

the essential guide to
customs & culture

CULTURE SMART!

BRAZIL



CULTURE SMART!

guides will help you to deal confidently with unfamiliar situations abroad. They tell you about the beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of people in different countries, so that when you arrive you are aware of local manners and sensitive issues, and are well equipped to make friends and enter into successful business relationships. Practical advice on what to expect and how to behave enables you to avoid embarrassing gaffes, establish a rapport with your hosts, and make the very best of your visit.

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CULTURE SMART!

BRAZIL

Sandra Branco
with Rob Williams

·K·U·P·E·R·A·R·D·

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Map of Brazil



introduction

For many people Brazil conjures up images of football, *Carnaval*, and the finest coffee in the world. But the country is much more than beaches and bossa nova, although the sound of samba is an excellent starting point for exploring this vibrant, captivating, and infinitely complex land.

Brazil is at once stunningly beautiful and delightfully disorganized. Even though it is one of the ten largest economies in the world, poverty exists side by side with spectacular wealth. As part of the New World, it is open to new ideas, new technologies, and newcomers. Youthful and fast moving, it can overwhelm you with its sheer size, or the warmth and spontaneity of its people, while its street children and shantytowns can be quite unsettling.

The fundamental concept to understand is that there is not one but several Brazils, not only because of its varied geography and racial mix, but also in time: sixteenth-century ways coexist with twenty-first century lifestyles. Brazil is home to the so-called “lung of the world,” the Amazon forest, and its incredible biodiversity. It also comes with its fair share of regional differences. It is a true melting pot of races and cultures—the Brazilians are a colorful mixture of native indigenous people, black former slaves, white

Europeans, and Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants. Despite this, there is a strong sense of national identity.

Brazil is the biggest country in South America and the fifth largest in the world. It builds satellites, exports airplanes, has its own petroleum industry, and takes pride in its modern architecture, furniture, fashion, and picturesque colonial towns. It has four different time zones, a rain forest, an Atlantic forest, drylands, wetlands, flatlands, high mountains, skyscrapers, busy urban centers, and quite a few deserted beaches hidden away in the 4,655 miles (7,491 km) of coastline.

One cannot hope to do justice to such diversity in a single book, and some generalization is inevitable. *Culture Smart! Brazil* aims to help you discover this fascinating country for yourself. It introduces the Brazilian people, their values, customs, and traditions; how they go about their daily life and spend their leisure time; and the way they think and do business. It describes the historical circumstances and influences that have shaped Brazilian society. The focus is mainly, though not exclusively, on the middle class—since these are the people visitors are most likely to interact with—so you will be eased into your first encounters with the Brazilians and their culture.

Key Facts

Official Name	Republica Federativa do Brasil (Federal Republic of Brazil)	
Capital City	Brasília	Population 2,562,963 (2013)
Major Cities (by Population)	São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, Brasília, Recife, Salvador, Curitiba	
Area	3,286,470 sq. miles (8,511,965 sq. km)	
Climate	Tropical and subtropical	
Currency	Real	
Population	201,032,714 (2013)	
Ethnic Makeup	White 47.7%; Mixed Race 43.1%; Black 7.6%; Oriental 1.1%; Indigenous 0.4% (2010 census)	
Language	Portuguese	
Main Religions	No official religion. Predominantly Roman Catholic. Growing Evangelical movement	Other religions include: Mormons, Eastern Orthodox, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Spiritualism (Kardecism, African, and Native Indian).
Government	Federal Republic, governed by Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary at national and state levels	Bicameral legislature: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Presidential elections are held every four years.

Media	<p>The main network TV channels are Globo, SBT, Record, and Bandeirantes.</p> <p>Main paid TV providers are NET, SKY, Claro TV, VIVO TV, Oi TV, and GVT TV. There are over 9,000 radio stations.</p>	<p>The newspapers with the widest circulation are <i>Folha de São Paulo</i>, <i>Jornal do Brasil</i>, <i>O Globo</i>, and <i>O Estado de São Paulo</i>.</p>
Media: English Language	<p><i>Folha de São Paulo:</i> www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en <i>Valor Econômico</i> (business newspaper): www.valor.com.br/international</p>	
Electricity	<p>220 volts and/or 110–127 volts</p>	<p>Several electricity grids supply electricity at different voltages.</p>
TV/Video	<p>PAL M and NTSC</p>	<p>DVD Region 4</p>
Internet Domain	<p>.br</p>	
Telephone	<p>Country code: 55</p>	<p>The code for dialing out depends on the phone company you use.</p>
Time Zones	<p>There are four time zones: Standard Brasília Time, GMT minus 3 hours (majority of the country); Western Area, GMT minus 4 hours; Acre, GMT minus 5 hours; Fernando de Noronha, GMT minus 2 hours.</p>	<p>Some parts of the country adopt summer time (generally from October to February).</p>

LAND & PEOPLE

If you could choose only one word to describe Brazil, it would be diversity. The variety of landscape, climate, flora, fauna, racial types, and lifestyles is enormous.

Brazilians tend to think of their country as some sort of continent within South America. The reason may be that its land mass represents nearly half (47.3%) of the territory. Looking at the map, we can see that the entire east side of Brazil is coastline (Atlantic Ocean), while the west side borders almost all the other South American countries, except for Chile and Ecuador.

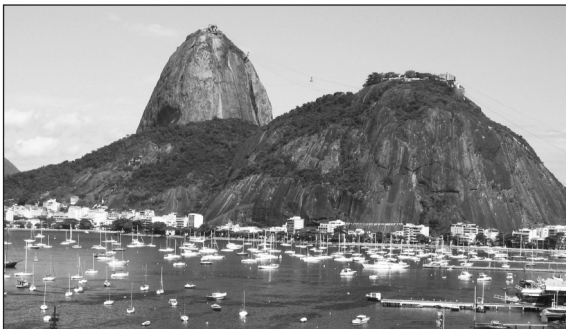
Since Brazil is mostly situated south of the equator, the seasons are the reverse of those in Europe and the USA. Officially, summer lasts from December 22 to March 21, fall from March 22 to June 21, winter from June 22 to September 21, and spring from September 22 to December 21. In parts of the country, however, notably the Amazon region, seasonal divisions are less clearly marked and tend to be classified as “wet” and “dry.”

Brazil has four time zones. Brasília time is the nation’s official standard, three hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), London.

The equator crosses the north of the country, near the city of Macapá. The Tropic of Capricorn passes through the south, near the city of São Paulo. This means that most of the country is within the tropical zone and characterized by a hot and humid climate. However, tropical does not necessarily mean that every region is hot all year-round, nor that the countryside is filled with lush vegetation. Altitude, proximity to the sea, soil fertility, and prevailing winds and weather fronts all have an effect on the different regions of the country.

The north is hotter and the south cooler (temperatures in some parts can fall below zero and snow is even seen occasionally in some cities). Generally speaking, cities on the coast are more humid, while those located on plateaus inland, such as Brasilia, São Paulo, and Belo Horizonte, have more temperate climates.

More specifically, Brazil can be divided into six climate zones: equatorial, tropical, Atlantic tropical, semiarid, highland tropical, and subtropical, according to location and terrain.



BRAZIL'S CLIMATE ZONES

In the Amazon region, which is equatorial, temperatures average 71–79°F (22–26°C), though at times it can be much hotter, and it rains often and heavily. Indeed, there are two areas where rainfall reaches over 78 inches (2,000 mm) a year: in the upper Amazon and near the city of Belém.

Most of central Brazil, parts of the northeast, and parts of the southeast have a tropical climate, characterized by hot, humid summers and colder, drier winters. Average temperature is around 68°F (20°C).

As its name suggests, the Atlantic tropical climate zone affects the coastline from Rio Grande do Norte down to the state of Paraná. Here rainfall is intense at different times of the year (fall and winter in the northeast and summer in the south). Temperatures can vary between 64 and 79°F (18 and 26°C), though as with other parts of the country they can rise to near 100°F (38°C) in summer.

The dryland inland part of the northeast, or sertão, is semiarid and suffers from long periods of drought. Temperatures average 80°F (27°C) but can soar above 100°F (38°C).

Along the plateau that stretches across the southeastern states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and parts of Paraná and Mato Grosso do Sul (highland tropical), temperatures average around 64–71°F (18–22°C). Rainfall can be very heavy during the summer. In the

area along the border of the mountain range (Serra do Mar) in the state of São Paulo it rains almost as much as in the Amazon. However, winters are drier with occasional frost in some areas.

The area south of the Tropic of Capricorn has a subtropical climate. Here, despite hot summers, average temperatures are lower than 64°F (18°C) and can drop below freezing in winter.

THE REGIONS

Brazil is divided into five administrative regions. The characteristics of their inhabitants are highly influenced by their geographic and economic situations.

North

Amazonas – Pará – Acre – Rondônia – Roraima – Amapá – Tocantins

Also known as the Amazon region, the North region is mainly covered by rain forest and is sparsely populated. It rains often and so regularly that the locals tend to organize their day and even arrange meetings



and appointments for “before the rain” or “after the rain.”

Despite recent deforestation, there are still large areas where, if you fly over the jungle, all you can see is an immense green carpet from horizon to horizon, with hardly a sign of human habitation.



Reservations have been set up for different tribes of Native Indians (*índios*) and most of the larger groups live in these areas. Most maintain contact with Brazilian institutions, and just a few do not welcome strangers. It is thought that there are still more groups that have yet to come into contact with outsiders.

The Amazon is the world's largest river in volume and its annual outflow accounts for one-fifth of the world's fresh water entering the sea. It is not surprising, then, that much of the transport in the region is by boat.

Given the difficulty in policing such a vast area, some illegal settlers, traders, and even drug traffickers have taken advantage and there have sometimes been violent clashes with the indigenous groups. Nowadays there is an integrated mapping system linked to satellite photography (*imazongeo*) to monitor the whole area and identify illegal use of land.

The harvesting of Brazil nuts and rubber latex are still the main economic activities, together with manufacturing, mining, and logging. Industry, farming, and ecotourism play only a small role.