be overstated.

## When to Go

### Foz do Iguaçu



**May & Sep** Off peak prices and crowds coupled with tolerable weather at Iguaçu Falls.

**Dec-Feb** Peak season brings the sunshine at Iguaçu Falls and Ilha do Mel.

**Aug** Retreating cold and mugginess in Curitiba makes for comfortable days.

## 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 maté* (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.

## **i** 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

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While not necessarily sexy, Curitiba has long garnered praise for being one of the world's best models of urban planning. If it weren't for the bold initiatives of its three-term mayor, Jaime Lerner, whose daring moves in early 1970s – transforming a six-block length of the downtown into a pedestrian zone (done in secret under the cover of darkness), creating five express-bus avenues with futuristic tubular boarding platforms, encouraging recycling and sustainable design long before it was fashionable and planting trees and creating parks on an enormous scale – Curitiba would probably resemble any other Brazilian city. Instead, it's the envy of the urban planners the world over and Brazil's most efficient city. Today, it's easier to get around Curitiba than any other large city in Brazil. The city has also taken



## Paraná Highlights

- 1** Experience Mother Nature's heart-stopping and thunderous roar from above and below **Garganta do Diabo** (p281) at Iguaçu Falls.
- 2** Drench yourself under one of world's most magnificent waterfalls on an **Iguaçu Falls** (p281) riverboat trip.
- 3** Ride the rails on the **Serra Verde Express** (p268) to Morretes, one of Brazil's last great train rides.
- 4** Laze about the wild beaches and sandy trails of car-free **Ilha do Mel** (p270).
- 5** Marvel at the ancient 'stone city' of **Vila Velha** (p267).
- 6** Appreciate art and eye-popping architecture at Curitiba's **Museu Oscar Niemeyer** (p262).
- 7** Indulge in a Michelin-level meal for a fraction of the price at Curitiba's **Manu** (p263), the South's hottest new restaurant.
- 8** Marvel at the jaw-dropping engineering feat of **Itaipu Dam** (p283).