

Ten Tips for Travellers in Brazil



We've collected up ten tips of things we found useful when travelling in Brazil. Hopefully you'll find some of them helpful.

Ten Tips

1. Get Your Visa Before You Leave Home (if possible)

Some nationalities don't need visas for Brazil, but unfortunately citizens of Australia and USA do.

We decided to sort out visas for Brazil shortly before arriving there from Uruguay. It turns out that the process is somewhat convoluted. First you need to complete an on-line application. Sounds simple enough but, there are a couple of traps.

One of the steps requires you to upload a photo of yourself with very specific dimensions of pixels and file size). If it is the wrong size (too big or small) it won't upload. We had to go to a photographic store in Montevideo that took passport photos and get them to change the settings to meet the Brazilian

requirements.

Next was evidence of tickets for transport in and out of the country. We had hoped to bus in and out, but once we knew this was needed for the visa application we booked flights from Brazil to Ecuador for the exit (which meant picking a date) and we decided to go to Chuy on the Uruguay-Brazil border to have the consul there complete the visa process rather than the embassy in Montevideo. If you cross into Brazil from Chuy you don't need to show an entry ticket as you can literally walk across the road. See our Uruguay post for more on Chuy.

And finally, for the online application you need to attach (hard copy print out) evidence that you have enough funds. A copy of your bank statement is needed.

Once you have all this you complete the on-line application, print it out, and submit it all to the embassy or consul who then take a hefty fee and it takes 5 business days to process (Brazil Embassy Montevideo) or 2 days at the Consulate in Chuy.

So, our advice is – get it before you leave home or allow sufficient time to get all this done. [NB: This was our experience in Uruguay. It may be different in other countries]

PS: For the 2016 Olympics Brazil is waiving these visa requirements from June until after the games.

2. Try Pao de Queijo

Pao de queijo simply means “cheese bread”. You generally get them at breakfast time in the form of cheesy tasting balls, about the size of golf balls. If they are fresh they are very tasty.

We saw lots of the locals, in the hotels we stayed in, slipping a few cheesy balls into their day packs when no one was looking (or so they thought) to enjoy later.

They are so popular that there is a chain of fast food joints devoted to the cheesy ball.

<http://www.casadopaodequeijo.com.br/>

3. Use the Long Distance Buses

We've mentioned this about other South American countries, but it is worth repeating it for Brazil, and that is, that the long distance buses are good.

It's a big country. And unless you have a lot of time you will probably fly between destinations. But where you can we'd recommend taking the bus. It's

a lot cheaper than flying. The buses are modern and comfortable. The bus companies we travelled with took security seriously and checked to make sure we had ID that matched our ticket names and also gave luggage receipts so that you had confidence that your bag would still be there when you got off the bus 8, 9, 10 hours later.

4. Learn Some Portuguese

Similar advice to what we recommended for Chile and Argentina – learn a few key words and phrases. If your travelling independently you will encounter plenty of people who don't speak English. After all, why should they, Portuguese is the national language. It does make life easier if you have a few basics. :

- A good starting point is “voce fala ingles, no falo portugese?” Do you speak English, I don't speak Portuguese?”
- Numbers: Very similar to Spanish but with a different pronunciation
- Times and days of the week – critical for getting the bus ticket on the day you want. Saturday and Sunday are the same as Spanish (Sabado and Domingo), but the other five are named 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th day (eg Monday is segunda feira)
- A couple of key phrases such as: “I want to go to.....”, “At what time....”, “Do you have....”, “I would like....”, and “I need/don't need)

5. Bring Plenty of Strong Insect Repellent

While you may not encounter many biting insects in the big cities this is the land of Zika and Dengue Fever. There are also large parts of the country that are malaria zones. Prevention is definitely better than cure in this case so have some good strong, tropical strength insect repellent with you. We always get ours from our local travel doctor before leaving on a trip.

6. Take Sensible Safety Precautions

Like it's neighbours, Brazil is also experiencing an economic downturn at present, with the drop in oil prices and reduced economic activity in China.

Crime, petty and serious, are on the rise. The main tourist zones tend to have large, visible police presences (e.g. the Pelourinho in Salvador has nearly as many police as tourists).

So be alert. Read the travel warnings that your government puts out and don't go flashing around your wealth – cameras, jewellery, smartphones. Dress down and be discreet. We had no problems in the month we spent there, but we were careful.

With basic safety precautions you should be fine and have a great time in Brazil. It's a fabulous country.

7. Try Açaí

Açaí (pronounced as-ai) is being promoted as another new 'superfood'. It's produced in Brazil and is dark purple fruit, like a grape, from a palm. You'll see it advertised all around the country.

It is best drunk with some added sugar and/or condensed milk, which you will be offered when purchasing.

We don't know about the superfood claims, but we liked the taste, and reckon it's worth a try.

8. Taste the Different Regional Cuisines

Brazil has many different regional food styles and specialities. In Bahia state the moqueca, a sort of seafood chowder (there are different sorts) is very good. The state of Minas Gerais is famous for its regional dishes (comida mineira) often with pork and tutu (a thick bean paste). These are just two examples, but there are many more. And there a million and one interesting things to try at street stalls.

So don't stick to the supposed safety of burger and fries or pizza go out on a limb and try the local food.

9. Drink a Caipirinha

Now that you've ordered that mixed shrimp and fish moqueca you need something to drink while you wait. The perfect choice is Brazil's favourite cocktail, the caipirinha.

It's made from alcohol made from sugarcane juice called cachaça (ca-shasa). To it is added a lime cut into quarters and pummeled a little to bring out the lime juice, with sugar and ice added.

But beware, they are seriously addictive.

10. Go to Rio!

What, you're going to Brazil but you're not planning on going to Rio. Big mistake.

Seriously, Rio has to be one of the most, if not the most, visually stunning cities on the planet. Ipanema and Copacabana Beaches, Sugarloaf Mountain and Christ the Redeemer overlooking it all on top of Corcovado (Hunchback Mountain), and that's just for starters.

The climate, the people, the food, the vibe.

Honestly, if you're going to Brazil, you must go to Rio.



I just love those cheesy balls

