



City Guide

Rio de Janeiro

Overview

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Rio de Janeiro is Brazil's second most-populous city and one of the most important economic and cultural centers in South America. It is situated in southeast Brazil on the natural port of the Baía de Guanabara (Guanabara Bay). Rio de Janeiro's economy is the second largest in country and largely dependent on the services industry, including tourism. Other prominent industries that contribute to the city's economy include commerce, industry and agriculture. Rio de Janeiro has a diverse population of about 13.6 million people, the vast majority of which is Christian. Portuguese is the primary language, although others such as Spanish and English may be spoken in areas of the city that are frequented by foreign nationals.

While Rio de Janeiro is one of Brazil's most developed cities, economic disparity is pervasive. Many wealthy neighborhoods are located near the city's informal settlements, which are typically associated with overcrowding, poverty and heightened criminal activity. This proximity allows for crime, both petty and violent, to spill over into affluent areas of the city. Other significant threats in Rio de Janeiro stem from civil unrest and kidnapping. Landslides and flash flooding occur in and near the city and are particularly severe during the rainy season from November to March.

Safety and Security

Crime

Crime is a serious concern throughout Rio de Janeiro. Opportunistic petty crime such as pick-pocketing, bag-snatching and theft of unattended items occurs frequently and generally targets those perceived to be wealthy. Such crime typically occurs in crowded areas such as shopping centers, museums, restaurants, monuments and transportation hubs. Crime rates are also elevated in the Zona Norte area of the city. Copacabana and Ipanema beaches also experience frequent instances of petty crime, especially during the evening hours. Another area of concern is Tijuca National Park, the location of the Corcovado monument and Christ the Redeemer statue. Travel to the central area of the park – known as Floresta da Tijuca – should be avoided due to elevated levels of crime and gang activity, especially at night. Pick-pocketing targeting travelers is a particular concern at Galeão International Airport (SBGL/GIG) as well as in hotel lobbies.

Most violent crime occurs in the vicinity of favelas, where police presence is minimal. Traveler safety is not guaranteed on any excursion to such areas, including on organized tours. As heightened criminal activity can extend outside favelas – which are scattered throughout Rio de Janeiro and not confined to any one specific area of the city – caution should be exercised at all times. Gang violence often involves confrontations with security forces and disputes with

other gangs over territory; drug related issues are also prevalent. Such conflicts periodically shut down commercial activity and prompt authorities to issue shelter-in-place orders and deploy security forces to the affected areas. Security operations are sometimes carried out in order to respond to the presence of gangs.

Armed robbery, home invasion and sexual assault are also concerns within the city. Confidence scams, in which criminals pose as police officers, may occur, which can result in armed or aggravated robbery. The risk of sexual assault increases after dark, including in restaurants, bars, public parks and on beaches. Individuals should exercise increased caution when traveling after dark.

Cybercrime is another concern in Rio de Janeiro. Credit card skimmers may be present in certain businesses or restaurants and may also be present in ATMs. Public WiFi networks may also be compromised. Travelers should take extra precautions, such as not connecting to public wireless networks. Additionally, bank accounts and credit cards should be closely monitored for unauthorized transactions.

The police force in Rio de Janeiro has faced corruption allegations. Reports of lower-level corruption, such as solicitation of bribes, are common, though accusations of excessive force have also impacted civilians.

Civil unrest

Demonstrations and strikes are common in Rio de Janeiro and can cause disruptions with little notice. Although most demonstrations are peaceful, they occasionally deteriorate into violence. Vandalism as well as clashes between protesters and security forces have taken place during such events. Most protest activity is motivated by labor or economic interests or in response to major political developments. Authorities are usually capable of dispersing unruly crowds, but excessive use of force is sometimes reported and often involves rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons. Demonstrations are frequently held near government buildings and installations, including foreign embassies. The Centro and Copacabana areas are also commonly used for protests.

The government's crackdown on criminal gangs in Rio de Janeiro's favelas has led to numerous protests and significant clashes between security forces, residents and criminal gangs. Significant clashes have occurred in the Jacarezinho, Morro do Chapadao, Cantagalo-Pavao-Pavaozinho and Complexo do Alemao areas. The Mare complex, a large neighborhood comprising several settlements, is of particular concern due to its location near Galeao International Airport (SBGL/GIG). Major protests in response to these security operations can spread outside of the affected areas, with protesters often alleging indiscriminate misuse of force by police.

Strikes are common and often disrupt both the public and private sector. Public transportation drivers conduct many strikes in Rio de Janeiro, frequently disrupting services throughout the city. Work stoppages are almost always accompanied by protests, creating further disruptions.

Kidnapping

Kidnapping is an elevated concern in Rio de Janeiro and includes both kidnap for ransom and express kidnapping. In instances of kidnap for ransom, criminals often spend extended periods of time learning their victims' daily movements and routines to abduct them at the most opportune moment. Victims are typically business executives and their family members, and local individuals are targeted more often than foreign nationals.

Express kidnapping is even more prevalent in the city and involves the temporary abduction of a victim who is forced to withdraw money from ATMs until either funds run out or their credit/debit cards reach their maximum withdrawal limits.

As instances of express kidnapping are opportunistic, both local residents and foreign nationals are targeted. This crime is most often initiated near unsecured ATMs by teams of multiple armed perpetrators and can also occur while using taxis, as some taxi drivers work with criminals to deliver victims.

Security recommendations

- Popular tourist beaches, including Copacabana and Ipanema, experience heightened levels of petty crime and should be avoided during the evening and after dark.
- Tijuca National Park has elevated levels of crime, especially in the central area of the park known as Floresta de Tijuca. Travel to this area should only be conducted in groups and during the day.
- The downtown area, known as Centro, should be avoided after business hours, as crime threats increase during this time due to decreased security presence.
- Galeao International Airport (SBGL/GIG) is a frequent site of petty crime, particularly pick-pocketing; travelers should remain aware of their surroundings and belongings at all times.
- Informal settlements should be avoided due to elevated levels of violent crime. Security presence is extremely limited in these locations, which are dispersed throughout the city.
- The use of ATMs should be limited to only those that are in secure locations such as banks or major hotels. Using ATMs in isolated locations or after dark is not advised due to risks of express kidnapping and robbery.

Travel Logistics

Airport information

Galeao International Airport

Rio de Janeiro/Galeao – Antonio Carlos Jobim International Airport (SBGL/GIG), commonly known as Galeao International Airport, is located approximately 12 mi (20 km) north of central Rio de Janeiro in the western Galeao neighborhood of Ilha do Governador. The facility services both international and domestic flights. Baggage theft is common. Facilities at the airport include banks, currency exchange offices, ATMs, restaurants, shops, a post office, a 24-hour hospital, tourist information and car rental services. Taxis, buses and airport shuttles as well as limousines and helicopters are available to transport passengers throughout the city from this location.

The airport complies with international safety standards, and no major security-related incidents have been reported at the facility. However, caution should be exercised while traveling to and from the airport due to its proximity to the Mare favela complex, a large neighborhood consisting of several informal settlements which is located along the Via Expressa Presidente Joao Goulart, the primary highway leading to and from the facility.

Santos Dumont Airport

Santos Dumont Airport (SBRJ/SDU) is a domestic airport east of central Rio de Janeiro on Guanabara Bay. It is located approximately 2.5 mi (4 km) from the downtown area. The airport primarily offers flights from Rio de Janeiro to Sao Paulo and other domestic flights, air taxis and private planes. Santos Dumont Airport complies with international safety standards. Facilities at the airport include tourist information, baggage storage services, banking and foreign exchange facilities and car rental. The airport is linked to the city by bus and taxi.

Getting around

Most major roads in and around Rio de Janeiro are generally in good repair and do not pose significant safety concerns. However, less frequented roadways are in poorer condition, particularly in the periphery of the city and in informal settlements in the hillside. Heavy traffic conditions throughout much of Rio de Janeiro regularly cause even the shortest trips to take extended periods of time. Erratic driving habits and failure by some drivers to obey traffic laws cause hazardous conditions for other motorists and pedestrians along city roads. Security risks are elevated on all forms of transportation. Secure, pre-arranged transportation through a reliable provider is recommended for all travel in Rio de Janeiro.

Bus

Buses are the primary form of public transportation for locals due to their relatively low cost and availability of lines that run throughout the city, including through informal settlements. Petty crime is a significant concern on buses and at bus stations, particularly after dark. Additionally, bus service is extremely limited in the evening. Buses are often overcrowded, and operators frequently drive chaotically. Furthermore, protesters have targeted buses, setting them on fire in some instances. Sexual assault has also been reported at stations and on buses, especially late at night when buses are mostly empty or at isolated bus stops.

Taxi

Taxis are widely available in Rio de Janeiro. Registered and unregistered taxis operate in the city, but travelers should use only registered taxis due to express kidnapping and other crime risks associated with unregistered taxis. Official taxis are yellow with a blue stripe and possess state-issued red livery license plates. Individuals should not hail taxis from the street; instead, taxi service should be dispatched by an airport, hotel or other trusted establishment. Taxi drivers often overcharge tourists, and therefore, the fare should be agreed upon prior to entering the vehicle.

Metro

Rio de Janeiro's subway system, Metro Rio, has 3 lines and 41 stations. It can become extremely crowded during business hours, prompting heightened petty crime risks. Such risks increase further after dark and at stations in northern neighborhoods. The last car of each train is designated for women travelers only and can be identified by its pink exterior. This optional segregation is an attempt to protect women from sexual harassment, which is most common after dark.

Ride-share

Transportation via ride-share services is available via mobile applications, and services often compete with regular taxis. Availability of ride-share services may vary, as crime has previously been perpetrated against drivers, most notably robbery. Theft and robbery toward civilians are also possible when using ride-share apps.

Vehicle rental

Vehicles can be rented at airports or rental agencies throughout the city. Driving within the city is not advised, as Rio de Janeiro's one-way streets are often confusing to foreign visitors, traffic is heavy, parking is difficult, and drivers are often aggressive.

Useful information

Dialing codes

- International country code: +55
- City code: 21

Time zone

- Brasilia Time (GMT -3)

Electricity

- 127/220 volts, 60 Hz
- Plug types: C, N

Health concerns

For information on COVID-19, please visit <https://www.travelguardworldwide.com/coronavirus>.

Money

- **Currency** – The currency is the real (BRL), which is divided into 100 centavos. Banknotes are in 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 reais. Coins are in 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 centavos as well as 1 real.
- **Foreign exchange** – Currency exchanges, known as casas de cambio, are available in major cities.
- **ATMs** – ATMs are widely available in major cities. Due to the threat of express kidnapping, travelers are advised to only use ATMs in secure, enclosed locations such as bank branches, shopping malls and hotels. ATMs in isolated areas should be avoided, particularly after dark.
- **Credit cards** – Credit cards are accepted in most hotels, restaurants and stores.
- **Tipping** – In restaurants, a 10-percent tip is the norm. Taxi fares are often rounded up to the nearest real.
- **Business hours** – Business hours are Monday to Friday from 09:00 – 18:00. Limited business may also be open on Saturdays.
- **Banking hours** – Banking hours are Monday to Friday from 10:00 – 16:00.

Contact Details

Important contact details

- International dialing code: +55
- International dialing prefix: 0015

Emergency numbers

- Police: 190
- Ambulance: 192
- Fire: 193

Embassies

Australian Embassy

Quadra 801, Conjunto K, Lote 7

Setor de Embaixadas Sul
Brasilia, DF, 70200-010
Brazil
Tel: +55 61 3226 3111
Email: embaustr@dfat.gov.au

British Embassy
Avenida das Nacoes
Quadra 801, Conjunto K, Lote 8
Asa Sul, Brasilia 70408-900
Brazil
Tel: +55 61 3329 2300
Fax: +55 61 3329 2369
Email: press.brasilia@fcdo.gov.uk

Canadian Embassy
Avenida das Nacoes
Quadra 803, Lote 16
Setor de Embaixadas Sul
Brasilia, DF, 70410-900
Brazil
Tel: +55 61 3424 5400
Fax: +55 61 3424 5490
Email: brsla@international.gc.ca

Chinese Embassy
Avenida das Nacoes
Quadra 813, Lote 51
Setor de Embaixadas Sul
Brasilia, DF, 70443-900
Brazil
Tel: +55 61 2195 8200
Fax: +55 61 3346 3299
Email: chinaemb_br@mfa.gov.cn

Dutch Embassy
Quadra 801, Lote 05
Setor de Embaixadas Sul
Brasilia, DF, 70405-900
Brazil
Tel: +55 61 3961 3200
Fax: +55 61 3961 3234
Email: bra@minbuza.nl

French Embassy
Avenida das Nacoes
Quadra 801, Lote 4
Setor de Embaixadas Sul
Brasilia, DF, 70404-900
Brazil

Tel: +55 61 3222 3999

German Embassy

Avenida das Nacoes
Quadra 807, Lote 25
Setor de Embaixadas Sul
Brasilia, DF, 70415-900
Brazil

Tel: +55 61 3442 7000

Fax: +55 61 3442 7020

Japanese Embassy

Quadra 811, Lote 39
Setor de Embaixadas Sul
Brasilia, DF, 70425-900
Brazil

Tel: +55 61 3442 4200

Fax: +55 61 3242 2499

Email: consular.japao@bs.mofa.go.jp

Mexican Embassy

Avenida das Nacoes
Quadra 805, Lote 18
Setor de Embaixadas Sul
Asa Sul, Brasilia, DF 70412-900
Brazil

Tel: +55 61 3204 5200

Fax: +55 61 3204 5201

Email: embajadamexbra@sre.gob.mx

US Embassy

Avenida das Nacoes
Quadra 801, Lote 3
Setor de Embaixadas Sul
Brasilia, DF, 70403-900
Brazil

Tel: +55 61 3312 7000

Fax: +55 61 3225 9136

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