

Welcome to Rio de Janeiro

Golden beaches and lush mountains, samba-fueled nightlife and spectacular football matches: welcome to the Cidade Maravilhosa.

Tropical Landscapes

Looking out from the 710m peak of Corcovado, you will see why Rio is called the Cidade Maravilhosa (Marvelous City). Lushly forested mountains fringe the city, shimmering beaches trace the shoreline and a string of tiny islands lie scattered along the seafront. Far from being mere cinematic backdrop, this seaside beauty hosts outstanding outdoor adventures: hiking in the Tijuca rainforest, cycling alongside the lake and beaches, sailing across Baía de Guanabara, and surfing, rock climbing and hang gliding amid one of the world's most stunning urban landscapes.

Captivating Beaches

Rio's beaches have long seduced visitors. Copacabana Beach became a symbol of Rio during the 1940s, when international starlets would jet in for the weekend. Hogging the spotlight these days is Ipanema Beach, its fame and beauty unabated since bossa nova stars Tom Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes introduced the world to its allure in the 1960s. For *cariocas* (residents of Rio), the beach is their backyard – a playground that's free and open to all, offering endless enjoyment in the form of football, volleyball, surfing, snacking, drinking or simply relaxing amid the passing parade of people.

The Rhythms of Rio

Music is the lifeblood of Rio, with a soundtrack of rock, old-school bossa nova, hip-hop, funk and Brazil's many regional styles. Above all there's samba, a rapid-fire style of music with African influences and an infectious beat that is synonymous with Rio. You can hear it all over town, but the soul of samba resides in Lapa, an edgy red-light district that is home to dozens of live-music halls and an enormous weekend street party that draws revelers from all walks of life. Samba is also the integral sound during Carnaval, and the danceable backing music to street parties and all-night parades.

Joie de Vivre

Speaking of Carnaval, Rio knows how to party. Whether you call it joie de vivre, *Lebensfreude* or lust for life, *cariocas* have it in spades. Carnaval, and the buildup to it, is the most obvious manifestation of this celebratory spirit. But Rio has many other occasions for revelry: celebrations after a big Flamengo (or Vasco, Fluminense or Botafogo) football match, weekend samba parties around town, *baile* funk parties in the favelas (slums, informal communities), and boat parties on the bay – not to mention major fests such as Réveillon (New Year's Eve) and the Festas Juninas.



Why I Love Rio de Janeiro

By Regis St Louis, Writer

There's no other place like Rio. It's a combination of many things that I find so captivating: walking through parks inside the city and seeing monkeys and toucans, spending the evening catching music jams around Lapa, joining a few friends amid the roaring crowds at Maracanã, or greeting the sunrise (after an early morning or late night) from Copacabana Beach. In moments like these you realize you're hooked. I also love the *carioca* spirit: spontaneous and good-natured, with the urge to live life to the fullest.

For more about our writer, see p264.