Gávea, Jardim Botânico & Lagoa

Neighborhood Top Five

1. Hiring a bike and going for a spin around the Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas (p78).
2. Taking a stroll through the lush and flower-filled Jardim Botânico (p79), followed by lunch at a lakeside kiosk.
3. Looking for monkeys in the tropical rainforest-lined Parque Lage (p79).
4. Sipping cocktails in an open-air setting while admiring the view from Palaphita Kitch (p82).
5. Checking out the latest exhibit at the Instituto Moreira Salles (p79).

For more detail of this area see Map p234
Explore Gávea, Jardim Botânico & Lagoa

Rio’s picturesque lake is the focal point of these well-heeled neighborhoods. The Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas is actually a saltwater lagoon and is much utilized by carioca (residents of Rio). Joggers and cyclists zip along the shoreline trail by day, while the lakeside restaurants fill with people enjoying a meal and live music in the open air by night. This area includes the north, east and west sides of the lake. The streets on the south side of Lagoa are generally considered part of Ipanema and Leblon.

West of the lake are the botanical gardens for which the neighborhood, Jardim Botânico, is named. Here you’ll find stately palms and a variety of flowering plants. South of the gardens is Gávea, home to Rio’s premier horse-racing track, and a planetarium. Aside from their natural attractions, these neighborhoods also have some excellent restaurants, lively nightlife and one of the Zona Sul’s best cultural centers.

Much of the development of this area is linked to the lake, which is named Rodrigo de Freitas in honor of the Portuguese settler who made his fortune off the sugarcane fields surrounding the lake in the 16th century. Factories blighted the landscape in the 1900s, and it took much of the 20th century for the area to recover. Although the lake is still too polluted for swimming, some wildlife has returned, and visitors might see egrets on the lookout for fish in the lake.

Local Life

- **Walks** There are several fine walks amid rainforest in Parque Lage or Parque da Catacumba.
- **Markets** Praça Santos Dumont hosts an antiques market on Sunday and a fruit market on Friday.
- **Nightlife** Bars near Praça Santos Dumont attract a large mostly student crowd during the week.

Getting There & Away

Gávea
- **Bus** Centro, Flamengo and Catete (170); Ipanema and Copacabana (571, 572, 574); Leblon (432, 435, 593).
- **Metrô na Superfície** Metro buses connect Ipanema/General Osório station with Gávea.

Jardim Botânico
- **Bus** Centro, Flamengo and Catete (170); Copacabana and Ipanema (570, 162, 584); Leblon (512, 574, 584).
- **Metrô na Superfície** Metro buses connect Botafogo station with Jardim Botânico.

Lonely Planet’s Top Tip

One of Rio’s often overlooked attractions, the Instituto Moreira Salles is well worth a visit with a picturesque setting and a museum that stages first-rate exhibitions. If you have kids in tow, Saturdays are a good time to visit, when they offer special (free) activities (crafts, music and the like).

Best Places to Eat

- Oro (p81)
- Olympe (p81)
- Bráz (p81)
- La Carioca Cevicheria (p81)
- Lagoon (p81)

For reviews, see p80

Best Places to Drink

- Palaphita Kitch (p82)
- Caroline Café (p82)
- Hipódromo (p82)
- 00 (p82)

For reviews, see p82

Best Places to Shop

- Dona Coisa (p83)
- Gabinete (p83)
- O Sol (p83)

For reviews, see p83