

**B**razil, the fifth largest country in the world – is a country of samba, carnival and beach culture. Along with miles of palm-fringed, pristine golden beaches, the country also boasts beautifully preserved colonial towns with fabulous Portuguese architecture and meandering cobbled streets.

Brazil is also home to some of the world's most magnificent natural phenomena – from the world's most voluminous waterfalls at Iguazu, to the rich, diverse and largely unexplored ecosystem of the Amazon to the incredible wildlife of the Pantanal wetlands.

With an equally diverse cultural and ethnic population, from Portuguese colonists, Amazonian Indians, and descendants of African slaves in the north to the German-Italian communities of the south, Brazil will captivate your every sense.

**Electricity:** 110 to 120V, 60 Hz, non-standardized

**Time Zone:** GMT minus 3 hours in the east, northeast, south and southeast; GMT minus 4 hours in the west; and GMT minus 5 hours in the far west.

**Dialling Code:** 55

### **Festival Calendar**

With so many festivals, we have only included the most important.

January 6th – 15th - Festa de Santo Amaro (Santo Amaro, Bahia)

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday in January - Lavagem do Bonfim (Salvador, Bahia)

January 20th - Folia de Reis (Rio)

February 2nd - Festa de Iemanja (Salvador, Bahia)

February - March - Carnival - Rio is without question the world's most popular place to celebrate Carnival. Prices for accommodation can triple and the streets are packed. The parades and costumes are beyond compare. The streets are alive with dancing and music and food stands. One word of caution: it is so easy for visitors to get caught up in the sights and sounds surrounding them that you can easily become a target for petty crime. Carry few valuables with you.

Late May/Early June - Festa do Divino Espirito Santo (Rio)

June - Festival Folclorico do Amazonas (Manaus)

July 17th – 19<sup>th</sup> - Festa do Divino - (Fortaleza, Ceara)

August 15th - Festa do Iemanja (Fortaleza, Ceara)

October 12<sup>th</sup> - Discovery of America Day

November 18<sup>th</sup> - Feria de la Chinita - (Maracaibo)

December 8<sup>th</sup> - Festa de Santa Barbara (Salvador, Bahia)

### **Currency**

The name of the official currency of Brazil is the Real, divided into 100 centavos. The notes are of different colours, much like the Australian and Canadian dollar, so they are hard to mistake. Again, the US dollar is the best foreign currency to take to Brazil. Dollars can be exchanged everywhere and at considerably better rates than travellers' cheques. However, travellers' cheques are still the safest mode of currency, so try to carry both. American Express travellers' cheques are the most widely accepted. Most convenient, however, is the credit card. Visa, MasterCard and American Express credit cards are accepted almost everywhere, Visa being the most widely accepted. You can often avoid the high "transaction fees" placed on exchanging travellers' cheques. As long as you deposit your travelling money into your credit card account before you leave, you will escape the interest fee charged.

ATMs are found almost everywhere. You can either withdraw currency on your credit card by using your personal pin number, or you can even use your bank card on the PLUS network.

When changing Reals back to dollars upon exiting the country, remember to keep your receipts.

### **Visas**

Most nationalities require a 90 day tourist visa.

### **Health risks**

**Malaria** - If you are travelling in endemic areas it is extremely important to avoid mosquito bites and to take tablets to prevent this disease. Symptoms range from fever, chills and sweating, headache, diarrhoea and abdominal pains to a vague feeling of ill-health. Seek medical help immediately if malaria is suspected. Without treatment malaria can rapidly become more serious and can be fatal. If medical care is

not available, malaria tablets can be used for treatment. You should seek medical advice, before you travel, on the right medication and dosage for you. If you do contract malaria, be sure to be re-tested for malaria once you return home as you can harbour malaria parasites in your body even if you are symptom free. Travellers are advised to prevent mosquito bites at all times. The main messages are: wear light-coloured clothing; wear long trousers and long-sleeved shirts; use mosquito repellents containing the compound DEET on exposed areas (prolonged overuse of DEET may be harmful, especially to children, but its use is considered preferable to being bitten by disease-transmitting mosquitoes); avoid perfumes and aftershave; use a mosquito net impregnated with mosquito repellent (permethrin) – it may be worth taking your own, and impregnating clothes with permethrin effectively deters mosquitoes and other insects.

**Dengue fever** - The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which transmits the dengue virus, is most active during the day, and is found mainly in urban areas, in and around human dwellings. Signs and symptoms of dengue fever include a sudden onset of high fever, headache, joint and muscle pains, nausea and vomiting. A rash of small red spots sometimes appears three to four days after the onset of fever. Severe complications do sometimes occur. You should seek medical attention as soon as possible if you think you may be infected. A blood test can indicate the possibility of the fever. There is no specific treatment. Aspirin should be avoided, as it increases the risk of haemorrhaging. There is no vaccine against dengue fever.

**Rabies** - This is a fatal viral infection found throughout South America. Many animals can be infected (such as dogs, cats, bats and monkeys) and it's their saliva that is infectious. Any bite, scratch or even lick from a warm-blooded, furry animal should be cleaned immediately and thoroughly. Scrub with soap and running water, and then apply alcohol or iodine solution. Medical help should be sought promptly to receive a course of injections to prevent the onset of symptoms and death.

**Yellow fever** - Yellow fever is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. There is an effective vaccine against yellow fever, so if you have been immunised, you can basically rule this disease out. Symptoms of yellow fever range from a mild fever which resolves over a few days to more serious forms with fever, headache, muscle pains, abdominal pain and vomiting. This can progress to bleeding, shock and liver and kidney failure. The liver failure causes jaundice, or yellowing of your skin and the whites of your eyes – hence the name. There's no specific treatment but you should seek medical help urgently if you think you have yellow fever.

**Meningococcal meningitis** - Not every headache is likely to be meningitis. There is an effective vaccine available which is often recommended for travel to epidemic areas. Generally, you're at pretty low risk of getting meningococcal meningitis, unless an epidemic is ongoing, but the disease is important because it can be very serious and rapidly fatal. You get infected by breathing in droplets coughed or sneezed into the air by sufferers or, more likely, by healthy carriers of the bacteria. You are more at risk in crowded, poorly ventilated places, including public transport and eating places. The symptoms of meningitis are fever, severe headache, neck stiffness that prevents you from bending your head forward, nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to light, which makes you prefer the darkness. With meningococcal meningitis, you may get a widespread, blotchy purple rash before any other symptoms appear. Meningococcal meningitis is an extremely serious disease that can cause death within a few hours of you first feeling unwell. Seek medical help without delay if you have any of the symptoms listed earlier, especially if you are in a risk area. If you have been in close contact with a sufferer it is best to seek medical advice.

### **Best time to go**

Only in the South of the country are their extreme seasonal changes as found in Europe and North America.

For the rest of the country, the temperature ranges from 20 to 30 degrees Celsius or 70 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit, irrespective of the season. The summer months between December and February can be hot and humid, taking temperatures to the high 30s.

The amount of rainfall depends greatly on where you are but around the Pantanal, Manaus and the Amazon basin, you can expect rain all year round. The only respite may be between June and September when the rains tend to stop. In the coastal regions of Recife, Fortaleza and Salvador, the opposite is true. The rains are heaviest here between March and August. Rio and the area around Foz de Iguaçu do not have any distinct rainy seasons.

## **Upon arrival**

Once you've reclaimed your baggage and cleared customs, you will be warmly welcome to Brazil, assisted with your luggage and taken you to your hotel by private air-conditioned minivan/bus. Please do not leave the airport terminal building unless you have made contact with Amazing Peru staff. Also ignore the calls from taxi drivers as your private transport has been provided for you.

## **Food and drink**

Drink only bottled water. Pasteurised milk is widely available. Avoid dairy products that are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Avoid street food vendors and the cheaper restaurants.

## **What to eat**

To try some typical foods, here is a selection of what we recommend.

Acarajé - A specialty of the Bahian women garbed in flowing white dresses. This dish consists of peeled brown beans mashed in salt and onions, stuffed with shrimp, pepper and tomato sauce and then fried in dende oil

Bobo de camarao - Made with manioc paste cooked and flavoured with dried shrimp, coconut milk and cashew nuts

Barreado - Popular in the Parana region. This state dish is a mixture of meats and spices cooked for 24 hours in a clay pot

Caruru - The most popular dish brought to Brazil from Africa. It's a mixture of okra and other spices boiled in water, drained and then onions, salt, shrimp, malagueta peppers are added

Empadinhas de camarao - Shrimp patties with olives and heart of palm

Coxinha - Manioc filled with meat or fish and deep fried

Salgados - A savoury pastry

Esfiha - A spicy hamburger inside an onion filled envelope

Cocada - A coconut and sugar biscuit

Fruits - So many types to choose from, many from the Amazon that are unique to the area.

## **What to drink**

Sucos - Fruit shakes found in every street shop. They are usually blended with milk and sugar like a smoothie. You can even mix and match. (tamarindo and sapoti are recommended, as they are impossible to find outside of Brazil)

Agua de coco or coco verde - A coconut water from fresh, green coconuts

Caldo de cana - Sugar cane juice

Guarana - A popular carbonated fruit drink

Coffee - "Remember that it is normally served with sugar.

Beer - Brahma, Cerpa and Antarctica.

## **Highlights**

### **Rio de Janeiro**

Praca Floriano - The heart of Rio today. Take a bus or the metro to Cinelandia, the section of the city where you will find the main square on Avenida Rio Branco. The area comes to life after lunch with samba musicians, soap box orators and outdoor cafes. From here, you can take a walking tour to many of the city's most memorable sites, such as the Teatro Municipal (home of Rio's opera and orchestra), Museu de Arte Moderna, Convento de Santo Antonio, Biblioteca Nacional and Museu Nacional de Belas Artes

Lapa - Otherwise known as the "Red-light" District. This is also where you will find many music clubs. It also provides the setting of many novels set in Brazil

Santa Teresa - Home to Rio's most charming colonial homes.

Copacabana - This famous beach has become the hub of Brazilian tourism. There are live musicians.

Ipanema & Leblon - A much more desirable beach location. This is where most of Rio's upscale shopping and restaurants can be found.

Pao de Acucar (Sugar Loaf Mountain) - No visit to Rio is complete without taking a cable car up the 396 m ascent to this scenic viewpoint. We suggest going at dusk so that you can view the city both in light and among the twinkling city lights of the evening.

Corcovado & Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer) - At 710 m above the city, this statue welcomes all

visitors to Rio. It's 30m high and weighs over 1000 tonnes.

### **Brasília**

The world's most ambitiously planned city, is also Brazil's capital. Unfortunately, its design favours cars and air-conditioning to people. This World Heritage site was designed by architect Oscar Niemeyer, urban planner Lucio Costa and landscape architect Burle Marx, the city was built in an incredible three years (1957-60) by millions very poor peasants.

### **Foz do Iguaçu (Iguazu Falls)**

The Rio Iguaçu arises in the coastal mountains of Parana and Santa Catarina and snakes west for 600km (372mi) before it widens majestically and sweeps around a magnificent jungle stage, plunging and crashing in tiered falls at the border with Argentina and Paraguay. The falls are over 3km (2mi) wide and 80m (262ft) high and their beauty is unsurpassed. The best time of year to visit is August-November, when there is least risk of flood waters hindering the approach to the catwalks.

### **Salvador da Bahia**

Founded in 1549, Salvador da Bahia was Brazil's most important city for 300 years, and the Portuguese Empire's second city, after Lisbon. Bahia (often abbreviated to Salvador) is Brazil's most Africanized state and as its capital, it is a fascinating city and one of Brazil's cultural highlights. As the centre of the sugar trade, it was famous for gold-filled churches, beautiful mansions and the slave trade. Now it is known for its many wild festivals and general sensuality and decadence; Carnival in Salvador is justly famous and attracts many tourists.

### **São Paulo**

South America's biggest city in one of ethnic neighbourhoods, with around 17 million people, many of Italian and Japanese descent, living in a giant megalopolis. São Paulo's industrial development and cultural diversity has created Brazil's largest, most cultured and educated middle class. These *paulistas* are lively and well-informed and, though they complain about the traffic, street violence and pollution, wouldn't dream of living anywhere else. São Paulo can be an intimidating place but it offers the excitement and nightlife of one of the world's most dynamic places. Attractions include the baroque **Teatro Municipal**, Niemeyer's **Edifício Copan**, the **Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP)** and the 16th-century **Patíó do Colégio**. The city is southwest of Rio and you can fly from there in less than an hour or take a six-hour bus ride.

### **The Amazon**

The Amazon basin contains 6 million sq km of river and jungle and spans eight countries. Just over half is in Brazil. There are 80,000 kilometres of navigable rivers, and ocean-going vessels can sail 3500km inland up the mainstream to Iquitos, Peru. Travellers enter the Amazon by bus, boat and air. Within the Amazon, boats are definitely the transport of choice, but flying can save a lot of time, is sometimes quite affordable, and most large Amazon cities have airports.

### **The Pantanal**

The Amazon may have all the fame and glory, but the Pantanal is a far better place to see wildlife. This vast area of wetlands, about half the size of France, lies in the far west of Brazil and extends into the border regions of Bolivia and Paraguay. Birds are the most frequently seen wildlife, but the Pantanal is also a sanctuary for giant river otters, anacondas, iguanas, jaguars, cougars, crocodiles, deer and anteaters. The area has few people and no towns, and access is often by plane into Cuaibá, Campo Grande or Corumbá, then overland to the gateway towns of Cáceres, Barão de Malgaça, Poconé or Aquidauana; or by road via the Transpantaneira, which ends at the one-hotel hamlet of Porto Jofre. Boat trips are available along the Rio Paraguai from the Bolivian border.

### **Hotels**

All the hotels we recommend are clean, well located and comfortable hotels varying in services according to their category. We rarely use hostels as the price difference is negligible between a good hostel and a hotel. In places like the Pantanal, we work with some superb pousadas. We do endeavour to choose the best hotels in line with your budget. There are five star deluxe hotels we offer that are among the best hotels in the world. We will always quote you with good hotels on all our programmes but upgrades or downgrades will be available as per your request. However, as the price will decrease with downgrades, this will ultimately reflect in the services and standards of the hotel.

**Flights**

Unless otherwise stated, we do not provide the internal flights in your programme, as more competitive rates can be purchased with special Air Passes when purchased in conjunction with your international flight to Brazil. We can provide international and national flight quotes upon request. We work directly with the best airlines in South America but are not responsible for any changes in flight schedules or cancellations made by the airlines. This is the responsibility of the airline in question. We will always endeavour to minimise any delays or changes but cannot guarantee a successful outcome.

**Insurance**

It is a mandatory requirement that all our customers take out adequate travel insurance cover. Once you have obtained your insurance, it is company practice to check the validity and cover of your insurance policy and we hold the right to refuse travel to anyone whose insurance does not satisfy Amazing Peru's stringent criteria. These include cancellation and curtailment, death or injury, medical insurance, emergency repatriation, delayed baggage, loss and theft etc.