



choice
TRAVEL

Destination Guide: Brazil

What to know before you go

Essential preparation and planning tips

Accommodation and transport

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Who is CHOICE? Set up by consumers for consumers, [CHOICE](#) is the consumer advocate that provides Australians with information and advice, free from commercial bias.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

OVERVIEW

Brazil culture, language, health, safety, laws, scams, emergency contacts and more.



BRAZIL OVERVIEW

Brazil is the largest country in South America and the fifth largest in the world. From the remote tribes in the tropical Amazon to the partying crowds on Rio's famous Copacabana Beach, the country offers visitors a vast choice of landscapes, experiences and cultures.

Travel-size tips

- Flight time from Australia to Brazil is 18+ hours.
- Australians need a visa to enter Brazil.
- Peak season hits its absolute peak during Carnival at the end of summer.

Know before you go

- Brazil is experiencing an outbreak of the Zika virus, which is particularly dangerous to pregnant women.
- Brazil may be the home of Havaianas, but it's against the law to drive in thongs!
- It's no surprise that you'll need a tour guide in the Amazon, but it's recommended that you hire a guide if visiting Rio's notorious favelas, too.

Weather and when to go

Brazil lies mostly in the tropics, so temperatures are warm to hot all year round in most parts of the country.

- Summer (December to March) is generally considered the high season, while winter (May to September) is considered the low season, with shoulder seasons in spring and autumn.
- Winter temperatures are mild but can become quite cool, particularly in the evenings, in southern areas such as Sao Paulo.
- The south experiences a lot of rain during the summer months.
- The Amazon and The Pantanal are best visited during the drier winter months.
- Summer can be very hot and humid, but it's also party season – the country's most famous party, Carnival, takes place in February or early March.
- New Year's Eve and Easter are also peak holiday times.

- › July can be busy with local tourists, as that's when Brazilian school and university students take an entire month off.
- › Many Europeans and North Americans visit Brazil during their summer holiday months of July and August.

Carnival

The biggest event on the Brazilian calendar, Carnival is a multi-day festival of street parties, eating, drinking and dancing, culminating in a world-famous colourful parade.

Dates vary each year, as Carnival always falls 40 days before Easter. The festivities generally run from the Thursday before until the Tuesday after Carnival Sunday. Expect hotels to book out early and prices to be inflated. Also bear in mind that most hotels will insist on a multi-day booking.

Carnival Sunday dates

- › 26 February 2017
- › 11 February 2018
- › 3 March 2019
- › 23 February 2020
- › 14 February 2021

Rio isn't the only place that celebrates Carnival – almost every Brazilian town and city has some kind of celebration on Carnival Sunday. Salvador and Pernambuco are the next biggest partiers after Rio.

Culture

- › Brazilian culture is made up of European, African and indigenous traditions.

- › Religion and family life is very important to Brazilians; most are Catholic.
- › Brazilians may refer to you as a gringo or gringa. Don't be offended – this is just a word to describe anyone who isn't Brazilian. They may also call you a marajá – a rich person – and compared to most Brazilians, you are!
- › A handshake is the standard greeting between men. A handshake or a kiss on both cheeks (left then right) is the appropriate greeting between women who know each other.
- › If giving gifts, avoid the colours black or purple as these represent mourning.
- › Arriving fashionably late to dinners and parties is the norm.
- › Brazilians tend to make the effort to dress well and look their best (women pay particular attention to their hair and nails) – so they might judge you if you don't!



- Brazil may be the home of Havaianas, but you'll need something more formal than rubber thongs to get into the swankier restaurants and nightclubs.
- Brazil is generally considered a gay-friendly country, particularly in the cities. Sexual and gender diversity is widely accepted, with gay couples allowed to marry and adopt, and gender reassignment surgery covered by the country's National Health Service (SUS). However, violence and discrimination against LGBTQI people still happens, particularly in rural areas.
- Brazilian men can be quite flirtatious and forward, so female travellers may find themselves the subject of unwanted attention. Some hotels now have women-only floors, and the Rio metro has pink, women-only carriages to provide a safe haven from harassment.
- Despite strict anti-discrimination laws, class is still unofficially determined by wealth and skin colour. Darker-skinned people may encounter some prejudice and mixed race couples may face judgmental attitudes.
- A tip of about 10% is standard in restaurants and hotels, but check your bill as this gratuity is often already added to the total. Tipping taxi drivers is unnecessary but appreciated. The same goes for street sellers who may have a tip box on the counter. If you're a Spanish speaker, be careful not to use the Spanish word "propina" – in Portuguese it means bribe, not tip. The appropriate word in Brazil is "gorjeta".

Language

The official language of Brazil is Portuguese.

English isn't widely spoken or understood, so it's a good idea to learn a few words of Portuguese before

you go, and to pack a phrase book or download a translation app on your phone.

- Thank you: "Obrigada" (if you're a woman) / "Obrigado" (if you're a man).
- Standard greetings: "Bom dia" (good morning), "boa tarde" (good afternoon), "boa noite" (good night).

Health and safety

The Brazilian health care system has no reciprocal deals with Australia – so if you get sick, you'll have to pay your own bills. Public hospitals can be overcrowded, with long waiting times and limited facilities. The standard of private hospitals and medical centres in major cities, such as Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, is comparable to services in Australia, but the bills can be high. As with any overseas destination, it's essential that you have travel insurance. Some doctors or hospitals may ask you to pay upfront, or to prove that you have insurance before they'll treat you.

Outside of the major cities, quality health care can be hard to find. The cost of medical evacuation to the closest city could be extremely high, so again: travel insurance is a must.

Drinking water

Tap water in the major cities is considered safe to drink, although it can taste pretty bad. The safer and tastier option is bottled water. Boiling the tap water is another way to ensure any nasties are killed off.

Water in rural areas may not be safe to drink. Check with hotel staff. Some hotels filter their tap water.

Zika virus

Brazil is currently experiencing an outbreak of the Zika virus. The illness is often asymptomatic, but in



one-fifth of cases it causes non-fatal flu-like symptoms that rarely require hospitalisation. It's primarily transmitted through mosquito bites, but there have been a few cases of sexually transmitted Zika.

While most people don't need to worry much about Zika, the risk to pregnant women is extreme, as the virus can cause children to be born with microcephaly (a seriously underdeveloped head and brain). The Australian government currently recommends that pregnant women, and women who are trying to become pregnant, should reconsider their need to travel to Brazil.

Visitors should try to avoid mosquito bites by covering up in light-coloured clothing and wearing repellent containing DEET or Picaridin. It's also a good idea to check whether your hotel has mosquito nets; if not, pack your own.

Check Smart Traveller's [Zika bulletin](#) and the World Health Organization's [Zika factsheet](#) for the latest advice, and read CHOICE's article about how the Zika virus could affect your trip at choice.com.au/zika.

Mosquito-borne illnesses such as malaria, dengue fever, chikungunya fever and yellow fever are also a risk in Brazil, so avoiding mosquito bites is a must.

Civil unrest

Despite spending millions on hosting the 2016 Olympics, Brazil is experiencing its worst recession in a century and many citizens are very unhappy with their government. President Dilma Rousseff was impeached in May 2016 and there have been widespread demonstrations over allegations of government corruption.

While most protests have been relatively peaceful, it's best to steer well clear of any scuffles should they arise.

For the latest advice on health and safety risks including terrorism, conflict, natural disasters and outbreaks of disease, visit smartraveller.gov.au.

Laws and watchouts

Laws

- It's no surprise that there are drugs in Brazil, particularly cocaine, but if you're caught using or transporting them the penalties and jail time will be significant. Police regularly search tourists outside nightclubs, in taxis and on the coastal drives from Rio to Búzios and Rio to Sao Paulo. Even coca leaves and coca tea aren't tolerated. Marijuana use, on the other hand, tends to be overlooked by police (although it is still illegal, so definitely not worth the risk).
- The legal drinking and smoking age is 18.
- Brazil has strict zero-tolerance drink driving laws and penalties are severe for driving with a blood alcohol level above zero.
- Under Brazilian law, foreigners must carry their passports with them at all times. However, because of the risk of theft, Smart Traveller recommends you leave your passport safely in your hotel, if possible, and carry a photocopy instead.

- Prostitution is legal in Brazil for over 18s, but prostitution houses aren't – which, of course, creates a grey area.
- Brazil has strict anti-discrimination laws, so overtly racist/homophobic statements or actions could land you in jail.

For road rules, see [Driving in Brazil](#) (p21).

Watchouts

- There's no denying that Brazil has a high crime rate, but as a tourist you're more likely to be the victim of pickpocketing or bag snatching than a serious violent crime. Always keep your valuables close and out of sight (consider using a money belt), only carry as much money as you need, and avoid backstreets, particularly at night or if you're alone. If you're unlucky enough to be robbed, don't resist or fight back – it's not worth the risk.
- Laptop theft is common, so keep yours hidden and carry it in an ordinary bag, not a laptop bag.
- Keep your wits about you from the moment you get off the plane, as many scams and robberies begin at Brazil's airports. One involves a well-dressed, official-looking man who claims to be a police officer escorting tourists outside of the airport and then pushing them into a car and robbing them. Another involves a scout identifying cashed-up tourists as they get into taxis, then phoning ahead to their friends on motorbikes, who rob the cars once they're out on the road.
- The favelas (the slum-like suburbs in Rio's hills) are home to gun-toting organised gangs, so be very careful where you wander. That said, the favelas

are not to be avoided all together and can be a great place to meet real locals and take in the best views of the city. To visit the favelas safely, it's best to join a tour group or, at the very least, ask a trusted local for advice on where to go. Rio's favelas are the most notorious, but you'll find slum areas in most Brazilian cities.

- As a tourist, expect to be charged higher prices by street vendors and to sometimes be taken the long way around by taxi drivers. This doesn't mean that everyone is out to get you, but it would be against the 'Brazilian way' ('jeitinho brasileiro') to pass up the opportunity to make an extra buck.
- Bank card skimming and credit card fraud is a risk in Brazil, as in most countries. Cover the keypad with your hand as you enter your PIN, never let your credit card out of your sight, use cash where possible, and let your bank know if you notice any unexplained transactions on your statement.
- Be careful using free Wi-Fi hotspots and avoid doing internet banking on untrusted connections.

Emergency contacts

If dialling from an Australian mobile phone, use the country code +55.

Police: 190 (some operators speak English and can redirect your call to the necessary service).

Ambulance: 192

Fire: 193

Tourist police (English-speaking)

Rio: 021 3399 7170

Sao Paulo: 011 3214 0209 / 011 3107 5642

Hospitals

Public hospitals are likely to be overcrowded and the standard of care may not be as high as in Australia. Assuming you have travel insurance (which is a necessity) and it's not an emergency, a private hospital is your better bet for quality care.

Rio

Hospital Copa Dór

Rua Figueiredo de Magalhaes 875
Copacabana
(21) 2545 3600

Hospital Sao Lucas

Travessa Frederico Pamplona 32
Copacabana
(21) 2545 4000

Hospital Quinta Dór

Almirante Baltazar 435
Sao Cristóvão
(21) 3461 3600

Hospital Barra Dór

Av Ayrton Senna 3079
Barra da Tijuca
(21) 2430 3600

Hospital Samaritano

Rua Bambina 98
Botafogo
(21) 3444 1000 / Private ambulance: (21) 2535 4000

Sao Paulo

Hospital Samaritano

Rua Conselheiro Brotero 1486
Higienópolis
(11) 3821 5300
Private ambulance: (11) 3824 5000 or (11) 3824 0022

Hospital do Coracao

Rua Des. Eliseu Guilherme 147
Paraíso
(11) 3053 6611

Albert Einstein Hospital

Av Albert Einstein 627
Morumbi
(11) 2151 1233

Brasília

Hospital Santa Lúcia

716 Conj. C
Setor Hospitalar Sul
(61) 3445 0000

Australian Embassy (Brasília)

SES Quadra 801
Conjunto K
Lote 7
Brasília DF CEP 70200-010
+55 61 3226 3111

Australian Consulate (Rio de Janeiro)

Veirano e Advogados Associados
Av Presidente Wilson 231, 23rd Floor
Rio de Janeiro RJ 20030-021
+55 21 3824 4624

Australian Consulate-General (Sao Paulo)

Alameda Santos 700
Ed. Trianon Corporate – 9th floor, unit 92
Cerqueira Cesar
Sao Paulo – SP 01418-100
+55 11 2112 6200

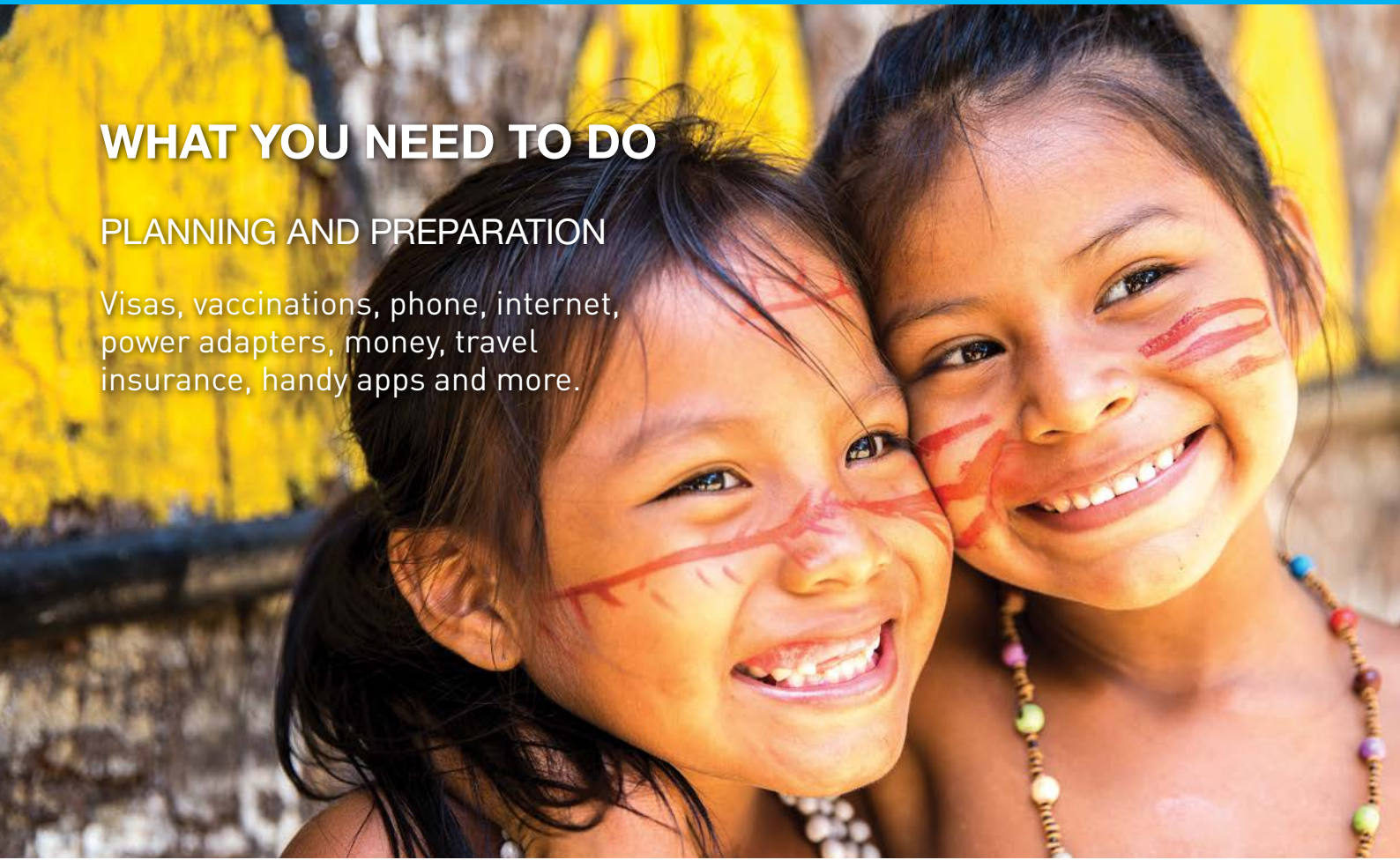
24-hour Australian Consular Emergency Centre

From overseas: +61 2 6261 3305 or
From within Australia: 1300 555 135
or SMS +61 421 269 080

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Visas, vaccinations, phone, internet, power adapters, money, travel insurance, handy apps and more.



Visas

Australian passport holders need a visa to enter Brazil.

It's important to get your application in early, as the processing time is approximately 15 working days and there is no express or priority service.

The first step is to fill in an application on the [Embassy of Brazil website](#) and upload a scan or digital copy of your passport photo. You'll receive a receipt for your application, which you'll need to print out and sign. This, along with your passport, a paper copy of your photo, and other supporting documentation, will then need to be delivered, either in person or by mail, to the Embassy of Brazil in Canberra or the Consulate General of Brazil in Sydney.

Tip: Never post your passport by standard mail. Use registered mail or a courier service.

You'll need:

- your passport, with at least six months' validity and at least two blank pages
- a recent, professionally taken photo
- a completed visa request form
- an itinerary from your airline or travel agent
- proof of sufficient funds to support yourself in Brazil (a minimum of AUD\$100 per day) or a letter of invitation if staying with a friend or family member
- a bank cheque or Australia Post money order to pay your visa fee of \$216* (this can also be paid in person using EFTPOS)

NB: Travellers under 18 will need a notarised copy of their birth certificate. If travelling alone or with only

one parent, they'll also need a letter of consent signed by both parents/legal guardians (and by a Justice of the Peace or Notary), as well as a copy of their parents' photo ID(s)/driver's license(s). If applicable, proof of sole custody or the death certificate of a parent may be needed.

*Visa fees and rules may change. For up-to-date information check with the Embassy of Brazil: camberra.itamaraty.gov.br.



Vaccinations

A yellow fever vaccination is strongly recommended for Australians visiting the following states in Brazil: Acre, Amazonas, Amapá, Distrito Federal, Goiás, Maranhao, Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso do Sul, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima and Tocantins. The vaccination is recommended for Bahia, Espírito Santo, Paraná, Piauí, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Sao Paulo.

If you're travelling somewhere outside of these areas, a yellow fever vaccination may not be essential, but you should speak to a doctor about your options. Depending on your health, where you're travelling and what you're planning to do, your doctor might recommend vaccinations for yellow fever, hepatitis A and typhoid. They may also suggest malaria prevention tablets.

Check The Travel Doctor's [Brazil fact sheet](#) and ask a doctor for advice based on your own health and travel plans.

Tip: Some vaccinations need to be given up to eight weeks before departure, so get in early.

No vaccine, no entry

Australian customs officers may take an interest in you if you return home from Brazil without proof of a yellow fever vaccination; however, they won't prevent you from re-entering the country. You'll be given an information card and asked to keep an eye out for symptoms for a few days after you return.

If you're travelling anywhere other than Australia after visiting Brazil, check that country's rules, as some will refuse entry to unvaccinated travellers arriving from yellow fever-affected regions.

Phone and internet

Global roaming and coverage

Brazil has good quality mobile phone coverage and it's unlikely you'll have any connection problems in the cities.

Most Australian mobile phones will work by connecting with local GSM networks, but if you use your phone more than occasionally, you're likely to see some big bills.



Check with your telco for roaming rates and to find out what steps you can take to avoid bill shock overseas. Some offer special daily add-on rates to keep roaming prices in check while overseas.

Tip: Switch off data roaming on your phone before you leave Australia. Likewise, switch off your voicemail and ask friends and family to text you rather than calling (you'll be charged if you answer incoming calls).

Local SIM

A pre-paid SIM could save you quite a lot of money if you're planning on using your phone regularly – particularly if you use data. Vivo, TIM, Claro and Oi are the four main providers in Brazil, check their websites to compare coverage and pre-paid rates. You can buy and set up a local SIM (or "chip", as they're called in Brazil) fairly easily. Pre-paid ("pre-pago") SIMs are sold at mobile phone stores and at most bancas de jornais (newsagency/snack kiosks) for around R\$10. Make sure you buy the right size chip for your phone, and once you've activated it using codes sent to you by text message, ask the seller for "recarga" (recharge) or buy credit via the phone company's website or app. If you buy from a mobile phone store, you may be able to get the seller to help you with set-up.

Tip: The seller may ask you for your CPF (similar to a tax file number) as this used to be a legal requirement to buy a pre-paid SIM. A new law was passed in 2012 allowing foreigners to use their passport number instead.

Travel SIM

If buying and setting up a SIM when you've only just landed in Brazil sounds too daunting or difficult, pre-paid travel SIMs are another option. They can be found at some Australian travel stores, phone stores and post offices, or ordered online before you leave. Rates are unlikely to be as cheap as with a local Brazilian SIM.

Remember: Your phone will need to be unlocked to accept a SIM from another network.

Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is available in most hotels and many cafes and bars in cities. Public hotspots are common – even Rio's beaches have free Wi-Fi, although flashing an expensive laptop or phone at the beach probably isn't the best idea. To search for free hotspots try wificafespots.com or download an app such as [WeFi](#) (Android) or Wi-Fi Finder ([Apple](#) or [Android](#)).

Wi-Fi will be harder to come by in rural and remote areas.

Power

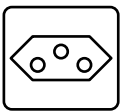
Voltage: 127/220V

Frequency: 60Hz

Voltage varies from 127 to 220V depending on which region of Brazil you are in. It's impossible to tell just by looking at the electrical socket, so do your research before you go (see this comprehensive table of Brazilian towns/cities and their voltages). Frequency in Brazil is a consistent 60Hz, slightly higher than Australia's 50Hz.

Most electrical appliances, such as laptops and phones, are designed to work on multiple voltages and frequencies, but it's always best to check. If your appliance or charger is marked **100-240V, 50/60Hz** then it will work in all regions of Brazil. Cheaper appliances such as hairdryers and plug-in shavers are less likely to have variable voltage and frequency – in the best case they simply won't work, in the worst they'll overheat and catch fire (the same warning applies to electrical goods bought in Brazil and brought back to Australia). A transformer can adjust the voltage for you, but it's quite a bulky item to travel with. If you really need a certain appliance, consider buying a cheap one once you're in Brazil.

Power sockets:



Type N

Brazil's type N power sockets and plugs are different to Australia's type I, so you will need an adapter.

Money

Currency: Real (BRL/R\$) (Pronounced "hey-ow". Plural **reais**, "hey-ice".)

Check [xe.com](https://www.xe.com) for the latest exchange rates.

Important: Tell your bank about your travel plans two weeks before you leave. Card activity in a foreign country could be mistaken for fraud and you could find your account frozen.

ATMs

Cash machines are easy to find in Brazil, and even small villages will have at least one. Some ATMs may not recognise certain foreign cards, so it's worth bringing a couple of different options along with you. Travellers tend to have the most success with ATMS from the major banks HSBC and Banco do Brasil. Remember you'll be charged a transaction fee and a conversion fee for using your Australian card.

Tip: ATMs often close between 10pm and 6am for security reasons, or they limit the maximum amount you can withdraw at night. Always be careful withdrawing money: cover the keypad as you enter your PIN, and try to use machines that are inside banks rather than on the street.





Credit cards

Credit cards are widely accepted in shops, restaurants, hotels and even in some taxis. Remember your bank will probably charge additional fees for using your card overseas. If you're worried about fees, check with your bank to see if they have a better card available for travellers. Credit card skimming is a common problem in Brazil, so don't let your card out of your sight when paying bills.

Money changers

Currency exchange desks are easy to find in tourist areas – just look for the “cambio” sign. You can also change money at banks and some hotels. Exchange rates will likely be higher at the airport than in town, but you may want to pick up a few reais as soon as you land, or even before you leave Australia, just for peace of mind.

Travellers' cheques

Travellers' cheques aren't so common these days, and you'll have trouble finding many places that can cash them. If you are using travellers' cheques, foreign exchange booths and major banks are your best bet.

Travel money cards

A travel money card isn't a great option for Brazil as there are no cards available from Australian financial

institutions that can be loaded with Brazilian real (or any other South American currency). You could load a travel money card with Aussie dollars, but you could be charged conversion and/or withdrawal fees, similar to a debit or credit card, as well as the initial card issue fee.

Tip: Carry at least two credit/debit cards and more than one cash currency (e.g. US dollars and Brazilian real). Split your money and cards between separate bags. That way if you lose one, you have a back-up.

Taxes

VAT varies from state to state, but you needn't worry about it too much as the number you see on the price tag or bill will always be the price you pay (there's no sneaky sales tax added, like in the US). A 10% service gratuity is sometimes automatically added to restaurant or hotel bills – otherwise, it's courtesy to leave a tip. Unlike some other countries, VAT cannot be claimed when leaving Brazil.

For more, see our guide: choice.com.au/travelmoney.

Travel insurance

Travel insurance is essential. Buy insurance at the same time as you book your trip – that way you'll be covered if you have to cancel for some reason before you go.

To choose the best cover, see the reviews and comparisons at choice.com.au/travelinsurance.

Ask your insurer about exclusions that may affect you, including extreme sports such as jet skiing and bungee jumping, motorcycle or scooter accidents, as well as pre-existing medical conditions. If you're planning to drive a car, check what level of cover your travel insurance offers, so you don't end up paying extra for unnecessary insurance from the car rental agency.



If you're pregnant, your travel insurance may not cover you if you contract the Zika virus in Brazil.

Be aware that anything that happens to you while under the influence of drugs or alcohol is unlikely to be covered by insurance.

Tips:

- Keep a print-out of your travel insurance details with you at all times while on your trip.
- Share your insurance details with family or friends before you leave.

Handy links and apps

Consider adding these links and apps to your phone, tablet or laptop before you go.

Tip: If possible, choose apps that work offline so they won't chew up your mobile data or stop working when you're in remote places.

- Travel apps such as Triposo (Apple or Android) include maps and info about popular destinations. Many are designed to work offline.
- Currency conversion apps help you work out costs in Australian dollars.

- Language translations apps can help with communication.

- Search for free Wi-Fi hotspots at wificafespots.com or download an app such as [WeFi](#) (Android) or Wi-Fi Finder ([Apple](#) or [Android](#)).

Tip: To save a map onto your Apple or Android mobile device for offline use, select the area on Google Maps then select 'Save offline map' from the menu and follow the directions on the screen. Your GPS positioning will still work on the saved map, even when you don't have access to the internet. Alternatively, go to 'Offline maps' in the menu and select a city.

- visitbrasil.com – the official tourism website for Brazil.
- smartraveller.gov.au – for the Australian government's latest advice on the safety of the region you're travelling in.
- xe.com – for the latest currency exchange rates.
- lonelyplanet.com
- tripadvisor.com
- virtualtourist.com
- wikitravel.org/en/Brazil for crowd-sourced information on culture, travel tips and more (may not always be accurate).

ACCOMMODATION AND TRANSPORT

GETTING THERE AND AROUND

Flights to Brazil, transport, accommodation, airport guides and more.



Flights to Brazil

Flight time from Australia: 18+ hours

- There are no direct flights between Australia and Brazil.
- Sao Paulo-Guarulhos (GRU) and Rio de Janeiro-Galeao (GIG) are Brazil's two biggest airports, but Brasilia, Fortaleza, Natal, Recife, Salvador, Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre also receive international flights.
- You can compare fares on booking sites such as Expedia, Skyscanner and Kayak, or with a travel agent. See choice.com.au/flightbooking for tips.

Flights from Australia to Brazil

Australian airport	Airline	Brazilian airport	Flying via
Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport (SYD)	Qantas/Lantam Airlines (codeshare)	Rio de Janeiro-Galeao International Airport (GIG)	Santiago International Airport (SCL) – Chile
		Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Santiago International Airport (SCL) – Chile
	South African Airways	Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Johannesburg OR Tambo International Airport (JNB) – South Africa
	American Airlines	Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Los Angeles International Airport (LAX)
		Rio de Janeiro-Galeao International Airport (GIG)	Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW)
		Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW)
	Etihad	Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH)
	Emirates	Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Dubai International Airport (DXB)
		Rio de Janeiro-Galeao International Airport (GIG)	Dubai International Airport (DXB)
Melbourne Airport (MEL)	American Airlines	Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Los Angeles International Airport (LAX)
	Etihad	Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH)
	Qatar Airways	Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Doha International Airport (DOH)
	Emirates	Rio de Janeiro-Galeao International Airport (GIG)	Dubai International Airport (DXB)
		Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Dubai International Airport (DXB)
Brisbane Airport (BNE)	American Airlines	Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Los Angeles International Airport (LAX)
	Emirates	Rio de Janeiro-Galeao International Airport (GIG)	Dubai International Airport (DXB)
		Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Dubai International Airport (DXB)
Perth Airport (PER)	South African Airways	Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Johannesburg OR Tambo International Airport (JNB) – South Africa
	Qatar Airways	Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Doha International Airport (DOH)
	Emirates	Rio de Janeiro-Galeao International Airport (GIG)	Dubai International Airport (DXB)
		Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Dubai International Airport (DXB)
Adelaide Airport (ADL)	Emirates	Rio de Janeiro-Galeao International Airport (GIG)	Dubai International Airport (DXB)
		Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)	Dubai International Airport (DXB)

Domestic flights

Most domestic flights in Brazil are operated by LAN and TAM Airlines (recently merged and rebranded Lantam), GOL, Azul, and Avianca. Domestic fares can be quite expensive, so if you're planning on taking several flights, search around for an Airpass. Deals vary, but generally they offer multiple flights with the same airline for a set price within a limited time period. Airpasses are only available to international visitors and often need to be booked at the same time (and with the same airline) as your international ticket.

At the airport

Australian passport holders need a visa to enter Brazil. See our visa section (p8) for details on how to apply.

Upon arrival, you'll receive an entry card. Make sure you don't lose this as you'll need to show it when leaving the country and could be fined if you can't produce it.

Brazil has similar import restrictions to Australia when it comes to importing fruits, vegetables and other natural products like seeds and wood, so you'll need to either declare these or avoid packing them.

If you are transiting through another country, such as the US, be sure to check their entry and exit requirements as well. They may have different laws about bringing medications or other items into the country, and you may need a visa if you're planning a stopover.

Sao Paulo airports

Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)

- 25km north east of the city centre.
- Taxis from the airport are operated exclusively by Guarucoop radio taxis – a company offering air

conditioned vehicles with bilingual drivers at fixed prices for fares to the city. Taxi desks are located outside each of the two terminals; here you can pre-pay your fare. (Tip: Some travellers report having trouble paying fares with their international credit card, so it's best to make sure you have cash right away). Radio taxis should be blue and white.

- If you want to be organised before you arrive, you can pre-book a private car to pick you up via brazilairporttransfers.com.
- For a much cheaper rates, EMTU/SP buses run from the airport to Congonhas (domestic) Airport, Praça da República (República Square), Tietê and Barra Funda Bus Stations, Itaim Bibi, the hotels along Avenida Paulista/Rua Augusta and Tatuapé Subway Station.
- Car hire companies that operate from the airport include Budget, Hertz, Localiza, Locar Alpha, Movida and Unidas (in Terminal 1) and Avis, Interlocadora and Localiza (in Terminal 2).
- Airport website: gru.com.br/en-us/





Congonhas Airport (GIG)

- São Paulo's second major airport, for domestic flights only.
- 8km south of the city centre.
- Airport website: aeroportocongonhas.net/en/

Rio de Janeiro airports

Tom Jobim International Airport (GIG)

- More often known by its previous name, **Galeão International Airport**.
- 20km north of the city centre.
- Taxis queue up directly outside the terminal. Yellow taxis are metered; 'radio taxis' (usually blue, green or white) charge a set rate, which you can organise at a kiosk desk before leaving the terminal. In theory the yellow taxis should be cheaper, but that depends on whether or not your driver gets stuck in traffic or decides to get creative with the fare. A radio taxi might be a safer bet if you prefer to know upfront how much you're paying.
- The BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) runs 24/7 express services to Alvorada Bus Terminal in Barra da Tijuca, making stops at Fundão Bus Terminal, and

Vicente de Carvalho and Madureira metro stations (connecting to the city centre). Non-express BRT services make many more stops along the way. BRTs leave from Gate H at Terminal 1 and Gate D at Terminal 2. Tickets are only a few real and must be bought in advance from a cashier desk inside the airport. The ticket is called a RioCard and can either be a one-off ticket or a rechargeable one.

- Private bus company Real also runs air conditioned services between 5:30am and 11:00pm to Santos Dumont Airport, Rio Central Bus Station, Alvorada Bus Terminal in Barra, and various other popular spots including Copacabana and Ipanema.

- Car hire desks are located in Terminal 2. Options include Avis, Budget and Hertz, as well as local companies Locaralfa, Car Rental Brazil and Transnet.

- Airport website: riogaleao.com/en/

Santos Dumont Airport (SDU)

- Rio's second major airport, only used for domestic flights.
- 2km from the city centre.
- Airport website: aeroportosantosdumont.net

Transport

Trip planning

- [Moovit](#) (Android/Apple/Windows) is a handy real-time app for planning A to B public transport journeys in more than 850 cities worldwide, including Rio.
- [Busão Carioca](#) (Android/Apple), an app with English language settings, can help make sense of Rio's complex bus system.
- [brtrio.com](#) is a website for planning trips on the BRT (bus) system in Rio.
- [metro.sp.gov.br](#) is an English-language trip planner for Sao Paulo's metro.
- [buscaonibus.com.br](#) is a website for comparing and booking long-distance bus fares.
- [rome2rio.com](#) is a website that can help you plan short or long journeys, by any means, between almost any two points in the world.

Trains and metro

Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo have efficient but limited metro systems, as well as connecting buses that link stations with outlying areas. The metro is a relatively safe and affordable way of getting around. Both cities also have an above-ground suburban train network.

Brasilia, Salvador, Fortaleza, Porto Alegre, Recife and Belo Horizonte also have limited metro and urban rail systems.

Tip: The last carriage on every Rio metro service is women-only (you can't miss it – it's painted bright pink).

Brazil has very few intercity or long distance passenger train lines – just a few scenic lines mostly used by tourists.

There are inter-country rail links between Brazil and Argentina, Uruguay and Bolivia.



Buses

Brazil's towns and cities are connected by an extensive network of long-distance bus routes. Services are mostly clean, safe and on time. There are three classes of bus travel, the most expensive of which is the sleeper buses for overnight trips.

➤ There are plenty of competing bus companies to choose from, but the easiest way to find a good fare is to search on buscaonibus.com.br, clickbus.com.br or brazilbustravel.com. Tickets can usually be bought at bus stations, but it's a good idea to book ahead if you're travelling on the weekend or at peak holiday times.

Buses are also the most common way of getting around cities. Sao Paulo and Rio both have dedicated bus lanes and extensive bus networks which cover more ground than the metros.

Bicycle

Rio has around 450km of cycle lanes, making biking an appealing alternative to joining the crowds taking taxis or public transport. Bike Rio is the city's bike share program, with stations in over 250 locations. To rent a bicycle, you'll need to register on the website or via the app, buy credit, then use your phone to unlock a bike. The downside for international visitors is that you'll need a Brazilian phone number.

Sao Paulo also has a bike share system, Bike Sampa. The car-congested city isn't quite as bike-friendly as Rio, but it's getting there.

Outside of the cities you'll find very few bike lanes, but the roads are reasonably safe and cycling can be a great way to see the more rural areas if you don't mind breaking a sweat.





Taxis

Catching a taxi is usually less stressful than navigating public transport or hiring a car, although the cost can add up if you get stuck in bad traffic.

In Rio, yellow cabs are metered, but watch out for yellow cars illegally posing as taxis. Official yellow cabs will have a blue strip on their side. Fares are relatively cheap, although rates are higher from 9pm to 6am Monday to Saturday and on Sundays and holidays. Radio taxis, which are blue, green or white, are more expensive, but they charge a fixed rate so you'll have no nasty surprises. Most radio taxis accept credit cards, but most yellow taxis only accept cash.

In Sao Paulo, standard taxis are typically white, while Guarulcoop radio taxis are blue and white. As in Rio, be careful not to get into an ordinary car posing as a taxi. Fares can be quite pricey, particularly when traffic is bad and at peak times (prices go up after 8pm and on weekends). Radio taxis, which must be booked ahead, usually accept credit cards but you'll need cash for the white taxis.

It's no use trying to use your Uber app in Rio as the city has banned ridesharing services (other Brazilian cities still allow them). Easy Taxi is a commonly used English-language taxi booking app which allows cashless payment, similarly to Uber.

Tip: Most taxi drivers don't speak English so make sure you have your destination written down, just in case your pronunciation isn't up to scratch.

Car hire

Avis, Budget and Hertz, as well as a number of local companies operate out of Brazil's major international airports, but you may find a cheaper deal if you pick up your rental car from somewhere other than the airport. In Rio, there are plenty of options along Avenue Princesa Isabel in Copacabana.

The big international companies are often a safer bet, as they're easier to deal with if something goes wrong.

Tip: Most companies will only rent to drivers over the age of 25.

Scooter hire

Zippering around on a motor scooter may sound more appealing than sitting in traffic and trying to find a park in a rental car. It's also a lot cheaper. However, be aware that your travel insurance is unlikely to cover you for a scooter accident. If you don't have experience driving a scooter or motorbike, it's best not to even consider trying it for the first time in a foreign country. In fact, some scooter hire companies refuse to rent to drivers with no experience on two wheels.

Driving in Brazil

If you're only visiting cities in Brazil then it's highly unlikely you'll benefit from having your own car. Public transport and taxis will be far more convenient. You may, however, like to rent a car to see the sights outside of the cities. If you're planning on driving, make sure you have the appropriate skills, license and insurance.

Driving in Brazil is not for the fainthearted. Drivers can be aggressive and rules are often ignored, some roads are in poor condition, and parking can be difficult to find in cities.

License: You don't need an international license to drive in Brazil. You do need a colour photocopy of your Australian license with an official Portuguese translation (done by a sworn public translator or by the Embassy of Brazil) as well as photo ID. Car hire companies are unlikely to ask for this, but the police could make life difficult for you if you're pulled over and you don't have it. By law they can seize your vehicle for any infringement, and they may use that power to get an on-the-spot fine (aka bribe) out of you. If you have an accident without the proper license, the consequences could be a lot worse.

- Vehicles drive on the right.
- Seatbelts are compulsory for drivers and all passengers. Children under 10 must sit in the rear seats. If a child is too small to use a seat belt, a child seat must be used.
- Brazil has strict drink driving laws and penalties are severe for driving with a blood alcohol level above zero.
- Mobile phones can only be used hands-free.
- It is illegal to run out of petrol.
- It is illegal to drive in thongs – so pack something other than your Havaianas.
- Right of way is given to vehicles already on a roundabout.
- Keep your windows up and your doors locked – car-jackings can happen at traffic lights and stop signs.
- Because of the risk of car-jackings, many drivers ignore stop signs at night.





If you're not keen on driving, consider joining an organised tour (some offer small, friendly groups) or hiring a private driver for the day. In a place like Brazil, it's not as exorbitant as it sounds, and it could save you a lot of stress.

Tours

Organised tours can take the stress out of a trip if you aren't a confident traveller or if you'd rather leave all the planning to somebody else. They can also be a great way to meet new people and to get a local's perspective on the places you're visiting.

While it's easy enough to do your own thing in most parts of Brazil, there are some areas where you'll need to hire a guide or join a tour group.

It's recommended that you hire a guide if visiting the favelas, particularly in Rio, as you'll need a local to help you steer clear of gang-controlled areas.

You'll also need a guide for tours of the Amazon, the Pantanal wetlands and any other remote areas or

national parks, as these are not the kind of places you want to be exploring alone.

Tours can be booked through a travel agent or online through a major tour operator before you go (try intrepidtravel.com and geckosadventures.com or look for recommended tours on tripadvisor.com) or if you're just after a day trip, wait until you're there as you're likely to find more choices and cheaper prices on the ground.

Accommodation

You can search for and book hotels, resorts and hostels online through sites such as wotif.com, booking.com or hostelworld.com. Compare booking sites and the hotel's website (if it has one) to find the lowest price. Check reviews on tripadvisor.com before you book.

To find private home rentals, or rooms for rent in local's homes, try airbnb.com.

The site hiddenpousadasbrazil.com is a good place to search for a bed and breakfast (known in Brazil as a pousada).