

[Brazil] Top Five Places

Brazil is not only Latin America's largest country, it is also by far its most diverse. For some, it brings to mind the legendary Amazon forest, amazing beaches and Carnival. For others, it's the friendly people, the great cities and a rich mixture of cultures and races. In the end, everyone agrees: Brazil is a travel adventure like no other.



BELÉM

In this city on the banks of the Amazon estuary in northern Brazil, people usually ask, "Are you going out before or after today's rainfall?" For those who don't know Belém, capital of the state of Pará, the joke might seem odd, but it is quite appropriate. Due to the region's hot, humid climate, it rains practically every day at around 3 p.m.—almost on schedule. The greatest attraction in Belém is the Ver-o-Peso (Check-the-Weight) Market. The name comes from colonial days when merchandise had its weight checked at the neighbouring port. Today, the market is a place where virtually anything can be found. Visitors can also enjoy the revitalized old port waterfront, a lovely area with many restaurants and shops.



LENÇÓIS MARANHENSES

One of Brazil's most beautiful spots, Lençóis Maranhenses is a sea of sand dunes that occupies 70 km of coastline in the state of Maranhão and advances 50 km inland. This formation is composed of small lakes with blue-green water that fill during the rainy season and contrast with the white sand of the dunes, which can reach 40 m in height. The 155,000 ha of Lençóis Maranhenses National Park preserve this very special ecosystem.



RIO DE JANEIRO

Known as the "Marvelous City," Rio de Janeiro offers attractions that have given it international fame. Who among us has never heard of Carnival, the most amazing and popular party in the world? Or Sugarloaf Mountain and the beautiful beaches that have inspired musicians from all over the world? There is always something to do in Rio: sporting events for all tastes, cultural centres, countless museums, churches, famous confectioners, old streetcars and beaches—many beaches. Rio is also one of Brazil's greatest business centres, regularly selected to host important national and international conferences, congresses and meetings. In 2016, Rio will be the first South American city to host the Olympic Games, and this year it will host the 5th Military World Games.



BONITO AND THE PANTANAL

This humble city's crystalline rivers, plentiful fish, caverns and waterfalls attract tourists from the world over. Popular activities include diving in caverns, observing underwater fauna and walking along forest trails. The Pantanal area, an ecological paradise very close to Bonito, features the largest flooded lowland and the third-largest environmental reserve in the world.



ILHA DO MEL

Ilha do Mel (Honey Island) is 95 km from Curitiba, in the state of Paraná, and getting there can be part of the adventure. Leaving from Curitiba, the Serra Verde Express travels through the largest preserved area of Brazil's Atlantic forest and will take you partway to Ilha do Mel. The island features beautiful, peaceful beaches and trails, an old fortress, a lighthouse and great nightlife. It is also a popular surfing destination and is renowned as an important ecological preserve.

photos: Ministry of Tourism, Brazil