



Country Report

BRAZIL

Last reviewed & updated 2025

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Brazil is a Portuguese-speaking country located in South America. It is bordered by every country in South America except for Ecuador and Chile and covers almost half of the continent's land area. Home to the largest portion of the Amazon rainforest, Brazil is rich in natural resources and is the focus of global attention over challenges to environmental protection. A democratic federal republic, Brazil was colonized by Portugal for more than 300 years and is ethnically diverse and the most populous country in Latin America, with more than 211 million residents. Considered an upper-middle-income country and a regional or middle power in global affairs, Brazil is also the largest economy in Latin America.

The primary risks to travelers in Brazil stem from crime, both petty and violent, and road accidents. It is advisable for travelers to adopt sensible precautions to minimize the risk associated with petty crime. Armed robbery, car theft, burglary, and occasional home invasions are common across Brazil, especially in major cities. Robberies by armed assailants on motorbikes are an acute problem in all cities across Brazil. Low-income and informal housing areas across Brazil, known as favelas, are entirely controlled by street gangs, and should be avoided by all travelers.

Brazil is prone to occasional flooding in some areas, especially rural areas where mudslides may also be a concern.

Adventure tourism such as hiking, biking, climbing, paragliding, and off-road driving



Country Risk Level	MEDIUM (3)
Capital	Brasilia
Region	South America
Official Language	Portuguese
Currency	Brazilian Real (BRL)
Country Calling Code	+55
Time Zone	UTC -3
Emergency Numbers	190 (Fed. Police), 197 (Civ. Police), 192 (medical)
Freedom House Rating	Free

accounts for a number of accidents involving foreign visitors each year and increased safety precautions are advisable on such excursions.

HEALTH & MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Private medical facilities in major cities, particularly Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro, can provide a high standard of care. The availability and quality of care can be limited outside of more populated areas. Travelers that are on prescription medication are advised to carry necessary and contingency doses, in its original packaging along with the prescription provided by the doctor. Private medical facilities have been known to require payment up-front for services. It is advisable for travelers to ensure they always have adequate insurance coverage. Consider and take out additional coverage if planning to participate in extreme sports or adventure activities.

There are periodic outbreaks of Dengue, and other mosquito-borne diseases, including Yellow Fever, Malaria, Chikungunya, and Zika throughout Brazil. Preventing mosquito bites is an important preventative measure for travelers and these include, wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, hats, using insect repellants that preferably contain DEET, and mosquito nets and repellent devices while sleeping.

Gastrointestinal illnesses caused by contaminated food and beverages commonly affect travelers in Brazil and can be dangerous without proper treatment. Tap water is generally not considered safe for consumption and most Brazilians stick to bottled water and/or treated water bought specifically for drinking. Travelers are advised to do the same.



Consult the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) website](https://www.cdc.gov) for Brazil prior to travel.

CRIME & SAFETY OVERVIEW

Street crime, both opportunistic and violent, is a major threat to travelers and residents alike throughout Brazil. The crime risks include robbery, burglary, sexual assault, kidnapping, cyber-theft, and pickpocketing. Though millions of tourists visit the country annually without incident, visitors should maintain vigilance as criminals may perceive foreign visitors to be more affluent and vulnerable. The most common type of crime is opportunistic and nonviolent in nature, but can quickly become violent, particularly if a victim(s) attempts to resist. Most criminals in Brazil are armed with handguns and knives

and do not hesitate to use their weapons. If confronted by a criminal, it is best to comply with the demands of the perpetrator(s).

Travelers are most likely to be targeted in crowded areas, festivals, street parties, and on public transportation. If visitors use public transportation in Brazil, such as the metro, buses, and taxis, they should keep all valuables, identification, and passports close by at all times. Bags/purses placed in the overhead compartments or under one's feet are often reported stolen. Travelers should remain vigilant in any crowded places (markets, transportation hubs, and tourist centers), refrain from carrying large sums of cash, and ostentatious displays of wealth. Crime rates increase during the holiday season in December and January each year, as well as during Carnival season in the spring.

In all major cities, travelers should exercise caution, including in high-end neighborhoods and upmarket shopping areas, as these are not immune to crime. Previous incidents suggest that criminals specifically prowl these areas seeking targets of opportunity. Travelers should always maintain situational awareness, travel in groups where possible, avoid hailing taxis on the side of the street or using unofficial taxis, and be particularly vigilant after dark and in the early morning hours.

Petty crime and property theft are prevalent in major cities, especially Sao Paolo, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasilia. Robberies committed by thieves on motorcycles occur both at night and during the day. These robberies sometimes end in violence when victims attempt to flee or resist, and travelers should comply with assailants in the event of a robbery. There have been cases in which travelers were targeted for robbery by criminals at the arrivals and baggage areas of major airports, including in Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro, and travelers should exercise caution accordingly. Prearrange transportation from airports to hotels using vetted transportation companies.

All neighborhoods in Sao Paolo, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasilia experience high levels of crime, both violent and nonviolent. Even tourist destinations, including Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro and other beaches popular throughout Brazil, see high crime rates, especially armed robbery, assault, and sexual assault. Criminals throughout Brazil are known to travel to affluent neighborhoods to target residents for burglary and robbery. Informal, low-income housing areas known as *favelas* are present in all major cities and are controlled entirely by street gangs and organized crime groups. Travelers should avoid all *favelas* at all times.

Organized crime, armed militias, and street gangs are pervasive throughout Brazil, primarily in *favelas* in all major cities and in the prison system. These criminal groups are focused on drug trafficking, local drug distribution, illegal arms trading, and numerous other illicit activities. The tri-border area between Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil is another noted hotspot for smuggling and organized crime related activity, as are all of the border regions of Brazil within 100 kilometers of the country's international borders.

Criminal groups engage in frequent gun battles with the police and with rivals in the *favelas*, including in daylight in crowded areas. There is a significant risk to travelers if caught in the vicinity of such confrontations, and travelers should seek hard cover or lay prone if caught near a shooting incident.

Of particular concern are nightclubs in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia, and other major cities. A number of scams are commonly reported, including a common one in which the bar places fraudulent charges on credit cards and has bouncers assault patrons who refuse to pay exorbitant fees. Assaults and robberies in and around nightclubs are commonly reported, and travelers are urged to be particularly cautious of the threat of drink spiking. A number of credible reports have emerged in recent years of criminals using rohypnol, scopolamine, and other drugs to incapacitate victims for robbery and/or sexual assault. Sexual assaults, particularly against females, are also an acute problem in nightclubs and in other public venues such as beaches, street festivals, and public transportation. For more information, see the *Female Traveler Safety Section*.

Credit card skimming is on the rise and muggings typically occur at ATMs located on the street and exposed to the public. Travelers should only use ATMs located inside of a reputable hotel or bank. Where possible, do not withdraw large amounts of cash. Travelers should, as much as possible, not let their credit cards out of sight, and monitor their accounts for signs of any unknown transactions. Travelers should report any suspicious activity to their respective financial institution as soon as possible.

Police across Brazil are generally known to be heavy-handed, involved in petty corruption, and inconsistent in their responses to crime and requests for assistance. Many Brazilian police units report being underfunded, understaffed, and underequipped. Military police officers are responsible for deterring and responding to crime but do not have investigative responsibilities, which fall to civil police units and federal police, depending on the severity of the crime. Police shootings, notably in Rio de Janeiro, are a common and growing phenomenon and credible accusations of extra-judicial killings by police against gang members are a major national issue.

Reporting crimes requires the victim to visit the appropriate local police station to undergo formal reporting procedures. Embassy officials from the travelers' home country should be contacted prior to undertaking such reporting. Uniformed military police armed with assault weapons are a common presence in all areas of Brazil, including major cities. Travelers should comply with any instructions issued by police in Brazil and should be prepared to supply official identification if requested.

The risk of kidnapping for foreigners in Brazil is significant and most often involves a method known as "express kidnapping," where the victim is taken for a short period of time and forcefully brought to a bank or ATM to withdraw as much money as possible.

Travelers should exercise caution with their movements, vary routines, and avoid giving out personal information while in country.

TERRORISM

The threat of terrorism is assessed as low in Brazil. Prior to and during the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazilian authorities arrested a network of self-radicalized terrorists who were allegedly planning to conduct attacks during the games. An eco-terrorist group was also found to have planted a small, crude bomb in a bus terminal in Brasilia during the Olympics. There are some concerns about terrorist financing by individuals with connections to transnational terrorist groups, including Hezbollah, in the tri-border area between Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. Aside from these issues, however, there is no recent history of terrorism in Brazil. Nonetheless, travelers should remain vigilant to their surroundings and report anything amiss to the authorities. During the political unrest following former President Jair Bolsonaro losing his bid for re-election, government officials of the incoming administration of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva referred to groups of Bolsonaro supporters as "terrorists" due to activities connected to efforts to contest and overturn the election results.

POLITICAL STABILITY

Demonstrations occur frequently in Brasilia, Sao Paolo, Rio de Janeiro, and in other major cities. Most protests are related to socio-economic and political issues, including labor disputes, education reform, and public corruption scandals. Recurring protests over economic conditions, environmental issues, and other societal woes, have at times become widespread and violent. In the spring and summer of 2019 major protests broke out over wildfires and development initiatives in the Amazon, as well as proposed cuts to the Brazilian education system. Thousands marched along Sao Paolo's Paulista Avenue, as well as near Rio de Janeiro's city hall.

While most protests in Brazil are peaceful and organized, with police accompanying crowds, violence can break out at little notice. The police have been known to employ tear gas, batons, and water cannon to disperse boisterous crowds. Avoid any protest or crowds gathering after an incident as a matter-of-course. Across the country, demonstrations are largely concentrated in the downtown areas of cities and towns, often taking place near government offices and national landmarks.

Jair Bolsonaro, the incumbent president, is a highly popular and divisive figure in Brazil, and his tenure in office has been marked by major corruption scandals, the weakening

of environmental protections, loosening of gun ownership laws, and increasingly militarized approach to crime, among many other issues. A populist former military officer, Bolsonaro's rhetoric makes frequent references to the country's former military junta and his administration has sought to implement socially conservative policies. Student groups, environmentalists, and Brazil's indigenous peoples in particular frequently organized demonstrations in major cities to raise awareness of perceived threats from Bolsonaro.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva also known as Lula da Silva or simply Lula, is a Brazilian politician who is the 39th and current president of Brazil since 2023. Presidential elections took place October 30, 2022, with President Jair Bolsonaro losing against former president and left-wing candidate, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Following the election results, supporters of Bolsonaro protested in the streets, blocking highways, and some calling on the military to stop the transfer of power. The protests and road blockings resulted in fuel distribution, supermarkets inventory, and grain shipments to be heavily disrupted. There were concerns over whether Bolsonaro would contest the election results, however, Bolsonaro stated he would follow the constitution, and the transition of power was carried out on January 1, 2023.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure and roads vary greatly in Brazil, with roads and major highways in major cities generally ranging from poor to good. Roads in rural areas can be especially hazardous, with potholes, obstructions, and poor signage. Self-driving in Brazil is not advisable for travelers without extensive prior experience in country due to unpredictable local driving habits, a high rate of road accidents, frequent road work, heavy traffic in major cities, and often poorly maintained roads in rural areas. Travel in rural and remote areas carries with it a greater risk of untoward incidents, including a lack of available roadside assistance, or the inability to access essential supplies or reliable communication. Outside of major cities, it is not advisable to travel after nightfall and travelers should plan accordingly.

Police checkpoints may be common, and the authorities may close off certain areas to transit at short-to-little notice, due to security threats. Drivers may be given breathalyzer tests and asked to provide identification.

Theft from stopped vehicles is a significant risk, including "smash and grab" attacks, where an assailant smashes a car window (even with the occupants in it) and grabs whatever is in reach. Car windows should remain up, doors locked, and valuables stored out of view. Exercise increased vigilance at intersections and in areas of heavy traffic congestion, where incidents of smash and grab often take place. Many Brazilians who are able to afford them drive armored cars with tinted windows, and executives and

foreign business travelers in major cities often utilize armored vehicles and close protection officers due to their increased profile.

Driving hazards increase at night due to the prevalence of road hazards, poor signage, and the absence of lighting. Visitors planning to undertake overland travel to more remote areas are advised to hire a reputable driver, and ensure that vehicle is well equipped, including extra supplies, such as fuel and food/water.

Instead of hailing cabs from the street, visitors should prearrange radio taxis or private drivers through reliable local contacts (such as from reputable hotels) or reputable local transport companies. Do not allow for a driver to pick-up other passengers and agree to the fare before entering the vehicle. Ride hailing apps such as Uber are available in major cities, and travelers should verify that the license plate on the vehicle matches the one listed in the app before entering. Travelers should note that due to conflicts with taxi drivers, it is common for ride hailing drivers to request that passengers sit in the front seat and to generally not appear as if they are hailing a ride.

Another acute problem with public transportation is sexual harassment and sexual assault. Some services, such as Rio de Janeiro's subway system, offer women-only cars during peak hours. Baggage theft at major airports throughout Brazil has been reported in a number of instances recently; if possible, avoid checking valuable items and keep a close eye on bags after securing them from the baggage carousel. Use extra caution when transiting to and from airports throughout Brazil, as smash and grab robberies on roads leading to the airport are known to occur.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Brazil is not prone to many types of natural disasters common in other South American countries. However, it is prone to flooding following heavy rainfall, especially during the rainy season (October-March). Low-lying areas may experience regular flooding during the rainy season and roads across the country can be susceptible to flashfloods. Heavy torrential rains struck the Rio Grande do Sul state in late April that included a record-setting 26 inches of rainfall in some areas and resulted in widespread flooding and landslides due to heavy soil saturation. The flooding and landslides resulted in 181 fatalities and a dam collapse.

Water safety standards in much of Brazil may not be as robust as other countries and precautions such as the provision of lifeguards may be uncommon. Drownings and boating accidents are consistently ranked as leading causes of death and injury for

Travelers can monitor
[Brazil's National Institute of
Meteorology website](#) for updates and
information on weather conditions.

travelers. Any trips that involve swimming or the use of boats and watercraft should employ extra precautions and vigilance. Travelers should only enter the water if they are confident swimmers and should seek the latest official water safety information before swimming. Travelers should avoid entering water when intoxicated, and be particularly cautious of rip currents, which are present along many of Brazil's beaches. This includes beaches popular with tourists. Water pollution is a concern in many tourist areas. Lagoa, Ipanema, and Copacabana beaches, as well as Guanabara Bay, all suffer from high levels of water contamination.

Extreme sports such as kitesurfing, paragliding, and off-roading account for a number of accidents involving travelers every year. Travelers should ensure that companies operating such activities have the requisite licenses and certifications prior to making reservations. While it is always advisable for travelers to have insurance coverage, such extreme activities warrant additional premiums to be added to an insurance policy. Visitors planning to take part in such activities should consult with their travel insurance provider prior to journey.

FEMALE TRAVELER SAFETY

Domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape occur at high rates in Brazil, including against female travelers. Females may be subject to unwanted attention and lewd comments such as "cat-calling". Men in Brazil may not always adhere to the same social boundaries or norms as men in your home country. Foreign women may face an increase in unwanted attention in comparison to local women. Female travelers are advised to not travel alone or at night.

Numerous instances of sexual assault against female travelers have been reported in recent years. The most vulnerable are women traveling unaccompanied and/or at night; travelers should avoid traveling alone wherever possible and ideally in groups of more than two individuals. Even pairs of women have been targeted in some cases.

Incidents tend to occur more frequently near beaches, along hiking trails, and especially around bars and nightclubs. Spiked food and drinks, specifically with the drugs rohypnol and scopolamine, is a common practice used to commit sexual assaults. Be wary of recent acquaintances and individuals who attempt to befriend travelers or offer favors. At no time should travelers accept rides from unknown persons. While the vast majority of locals are eager to help visitors in need, high rates of sexual assault and violence against women necessitate heightened awareness and safety practices. Travelers should consider contacting their respective diplomatic mission in the event of a sexual assault incident as consular officials can advise on how to interact with the local authorities; procedures and standards for care may differ from those in your home country.

LGBTQ+ TRAVELER SAFETY

Same-sex marriage is legal and protections for LGBTQ+ persons are included in anti-discrimination laws. There are no laws against same-sex relationships or LGBTQ+ events. However, in practice there are still sizeable portions of Brazilian society that are socially conservative and in some cases hostile to members of the LGBTQ+ community. Despite this, Brazil is one of the top destinations for LGBTQ+ tourism in the world.

Brazil has a very active LGBTQ+ community, including thousands of bars and nightclubs that cater towards the LGBTQ+ community and large organized pride parades. Nonetheless, travelers are recommended to exercise caution as occasional discrimination and harassment is reported.

CULTURAL INFORMATION

Brazil is an extremely diverse country. The official language is Portuguese, spoken by about 99% of the population, with the remainder speaking some 180 indigenous languages or European languages including German and Italian. Ethnically, the country is primarily made up of people of mixed European, sub-Saharan African, and Amerindian descent. Brazil is considered to have one of the highest rates of ethnic and racial admixture, with a correspondingly high rate of cultural assimilation. Brazilians of African descent comprise the largest population in Brazil's northeast, while Brazilians of European descent are the majority in the country's south. Most Brazilians are very patriotic, and the vast majority of residents are warm and hospitable to travelers.

While much of Brazilian culture centers around Portuguese culture, Brazilian culture, including its cuisine, music, dance, art, and architecture, incorporates a mixture of African, Amerindian, and various other European cultural inputs. Brazil attracts millions of tourists every year, especially during Carnival, which is held annually each spring leading up to Ash Wednesday. While Roman Catholicism is widely influential in Brazilian life, religions with African origins, Judaism, Islam, and other religions are also practiced by sizeable populations.

Family is at the center of Brazilian social life, and as such, family events may take precedence over business activities in some instances.

TRAVELER ADVICE

- ✓ Street crime is common across Brazil, especially in its major urban areas. Visitors should maintain situational awareness when in public areas and keep belongings close by at all times.
- ✓ Avoid travel to all areas within 150 km/100 miles of Brazil's land borders with Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and Paraguay due to criminal activity. This does not apply to the Foz do Iguacu National Park or Pantanal National Park.
- ✓ Avoid all travel to informal housing areas known as favelas due to the prevalence of gangs, organized crime, and street crime.
- ✓ Prearrange transportation from major airports and do not linger in the arrivals and baggage areas, as criminals sometimes target travelers for robbery outside the airport upon their arrival.
- ✓ Use caution if traveling by bus, metro, or train. Travel during daylight hours when possible, confirm your destination, and only buy tickets directly from official channels.
- ✓ Robberies and sexual assaults are common near beaches after nightfall. Travel in groups, do not visit beaches at night, and exercise increased caution in these areas.
- ✓ Do not hail taxis from the side of the street. Pre-arrange rides ride hailing apps or official taxis (red license plates) if available.
- ✓ Always keep vehicle doors locked, windows up, and valuables out of sight when in transit. Do not allow your driver to pick up any additional passengers and do not embark on rides where the driver is accompanied by another unknown passenger.
- ✓ Monitor travel advisories and local media to keep abreast of any planned protest. Avoid the vicinity of any scheduled demonstrations. If caught up in a protest, leave the scene immediately.
- ✓ Always carry either your passport or a photocopy. The police may also ask to see of copy of the passport page with your visa.
- ✓ If you encounter a roadblock do not attempt to pass through it without consent of the personnel manning the roadblock, as this will likely prompt an aggressive response.

- ✓ If involved in a car accident, all vehicles and parties should remain at the scene until the authorities arrive.
- ✓ Self-driving is not advised unless traveler is intimately familiar with local driving conditions, routes, and laws.
- ✓ Where possible, travel in groups. Avoid drawing unnecessary attention or ostentatious displays of wealth. Do not physically attempt to resist any mugging attempts, criminals are often armed and prepared to use violence.
- ✓ Avoid using your cell phone in open public places. Exercise vigilance when withdrawing cash from ATMs. Where possible use ATMs inside public buildings such as shopping malls and hotels.
- ✓ Do not provide personal information to unauthorized individuals (i.e. people without official uniforms or credentials). Fake police are known to operate in major cities and tourist sites.
- ✓ Do not leave food or beverages unattended in public areas as criminals commonly use drugs to subdue their victims. Do not consume any food and drinks offered by strangers.
- ✓ Monitor local news for reports of natural hazards that could impact your travel plans (e.g. flooding, landslides). Be prepared to cancel or change travel plans at short notice.

The information provided to you within this report has been compiled from a multitude of available sources and is based on current news and analysis at the time of writing. The security team at On Call International, LLC has provided this analysis, supporting advice and recommendations in good faith to assist you in mitigating risks that could arise. However, no implied or express warranty against risk, changes in circumstance, or other fluid and unforeseen events can be provided. By reading this report, you will agree that any reliance you place on this information is therefore strictly at your own risk and that you will not hold On Call International, LLC or the authors responsible for any inaccuracies, errors or oversights here-in. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise without the prior permission of On Call International, LLC.