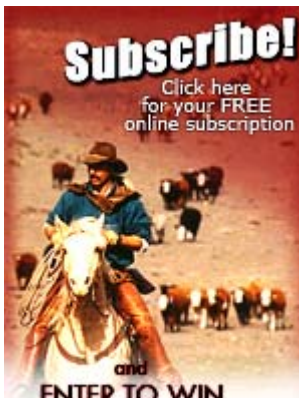




- Contents ▶
- Features ▶
- Departments ▶
- Contests ▶
- Contact Us ▶
- Plan Your Trip ▶
- Advertise ▶
- Contributors ▶
- Past Issues ▶



Search Articles by Location
-or-

Search Articles by Interest

- Albania (1)
- Antigua (1)
- Argentina (2)
- Australia (18)
- Austria (4)
- Bahamas (1)
- Bangladesh (1)
- Belgium (1)
- Belize (1)
- Bermuda (1)
- Bolivia (3)
- Bosnia-Herzegovina (1)



Verna Gates

Wide beaches invite swimmers for a cool dip. Sun bathing was first introduced here by scandalous actress Sarah Bernhardt, who took to the beach during daylight hours in scanty clothing. Rio boasts 250 days of sun per year.

Real Rio

Brazil's Cidade Maravilhosa (Marvelous City)

By Verna Gates

To prove that glamour doesn't need silk stockings and silver spoons, simply visit the wide beaches of Rio de Janeiro, where women in "dental floss" bikinis, who live in tiny apartments, exude the aura of elegance eluding anyone who has shopped at Wal-Mart in a sweat suit.

Forget the miraculous ingredient in their lives that appears to deflect cellulite. It happens to all who stroll the legendary beaches of Ipanema, even in your one-piece, or even those who slosh across the marble floors of the Copacabana Hotel, dripping from the pool. Unlike any other city in the world, Rio elevates beach life to phenomenal.

With its dramatic setting of jungle, mountain and beach, rich ethnic culture and dining, and the fun-loving *cariocas* (locals), this sunny city delights all and seems to alert a few you may not even be aware of. An undertone of electricity electrifies the air, for both tourists and locals: Brazil has one of the lowest crime rates. Once a carioca, always a carioca. So beware her charms.

As you arrive in Rio, the picture perfect harbor opens its arms wide to welcome you, revealing its brightest blue against bleached white sand. Look up, and another arm stretches out, the statue of Christ the Redeemer, the monumental art sculpture seen from virtually all of Rio. Sitting atop Corcovado (hunchback) mountain, the statue can be reached by a train ride up the 2,300-foot (700 meters) steep incline. Your reward is a 360-degree view of the city and bay.

- Botswana (2) jungle behind.
- Brazil (2)
- British Virgin Islands (1) Across the way another mountain juts straight up from the sea: Sugarloaf, shaped like an old sugar mold. A cable car rattles you up the mountain, which guards the Bay of Guanabara. The views display an artist's palette, dabbling blue, white, brown and green in broad swaths.
- Bulgaria (1)
- Cambodia (4)
- Canada (24)
- Chile (3)
- China (9)
- Costa Rica (4) One mountain was sacrificed to provide stones for an enormous public works project that extended the 45 miles (72 kilometers) of beaches, making all of them public. The stones encircle the beaches with colorful tile walkways.
- Croatia (1)
- Cuba (1)
- Denmark (1)
- Ecuador (2)
- Egypt (2)
- England (19)
- Estonia (1)
- Finland (2)
- France (9)
- Germany (5)
- Greece (4)
- Guatemala (2)
- Honduras (1)
- Hungary (2)
- Iceland (5)
- India (6)
- Iraq (1)
- Ireland (5)
- Israel (3)
- Italy (17)
- Jamaica (2)
- Japan (5)
- Jordan (1)
- Kenya (2)
- Korea (2)
- Macau (1)
- Malaysia (4)
- Mauritania (1)
- Mexico (19)
- Micronesia (1)
- Moldova (1)
- Mongolia (1)
- Morocco (2)
- Mozambique (1)
- Netherlands (4)
- New Zealand (7)
- Nicaragua (1)
- Norway (2)
- Panama (1)
- Peru (4)



**Christ the Redeemer opens I
the city from atop Corcovada**

The healthy Brazilian lifestyle means staying alert for those on a more determined pace than the average tourist. The tile walkways carry distinctive patterns indicating the different beaches such as Ipanema and Copacabana.

Stick to your familiar patterns, as Rio is a big city with a huge slum. Just like U.S. cities, there are good parts and bad parts, so stick to the good. And, even so, leave the big diamonds at home and make use of your hotel safe.

If the heat of the sand becomes oppressive, take to the nearby mountains world's largest urban forest, a UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific Cultural Organization) reserve. A jeep ride through the Tijuca rainforest off at the original home of the Tamoios people. Every inch is crammed with life trees, orchids and monkeys carrying young on their backs.

Two hundred types of bromeliads bloom in the trees. A Morpho butterfly sh sky with high intensity blue. On your way down, stop in at the Burle Marx e former home of Brazil's most famous landscape artist.

When night falls, enjoy a decadent meal of Brazilian barbeque, brought to on large skewers and served until appetite death. Afterwards, there are ple opportunities to work it off. The rhythms of samba, bossa nova, choro, tan Brazilian rock call the dancers to the floor, and dance they can, moving wit grace.

Don't worry if you feel like Sasquatch lumbering across the floor; take anot your *caipirihna*, made from limes and sugar cane rum. As a testimony to th loving Brazilians, their *cachaça* ranks as the world's third most consumed c beverage.

The Lido area in Copacabana is packed with clubs blaring out music. Rio ha out many of the kinks of bar service; you get a number and pay all at the e night. "Rio Scenarium" and "Casa da Mae Joana" are two popular nightspot

"The Girl from Ipanema," just a teenager when the song was written, still v this ocean front neighborhood and often stops in the song's namesake rest which serves excellent drinks and a good bar food. (Her real name is Hélois

- Philippines (1)
- Poland (1)
- Portugal (2)
- Romania (1)
- Russia (6)
- Scotland (3)
- Seychelles (1)
- Singapore (2)
- Slovenia (1)
- South Africa (2)
- Spain (4)
- Sri Lanka (1)
- Sweden (3)
- Switzerland (2)
- Tanzania (2)
- Thailand (9)
- Tunisia (2)
- United Arab Emirates (1)
- United States (123)
- Uruguay (1)
- Vietnam (3)
- Wales (1)
- Yemen (1)
- Zambia (1)
- Zimbabwe (1)

In 1962 on her way home from school, she regularly passed the "Bar Velos sidewalk cafe in this fashionable district where composer Antonio Carlos Jobim and poet Vinicius de Moraes hung out and were inspired to write the melanchol about this beauty with long golden hair and bright green eyes.)



A view from the foot of Christ the Redeemer on Corcovada Mountain reveals the shapely stretch of one of Rio's legendary beaches. The city nestles between the sea and the mountains.

Within the nightclubs, people share their joy attitudes, even if you speak Portuguese. The fun reaches its fullest during Carnival, their Mardi Gras, the pre-L season.

For pageantry, Rio ex leaving New Orleans I behind. Fantastic par thousands of dancers choreography and col feathered and sequine costumes.

These unusually beau display their talent, le maybe even a little bi Many are mixed race,

African-American tourists experience an acceptance and comfort level they as unusual.

All this because of a happy accident. Rio was founded by a lost Portuguese looking for India. Andre Convalves demonstrated his further confusion by n the harbor for the mouth of a river, thus on New Year's Day in 1502, it bec River of January, Rio de Janeiro. Januar was the two-headed Roman god w into both past and future and guarded the gateways of life. He was conside lucky that his coins were carried faithfully in pockets. With its many treasur indeed a place of good fortune.

IF YOU GO:

Hotels:

"Copacabana Palace Hotel" is the Grande Dame of Rio. Considered one of t hotels in the world, there are two employees for every guest, and it is one places I seriously considered talking them out of pillows and showerheads. start at US\$ 320.

www.Copacabanapalace.com.br

Restaurants:

"Confeitaria Colombo" downtown refuses to modernize its 1894 interior, pr dashing elegance. It is an excellent example of Belle Époque decor within a architecture. Get the whole buffet for about US\$ 21.

"Marius" on Leme Beach offers traditional "churrasco" barbeque Brazilian s Everything from chicken to wild boar could end up on your plate, all of it su An amazing dining experience for a flat fee of about US\$ 25.

"Casa da Feijoada" in Ipanema is named for Brazil's most traditional dish. I

pork and black beans, it is a savory and filling dish first prepared by slaves the farofa, stir-fried manioc flour. About US\$ 13 for main course and sides.

"Barraca do Pepe" on Tijuca Beach, named for a famous local hang glider. A sandwich and fruit drink and enjoy a famous people-watching spot.

Nightlife:

"Rio Scenarium" on Rua do Lavradio combines food, drinks, history, antiqu and music into a thrilling mixture of high spirits. An eclectic and fun place to bite, drink a few and dance into the night.

rio-scenarium@uol.com.br.

"Casa da Mae Joana" offers authentic Brazilian samba and choro music so v that favorite artists have cut CDs from the stage. Relax with a caipirinha or drink and find yourself moving to Latin rhythms.

Be Aware:

Crime has been a problem in Rio. Although the situation has gotten better (created a tourist police force to help with the problem), it still helps to be a Crimes against tourists tend to be near hotels, bars, nightclubs and areas a all main beaches. Use common sense; don't walk along at night.

Getting There:

Varig Airlines has been flying out of the U.S. since 1955. The flight to Miami directly to Sao Paulo and on to Rio. You can get round trip fares as low as 1

Visas

Check visa requirements at your local Brazilian consulate. Americans, Austri Canadians and New Zealanders all need visas to enter the country. Current Americans pay around US\$ 100 for a visa to Brazil. An application is availal but it's better to use your travel agent. Beware- forms must be filled out pe applications take time.

Rio Convention Bureau

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[Table of Contents](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Past Issues](#) | [Pri](#)

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