



# BIG IN BRAZIL

IN RIO, BEACH IS A RELIGION, WHILE A DEVOTION TO HARD WORK IS SÃO PAULO'S THING, AND IN BETWEEN LIES A PARADISIAC SEGUE FOR A TRAVELLER **WORDS** JONO CANE

Top to bottom A studio portrait of Nina Simone in 1970; with her daughter Lisa Celeste Stroud in 1965. Lisa followed her mother into the business, finding success as a Broadway actress and singer. **Opposite** Nina Simone in 1979. Onem quamE pudips am isciatur?

The paulistanos and cariocas may share an upcoming FIFA World Cup but are kept apart by two weeks' worth of beaches and islands – the perfect segue for the traveller, who doesn't have to choose a side, but does have to choose a side on which to begin. Our choice was made easier by the Bienal de São Paulo, which finishes in early December. So to see the world-famous art exhibition we began in the hot and rainy Ibirapuera Park where Oscar Niemeyer's acclaimed modernist Bienal Pavilion was three storeys high with three days' worth of contemporary art. We took in as much as we could – the paranoid schizophrenic Arthur Bispo do Rosário's nutty embroideries and knick-knacks, Sheila Hicks's weaving, Rodrigo Braga fighting with animals and Thiago Rocha Pitta's pile of red dirt with silver flags. Then we browsed books at Isay Weinfeld's Livraria da Vila, walked past Lina Bo Bardi's brutalist Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), through Trianon tropical park, watched kids skateboarding and drank cocktails at Unique hotel where rich men pick up prostitutes and foreigners watch the time pass on giant clocks on the endless skyline. São Paulo is a two-day or two-month kind of city; like going on vacation to Jo'burg. In 2014 the Bienal – the concept is 'how to speak about things that do not exist' – will be curated by Charles Esche and I will be back. This time, in the rush to get to the beach, we missed Lina Bo Bardi's wonky cultural centre Sesc Pompéia, the stately Pinacoteca do Estado and chef Alex Atala's famed Brazilian restaurant D.O.M.

Rio de Janeiro is where the 'cariocas' live. They do groceries in waist-high Speedos, drink coconut water out of coconuts; they take gyming on the beach seriously, eat açai and get calf tattoos. They really don't use sunblock, because they really want to tan – this from a dermatologist who has never used sun cream and is smoking with me in an Ipanema bar called Tô Nem Ai, which literally means 'I Don't Give a Shit'. And they literally don't. They are hated by the 'paulistanos' who call them 'coxinhas' (I'll explain in a moment). The feeling is entirely mutual. The paulistanos, who walk briskly down São Paulo's banking boulevard Avenida Paulista, contribute three times more money than Rio to

Brazil's national gross domestic product (GDP). (As a context, São Paulo the state has a GDP equivalent to that of Spain, or double the whole of SA.) Paulistanos are really weird people. They are smart and uptight and subtle and are nothing like what you imagine Brazilians are like. They conform to highly codified social cues, which govern the way they eat, talk and move about their mega-city. I'm not suggesting they are not just as sexy, fun or welcoming; just that there are no samba drums playing in the metro as 20-million people push past you to get to the park so that they can drink coconut water and relax. They are not well liked by those cariocas who call them 'coxinhas' (I'll explain now-now, I promise).

The village of Paraty is four hours away by bus and is as small, charming and relaxing as São Paulo is not. The Portuguese colonists





Top to bottom A studio portrait of Nina Simone in 1970; with her daughter Lisa Celeste Stroud in 1965. Lisa followed her mother into the business, finding success as a Broadway actress and Esquire milliqua nobiscipiet, omnit est

## CITY GUIDE

### Rio de Janeiro

■ **SLEEP** The fabulous and fabulously expensive **Fasano** hotel by Philippe Starck is on the promenade directly opposite Praia de Ipanema. [Fasano.com.br](http://Fasano.com.br)

■ **DRINK** In the once-abandoned hills of **Santa Teresa** a coffee-plantation mansion turned luxury boutique hotel offers the best possible views of Rio de Janeiro for a sundowner. [Santa-teresa-hotel.com](http://Santa-teresa-hotel.com)

■ **PARTY** **Bohemian neighbourhood**

**Lapa** literally erupts on Friday nights, as Avenida Mem de Sá turns from a street into a street party.

■ **EAT** Subtle and modern, **Forneria São Sebastião** stands out as a classic Italian restaurant in a city of cheesy pizzerias. [Forneria.com.br](http://Forneria.com.br)

■ **SHOP** You're not supposed to admit it, but sometimes after a week in the sun, a posh air-conditioned mall, a Starbucks and a new costume from Brazil's famous Osklen is what you really want.

[Shoppingleblon.com.br](http://Shoppingleblon.com.br); [Osklen.com](http://Osklen.com)

## CITY GUIDE

### São Paulo

■ **SLEEP** Understated and quiet, **Hotel Emiliano** hotel is situated on the best street in Jardins close to the best restaurants, shopping and art.

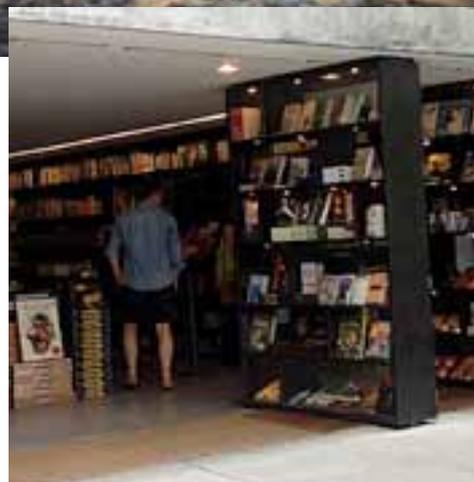
[Emiliano.com.br](http://Emiliano.com.br)

■ **DRINK** Find the dodgiest looking pub or 'boteco', grab a plastic chair, order a 'grande cerveja' and coxinha, and enjoy.

■ **PARTY** Twin streets Rua Augusta and Rua Frei Caneca are lined with bars, botecos and brothels and are open literally 24 hours. Visit **Bella Paulista bakery** for freshly baked sugary bread and cream-cheese pizza at 3am. [Bellapaulista.com](http://Bellapaulista.com)

■ **EAT** Star chef Alex Atala reinvents regional Brazilian cooking at his internationally acclaimed restaurant **D.O.M.** [Domrestaurante.com.br](http://Domrestaurante.com.br)

■ **SHOP** **Isay Weinfeld's** subterranean flagship store for Brazilian flip-flop brand Havaianas holds its own on São Paulo's swishest shopping street Rua Oscar Freire. [Havaianas.com.br](http://Havaianas.com.br)



set up the little port town in 1667 – wide cobblestoned streets, closed to automobiles, run down to the sea, and flowers from the trees around Matriz da Nossa Senhora dos Remédios church still fall in worship, turning the streets pink. Walking trails used by slaves, gold miners and pirates lead out from Paraty into the lush Atlantic forests and to secluded beaches where shacks sell Caipirinhas and fried fish and ice-cold beer. If you're too lazy, or drunk, to find your way back, sea-taxis will ferry you to town where you can drink shots of locally brewed cachaça (a liquor made from fermented sugarcane juice) and eat 'manioc' (cassava) chips to soak up the booze.

About halfway between Paraty and Rio is a little island inappropriately called Ilha Grande. Part of the archipelago Angra Dos Reis, it is reached by 'ferry' (read here fishing boat with cooler box and beer). There are no cars and no banks or ATMS, but there is one nice coffee shop with Wi-Fi that sells a local French toast called rabanada, which is soaked in condensed milk and cinnamon and is only made around Christmas. The beaches are lined with shacks barbequeing fish and serving alcohol, while in 'town' there are many pizzerias that serve typically Brazilian pizzas, like manioc, peas, palm hearts,

chicken hearts, dried meat and stroganoff. There is one pizzeria we particularly liked which was frequented by swarms of hummingbirds. It is, what they call, a paradise. Besides adventuring through the forests in search of toucans and remote beaches, daily charters leave for bays and smaller islands. The nights are warm and rainy and locals play music while tourists eat ice cream on the beach. It's almost too perfect, leaving you with a disquieted feeling that you may in fact be on a set. It's the same eerie feeling I had once in Marrakesh, the feeling that the 'real' had been swallowed by the performance of the 'perfect'.

Rio de Janeiro's graffitied, peeling, crumbling neighbourhoods feel somewhat more 'real' in comparison, though no less romantic. Maybe 'romantic' is the wrong word to describe the hundreds of tanned, tattooed, basically naked bodies lounging and running and playing beach volleyball. 'Sexy' sounds like what marketing people say about a new product-line extension and 'fleshy' sounds like what serial killers think of middle-aged women. Rio is immoderate, indecent – a giant sweaty, drunken sea creature that swallows you up and spits you back onto the beach, tanned and in a Speedo. At night the beaches are still full, but with locals avoiding the gringos, and public squares swell with drunk and singing Brazilians who will kiss you or rob you, or both if you're not careful. And on Sundays, old men play music and sell beer, while in the neighbourhood of Ipanema the promenade is closed to cars, and rollerbladers with helmets and skaters and walkers parade. And, when the sun sets, cariocas clap – because they are grateful.

Brazilians are, no matter where they live, pretty damn glad to be Brazilian. And very proud – of their architecture, art, beaches, bodies, language and food. The first five things on the list seem worth being proud of. I, on the other hand, will be happy to have my next island holiday without chicken-heart pizzas. Don't tell Brazilians this (particularly those from Rio); they think the 'coxinha' – a tear-shaped deep-fried pie of shredded chicken and mashed potato – is so fancy that they use it as a pejorative, an insult hurled over state lines. **mc**