

# Rio de Janeiro: in a [Brazil] nutshell



The organizers of the 2006 IMS Annual Meeting, in conjunction with the tenth Brazilian School of Probability, are busy with preparations for the meeting. In the meantime *IMS Bulletin* is bringing you a series of articles about Rio de Janeiro, to help you with your own preparations. First, we recommend the excellent and thorough [www.ipanema.com](http://www.ipanema.com), which provides all the basics. So here's Rio in a nutshell (that's a Brazilnut, natch...)

## Olá! Bem-vindos ao Rio de Janeiro

You will probably already know that Rio de Janeiro is a vibrant, cosmopolitan, and beautiful city, a city of sea, sun and samba. Modern Rio is a city forged by five centuries of Amerindian, European, and African historical and cultural interaction.

It is a city of contrasts, where the gulf between the glitter and the gloom seems deep and wide. A swim before dusk, surrounded by Rio's spectacular scenery, is an unforgettable experience. But visitors should remember that those romantic sparkling lights on the hillsides pinpoint the city's notorious *favelas*, or shanty towns and that robbing tourists, particularly in the Copacabana district, is a not uncommon beach activity. But don't let that put you off! Since we know that security will be a concern for many visitors, in the next issue there will be plenty of advice on keeping safe, so that you can focus on the meeting (and the scenery, the nightlife, the food, the beaches, the music...)



Photo: Jan Sidorowocz, courtesy of [www.worldisround.com](http://www.worldisround.com)

But first, a little history lesson.

## What's in a name?

There's always a story behind a name, and here's the story of Rio's naming. In 1502 Portuguese explorers sailed to Brazil. Their mission: to confirm the existence and map the coastline of the land Pedro Álvares Cabral claimed he had 'discovered' (reportedly he'd got lost on the way to India, but that's another story). This second journey was headed by André Gonçalves (probably—there is some debate on this point). Sailing into what is now known as Guanabara bay, he apparently mistook it for the mouth of a river, (*rio* in Portuguese), the month was January (*Janeiro*)... the rest, as they say, is history.

According to linguists, the term *carioca*, as locals call themselves, is not derived from the word Rio, as in *ca-rio-ca*. It is actually a Tupi Indian term (*kari'i oca*), roughly meaning "white house", or "house of whites". That's what the original inhabitants

called the houses built by the Portuguese settlers. Gradually the Portuguese started thinking of themselves as *cariocas* (from the excellent website <http://www.ipanema.com>).

Incidentally, since the *r* in Portuguese is



pronounced more like an *h*, you might hear those in the know referring to "*Heeo*". There's some more on Portuguese on the next page.

If you thought Rio was the capital of Brazil, well, you're only a bit behind the times. It was the country's capital from 1763 until 1960, when President Juscelino Kubitschek inaugurated his dream vision of a model capital, Brasilia. Rio remains a major economic and cultural hub in the Southeastern region, where 60% of the Brazilian GDP is concentrated. It is the capital of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

The city of Rio de Janeiro welcomes more than 2 million foreign tourists each year, making it the most visited city in Brazil. Added to this are more than 5 million Brazilian tourists a year. Its exuberant natural resources include 90 km (56 miles)

of beaches, the Tijuca National Park, which includes the largest urban forest in the world, and the Rodrigo de Freitas, Camorim, Tijuca and Marapendi lakes and lagoons.

**Language tips**

The main language in Brazil is Portuguese. Over 200 million people around the world claim Portuguese as their native language: in fact, it is the seventh most spoken language in the world today, behind English, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, Hindi, and Russian. Pronunciation varies in the Portuguese-speaking (or Lusophone) world, but not enough to block communication.

English is the predominant foreign language taught in schools, and Spanish, if spoken slowly, is understood by a good percentage of the population.

Learning a few phrases will help, and there are some useful websites like <http://www.sonia-portuguese.com/> and <http://fonetiks.org/indexother.html> (for pronunciation). Here's some useful ones to get you started (thanks to Eulalia Vares for help with this!):

Hello	Olá!
Hi	Oi
How are you?	Como vai? Tudo bem?
How do you do? (more formal)	Como esta?
I'm fine	Tudo bem! <i>or</i> Tudo tranqüilo!
Good morning	Bom dia
Good afternoon	Boa tarde
Good evening	Boa noite
Nice to see you	Prazer em ve-lo
Please	Por favor

Thank you	Obrigado <i>(if a man)</i> Obrigada <i>(if a woman)</i>
You're welcome	De nada
Yes	Sim
No	Não
Goodbye	Adeus
Bye / So long	Ate logo
See you later	Ate mais tarde
See you tomorrow	Ate amanhã
Good night	Boa noite
Repeat it, please <i>and finally...</i>	Repita, por favor
Have a good trip!	Boa viagem!

*Ten most frequent countries of origin of foreign visitors to Rio de Janeiro in 2004*

	Country	Number of visitors	%
1	United States	379,815	21.5
2	Argentina	211,935	12.0
3	Portugal	136,187	7.7
4	Germany	130,915	7.4
5	Italy	105,991	6.0
6	France	105,688	6.0
7	United Kingdom	96,401	5.5
8	Spain	69,089	3.9
9	Chile	61,957	3.5
10	Canada	45,143	2.5
-	Other countries	n/a	24.0

[Source: EMBRATUR]

**Do you need a visa?**



Image: Ian Britton

This is a reminder that *most* foreigners traveling to Brazil on business will need a business visa. This includes Canadian, American and Australian visitors. You should check with your nearest Brazilian embassy or consulate.

At this time, nationals of most South American and European countries, together with Israel, New Zealand, The Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, and Thailand **do not need a visa when travelling to Brazil for business discussions**. Most Brazilian consulates list the requirements on their websites. Check, for example, the one in New York: [http://www.brazilny.org/consular/vistos/visas\\_by\\_country.htm](http://www.brazilny.org/consular/vistos/visas_by_country.htm)

Note that your passport should be valid for at least six months after your trip. Also, your first entry into Brazil must be made within 90 days of the date the visa is issued, so time your application accordingly.



Photo: Alex Gonzalez / www.omegaound.com