

# Overview of Brazil

## General

Brazil has a population of 146 million people concentrated on its two hundred miles of east coast. Over 90% of the people live on 10% of the land, and over 15 million live in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Brazil's ethnic composition is 55% European descent, 38% a mixture of cultures, 6% African, and only 1% Amerindian. Brazil is a multiparty federal republic. The president is both the chief of state and the head of the government. There are two legislative houses: an 81 member Senate and a 503-member Chamber of Deputies.

Portuguese is the official language, although some speak Spanish, Italian, or various Amerindian languages. There is no official religion but about 90% of the population is Roman Catholic.

Nearly 50% of the population is under twenty years of age. Despite massive economic problems, Brazil is often regarded as a potentially rich country with a strong industrial sector, large agricultural production, and rich natural resources.

## October Weather

**Rio:** 20°C – 27°C (68°F - 81°F) with some rain

- *October is the true start of the warmer winter months, with great weather lasting roughly through until March. Rainfall is minimal and very unlikely to cause any issues for travelers, and the fog which has been common over the summer starts to ease off a little, although the city does experience heavy periods of mist year round.*

**Ouro Preto:** 18°C– 28°C (65°F - 82°F) degrees daytime

- *Ouro Preto enjoys a tropical climate, with a comfortable level of humidity most of the year. May through October is the winter season, when it gets especially cold in the morning and at night due to the region's altitude.*
- ***Expect much cooler temperatures in the evening***

**Porto de Galinhas:** 23°C – 28°C (75°F to 84°F) degrees

- *The north-east area of Brazil including Recife and Porto de Galinhas generally experiences warmer weather year round.*

## Electricity

- Voltage – 110/220
- Frequency – 60Hz
- Plug – A & B, C
- Comments – 127 V found in Rio, Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais (though 220 V may be found in some hotels). Other areas are 220 V only. Outlets are often a combination of type A and C and can accept either type plug.

## Body language

- Brazilians speak in very close proximity, with lots of physical contact.
- Touching arms and elbows is the norm. Back slapping is very common between men.

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- Eye contact is expected.
- The 'OK' hand signal is a rude gesture in Brazil.
- To express appreciation, a Brazilian may appear to pinch his earlobe between thumb and forefinger.
- To invoke good luck, place your thumb between your index and middle fingers while making a fist. This is also known as the "fig."
- Flicking the fingertips underneath the chin indicates that you do not know the answer to a question.

### Communication

- **Good conversation topics: soccer, family, and children.**
- **Bad conversation topics: Argentina, politics, poverty, religion, and the Rain Forest.**
- Brazilians tend to speak quite loudly, especially in casual situations.
- Brazilians are gracious, forgiving and not easily offended
- Handshaking, often for a long time, is common. Shake hands for hello and goodbye; use good eye contact; when leaving a small group, be sure to shake hands with everyone present.
- Both men and women greet women with a kiss on the cheek.
- First names are used often, but titles are important.  
Music and long, animated conversation are favorite Brazilian habits. When conversing, interruptions are viewed as enthusiasm. Brazilians enjoy joking, informality, and friendships.

### Food

- Food is big in Brazil. Formal lunches and dinners have always been a part of doing business. Sometimes it is easier to invite a senior contact for a meal than for a meeting at the company. Lunches and dinners are seen as an opportunity to socialize and to get to know each other in more depth. These are also seen as good opportunities to do business.
- Midday is the normal time for the main meal. A light meal is common at night, unless entertaining formally. Lunch is served from 12.30 to 14.30 and dinner from about 20.30 to 22.30.
- Restaurant entertainment prevails versus at home.
- Tipping is typically 10% in Brazil.
- Toast: *Saude* or *Viva* (Sah-OO-Day, VEE-va)
- Frequent toasts to good health are standard. You can drink alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks for toasts. If you host a meal, soft drinks and juices should be available.

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## Security in Brazil

### Crime

- Brazilian police and media report that the crime rate remains high in most urban centers, including the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, and is also growing in rural areas within those states. Brazil's murder rate is more than four times higher than that of the United States, and rates for other crimes are similarly high.
- Street crime remains a problem for visitors and local residents alike. Foreign tourists, including U.S. citizens, are often targets, especially in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and Recife. While the risk is greater during the evening and at night, street crime also occurs during the day, and safer areas of cities are not immune. Incidents of theft on city buses are frequent. You should keep a copy of your passport with you while in public and keep your passport in a hotel safe or other secure place. You should also carry proof of your health insurance with you.

### Who to Contact

#### **DEAT - Police Special Tourist Service**

Civil Police - Specialists who cater specifically to tourists

Address: Avenida Afrânio de Mello Franco, 159 - Leblon

Telephones: (21) 3399-7170 / 7171/7172 / 2511-5112

Customer Service 24 hours

#### **BPTUR - Police Battalion in Tourist Areas**

The Military Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro protect the tourist sites in the city of Rio de Janeiro

Address: Rua São Clemente, 345 - Botafogo

Telephones: (21) 3399-7565 / 69/7457/7562/7450

### Top Safety Tips

#### **General - Try not to behave like a tourist!**

- If you need help, only ask questions of "officials" – police, tourist information employee, etc. Do not ask people on the street for directions or information.
- Try to dress like a local. Wear simple clothes.
- As much as possible, do not carry valuables. Try to wear your belongings on your body – in a pouch around your waist, etc.
  - Avoid carrying passports and travelers checks when visiting tourist sites.
  - Do not wear jewelry and watches when out in public.
  - Keep cameras, guidebooks, maps, cameras, etc. out of site. If you can, carry cameras, video cameras, etc. in small bags.

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- Avoid going out with cash. Use credit cards instead.
- In case of loss or theft, report the incident immediately.

### **Transportation**

- Only use taxi services from official points. Do not hail a taxi on the street.
- Keep doors locked and windows closed when in a vehicle.
- Sit in the aisle seat on the bus.

### **Walking Safety**

- Avoid being out alone. Always go out in a group if possible.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times.
- Walk quickly and pay attention to what is going on around you.
- If you notice someone is following you, enter a store, call out to someone, etc.
- Do not walk near the sea if the beach is deserted. Use the boardwalk instead where there are more people.
- Walk close to the curb and avoid deserted areas.

### **Exchanging Money**

- Exchange money only in exchange offices in airports or authorized banks.
- If you need to go to an ATM, use ones located in malls or inside banks. If you need assistance, ask a bank employee.
- Avoid ATMs located in unlit locations or on the street. If you need assistance, ask a bank employee.

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## Doing Business in Brazil

### Appearance

- Conservative European dress code is the norm for all meetings in big cities such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.
- Three-piece suits carry an "executive" connotation, whereas two-piece suits are associated with office workers.
- Conservative attire for women in business is very important. Make sure your nails are manicured.
- The colors of the Brazilian flag are yellow and green. Avoid wearing this combination in any fashion.

### Presentations

- Sophisticated presentations with multiple illustrations are the norm.
- Handouts and brochures in Brazilian Portuguese are recommended.
- During presentations avoid slang and jokes specific to your culture and geography.
- There is no need to be extremely formal.
- Do not speak too quickly, loudly, or in a monotonous tone.
- At the beginning of the presentation make it clear to the audience whether you prefer to take questions during or after the talk. Often, audiences are happier writing down their questions rather than asking them in front of others.