

# São Paulo State



It is hard to speak of São Paulo state without using superlatives. The region is home to Brazil's largest industrial output, its largest (and most ethnically diverse) population, the richest of its rich, its biggest stock exchange, its busiest port, its finest museums, its worst traffic and its vastest slums. Paulistas, as residents of São Paulo state are known, take pride in their ascendancy, sometimes irking residents of other states in the process, particularly their tetchy neighbors in Rio. But that, to a good Paulista, only proves the point. Everyone's just envious, you see.

With Rio's economic star in eclipse and Brasília limited to governmental functions, the sprawling city of São Paulo in many ways serves as the country's de facto capital – commercially, financially, industrially and culturally. If you're doing business in Brazil, this is where you're likely to end up, and there has been an explosion of interest among sophisticated travelers who are catching wind of the city's extraordinary restaurants, art scene and nightlife.

Still, there are good reasons to escape the capital's clutches. Just beyond the jungle-draped coastal mountains lie some of southern Brazil's finest beaches. The mountainous stretch of coast around Ubatuba is particularly winning. Inland, the area around Campos do Jordão delivers the stunning vistas – and chilly air – of the Serra da Mantiqueira, whose green peaks reach more than 2500m. Further afield, Iporanga sits amid one of the least disturbed areas of Brazilian Atlantic Forest, while the nearby state park boasts hundreds of cataloged caves, making it Brazil's Capital das Grutas (Cave Capital).

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Gape at the sheer size of São Paulo from the art-deco heights of the **Banespa building** (p281)
- Stalk the rich at their preferred watering holes in São Paulo's leafy **Jardins district** (p283)
- Determine which of **São Paulo's legendary nightclubs** (p297) best cater to your unique nightlife needs
- Seek out wild, deserted beaches where mountains meet sea just north of **Ubatuba** (p302)
- Hike amid the green peaks of the **Serra da Mantiqueira** (p310), known as 'Brazil's Switzerland'



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 11

■ POPULATION: 40.4 MILLION

■ AREA: 248,800 SQ KM

## History

Like the rest of Brazil, São Paulo began its life essentially as a series of coastal sugar plantations. However, unlike northeast Brazil, mountains limited growing areas and, while it seems hard to believe now, the region remained a colonial backwater well into the 18th century.

Two groups dominated early Paulista life: Jesuits, who crossed the coastal range to found the future city of São Paulo in 1554, and the *bandeirantes* who followed them – groups of pioneers who conducted raids into the interior, enslaving indigenous peoples to work the coastal plantations. The interior was so remote that even people of European descent spoke not Portuguese but a simplified form of the indigenous Tupi-Guarani language.

When Africans began to replace indigenous peoples on the slave plantations in the late 17th century, the *bandeirantes* tried their fortune hunting for gold, eventually discovering rich veins in neighboring Minas Gerais. The town of São Paulo profited as an important market for *bandeirantes* to stock up on supplies for their expeditions. The land around it also proved relatively good for growing sugar cane.

By the early 19th century, however, sugar growers discovered that their soil was ideal for an even more profitable crop: coffee. By the 1850s vast stretches of the state were given over to coffee plantations. A rail connection over the coastal range began carrying hugely profitable quantities of the bean to the port at Santos, and then on to world markets. When slavery was abolished in 1888, growers encouraged mass immigration of Europeans, particularly Italians, to work the plantations. The next great wave of immigrants came from Japan, starting around 1910 and peaking in the 1930s.

Crashing coffee prices in the early 20th century convinced investors that they needed to spread their bets, and by the 1950s São Paulo had transformed itself into the industrial engine that drove the national economy. Cars had replaced coffee as São Paulo's new cash crop. At the same time, the vast automotive plants that sprung up in São Bernardo do Campo, south of São Paulo city, became a hotbed of leftist union activity and proving grounds for future president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

In fact, the trade unionists were part of a long tradition of liberalism and dissent in the state, from the independence and abolition movements of the 19th century through to opposition to the military junta that, with support from the US, ruled the country from the 1960s to the 1980s.

While immigration slowed dramatically by the 1980s, millions of Brazilians continued to stream into São Paulo, particularly from the Northeast. As the capital failed to cope with its growth, and crime and congestion spiraled out of control, many entrepreneurs began to migrate to the more stable cities of the interior. Today, Campinas and Ribeirão Preto, once small towns, sit amid one of the richest regions in Latin America.

While the state's dominance remains unchallenged within Brazil, the mega-growth of China and India has raised alarm bells among Brazilian industrialists. At the same time, the maturing economy is more stable and diversified than it has ever been, even if São Paulo, like the rest of the Brazil, must still address the gaping divide between haves and have-nots.

## Climate

São Paulo's coastline is skirted by the Sierra do Mar, below which is a narrow coastal zone broken by lagoons, tidal channels and mountain spurs. In the mountains the state has a mild, temperate climate that can be very bracing – jackets are needed in winter. In the coastal zone the temperatures are moderate in winter and very hot and humid in summer with frequent tropical downpours. The city of São Paulo has somewhat more moderate temperatures in summer and cool but not cold winters.

## Getting There & Around

The state's capital, São Paulo city, is Brazil's principal hub for international travel. Dozens of airlines have direct international services to São Paulo's Guarulhos airport, and there are also direct bus services from neighboring countries. The city is also a major center for domestic air travel, with affordable airfares available to cities around Brazil. The state's highway system is among the best in South America, making driving a good option, though São Paulo city itself can be maddening because of poor signage and horrendous traffic. Alternatively, there are also frequent and good long-distance bus services, within the state and to other parts of Brazil.