

Centro & Praça Mauá

CINELÂNDIA | PRAÇA TIRADENTES | PRAÇA XV | PRAÇA MAUÁ

Neighborhood Top Five

- ❶ Pondering the future while browsing interactive exhibits in the beautifully designed **Museu do Amanhã** (p128).
- ❷ Peering back through hundreds of years of Brazilian history at the **Museu Histórico Nacional** (p122).
- ❸ Taking in first-rate art installations and rooftop views at the **Museu de Arte do Rio** (p127).
- ❹ Going eye-to-eye with fish, sharks and rays in **AquaRio** (p128).
- ❺ Watching a show inside the lavish **Theatro Municipal** (p123).



For more detail of this area, see Map p254 ➔

Explore Centro & Praça Mauá

Rio's downtown is an architectural medley of old and new, with striking baroque churches and narrow colonial streets juxtaposed against looming office towers and wide, traffic-filled boulevards. During the week it's all fuss and hurry as Rio's lawyers, secretaries and clerks jostle on the crowded streets. But despite the pace, it's worth joining the fray; Centro has some of the city's best museums and its most intriguing historical sights, including avant-garde art galleries and 18th-century cathedrals.

The southern focal point of downtown is Cinelândia, which has a wide plaza framed with grand buildings, a historic theater, an old cinema and several outdoor cafes. Near the waterfront, Praça XV is another pivotal sight, home to a former royal residence turned into a museum and some cafes. A short stroll from here leads to the Travessa do Comércio, one of the oldest intact parts of Rio. Lined with colonial architecture, the narrow cobblestone streets here buzz with life on weekday evenings, as *cariocas* (residents of Rio) pack the outdoor bars and cafes.

Many pedestrian-only areas crisscross Centro, and for the urban wanderer, there's no better destination in Rio. In addition to Praça XV and Cinelândia, it's worth exploring the streets around picturesque Praça Tiradentes. A handful of galleries, old dance halls and historic sites lie nearby. A few blocks north of here is Saara, a giant street bazaar crammed with discount stores and sprinkled with Lebanese restaurants.

North of Centro is Praça Mauá, a waterfront plaza that has become the symbol of Rio's renaissance. The once derelict streets here have been revitalized with new museums, an aquarium and towering office buildings, and there are yet new restaurants, cafes and bars in the works.

Local Life

- ➔ **Arts** There are several key concert halls in the area, including Teatro Municipal (p123) and Teatro Rival Petrobras (p133).
- ➔ **Hangouts** Open-air bars along Travessa do Comércio and nearby streets draw festive after-work crowds.
- ➔ **Shopping strips** The narrow, pedestrian-packed streets of Saara are intriguing for browsing.

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Bus** From the Zona Sul look for the following destinations printed in the window: 'Rio Branco,' 'Praça XV' and 'Praça Tiradentes.'
- ➔ **Metro** Cinelândia, Carioca, Uruguiana and Presidente Vargas.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Centro provides good value for money. There are lots of museums in the area that have free admission, and stiff competition helps keep lunch prices down – particularly at the many decent pay-by-weight restaurants. For an inexpensive cruise on the bay, hop on the ferry to Niterói (p127).

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Brasserie Rosário (p129)
- ➔ L'Atelier du Cuisinier (p130)
- ➔ AlbaMar (p130)
- ➔ Cais do Oriente (p130)
- ➔ Govinda (p128)
- ➔ Imaculada (p130)

For reviews, see p128 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Samba Caffè (p132)
- ➔ Jazz In Champagneria (p132)
- ➔ Amarelinho (p132)

For reviews, see p130 ➔

Best Historic Sites

- ➔ Igreja São Francisco da Penitência & Convento de Santo Antônio (p124)
- ➔ Ilha Fiscal (p127)
- ➔ Mosteiro de São Bento (p128)
- ➔ Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Carmo da Antiga Sé (p125)
- ➔ Paço Imperial (p125)

For reviews, see p123 ➔