

# **Budget Break in Rio**

Rio de Janeiro, 3 Days

## **Table of contents:**

Guide Description 2

Itinerary Overview 3

Daily Itineraries 4

Rio de Janeiro Snapshot 10



## **Guide Description**

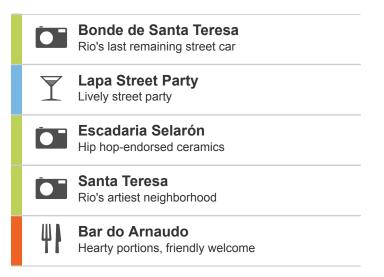


AUTHOR NOTE: Spiraling inflation, an increasingly strong currency and an ever-increasing flow of tourists mean that Rio is no longer the bargain beach destination it once was, especially as travelers feel the pinch of the financial crisis. However, with a little know-how and some smart thinking, it's easy to avoid the tourist traps and see the best of this magnificent city without breaking the bank. Never has the phrase 'the best things in life are free' been more apt than in Rio – beautiful beaches, breathtaking views and interesting museums can all be enjoyed without reaching for your wallet; and – if you know where to look – it's possible to enjoy good food and lively nightlife without blowing your budget.



## Day 1 - Rio de Janeiro

DAY NOTE: Friday nights in Rio are all about the street parties and samba clubs of Lapa, so make your base close to the action at the good-value Rio Hostel. The hostel lies between the laid back, boho neighbourhood of Santa Teresa and Lapa itself, and while walking between the districts is easy, don't do so at night unless in a large group. If you are alone, or there are just a couple of you, take a cab, or you might fall victim to opportunistic thieves. Once you've stashed your bags at the hostel, head down to Lapa itself and check out the intriguing Lapa steps. You'll usually find the eccentric Chilean artist Selaron hard at work on his masterpiece, and he's always happy to talk about his work. Bring your camera, the steps are a great photo opportunity! From here, head into Centro and take in colonial architecture before stopping for a cold beer and bite to eat at Amarelinho, which sits at the heart of Cinelandia square. Prices for food here are kept low despite a great location, and you'll be sure to linger a while as you sit and watch the world go by. After lunch, head to the bonde (tram) station, and pay just 60 centavos for this fun, rattling ride aboard the old streetcar as it rumbles over the Lapa Arches and up the winding cobbled streets of Santa Teresa. Hop off at Curvelo and check out one of the best free views over the city from the top of a renovated mansion at Parque das Ruinas. Jump back on the bonde or walk on foot to Largo das Neves, where you'll find a quaint little square lined with bars in front of a dinky little white church. You can pick up bargain arts, crafts and vintage clothes in Santa Teresa's many boutiques, and after a hard day's browsing settle down to a bargain Northeastern feast at the excellent-value Bar do Arnaudo. After dinner, grab a couple of drinks in a bar and head on down the hill to Lapa, where the street party action gets going around 11pm. Countless stalls selling vodka and cachaca cocktails make this a true cheap and cheerful night out – just be careful not to get lost in the crowd, and don't take a bag or camera, keep money in front pockets.





#### **Rio Hostel**

Hostel with a pool and bar

## Day 2 - Rio de Janeiro

## بسب

#### **Copacabana Wave Hostel**

Two minute walk to the beach



#### Barril 1800

Bar and barbeque right by the beach



#### Lagoa

A beautiful place to unwind



#### **Parque Lage**

Gorgeous Gardens and Grounds



#### Emporio

Late night Ipanema option



#### **New Natural**

Great for vegetarians



#### Copacabana Beach

The World's Most Famous Stretch of Sand?



## Day 1 - Rio de Janeiro

**QUICK NOTE** 

DAY NOTE: Friday nights in Rio are all about the street parties and samba clubs of Lapa, so make your base close to the action at the good-value Rio Hostel. The hostel lies between the laid back, boho neighbourhood of Santa Teresa and Lapa itself, and while walking between the districts is easy, don't do so at night unless in a large group. If you are alone, or there are just a couple of you, take a cab, or you might fall victim to opportunistic thieves. Once you've stashed your bags at the hostel, head down to Lapa itself and check out the intriguing Lapa steps. You'll usually find the eccentric Chilean artist Selaron hard at work on his masterpiece, and he's always happy to talk about his work. Bring your camera, the steps are a great photo opportunity! From here, head into Centro and take in colonial architecture before stopping for a cold beer and bite to eat at Amarelinho, which sits at the heart of Cinelandia square. Prices for food here are kept low despite a great location, and you'll be sure to linger a while as you sit and watch the world go by. After lunch, head to the bonde (tram) station, and pay just 60 centavos for this fun, rattling ride aboard the old streetcar as it rumbles over the Lapa Arches and up the winding cobbled streets of Santa Teresa. Hop off at Curvelo and check out one of the best free views over the city from the top of a renovated mansion at Parque das Ruinas. Jump back on the bonde or walk on foot to Largo das Neves, where you'll find a quaint little square lined with bars in front of a dinky little white church. You can pick up bargain arts, crafts and vintage clothes in Santa Teresa's many boutiques, and after a hard day's browsing settle down to a bargain Northeastern feast at the excellent-value Bar do Arnaudo. After dinner, grab a couple of drinks in a bar and head on down the hill to Lapa, where the street party action gets going around 11pm. Countless stalls selling vodka and cachaca cocktails make this a true cheap and cheerful night out – just be careful not to get lost in the crowd, and don't take a bag or camera, keep money in front pockets .

#### contact:

tel: +55 21 222 1003 / +55 21 242 2354

http://www.sectran.rj.gov.br/

#### location:

Rua Professor Lélio Gama, 65 Rio de Janeiro RJ 20031-080

#### hours:

7a-10p M-Su

### **Bonde de Santa Teresa**

DESCRIPTION: The Santa Teresa bonde (streetcar) is the last reminder of what was once Rio's principle form of public transport. But far from being just a historical artifact, the rattling yellow tram is great fun to ride, as it clatters over the iconic Arcos da Lapa and up the winding cobbled streets of Santa Teresa. Locals jump on and off the bonde as it rattles by – there is no charge for those who choose to stand on the running board instead of taking a seat. There are two lines – one to Paulo Mattos, and one to Dois Irmaoes. Both pass tram stops at Largo do Curvelo, where there is regular live samba on Sundays, and Largo do Guimaraes, which is the central point for the neighborhood's many excellent bars, restaurants and shops. Jump off at either point and you will be well-placed for exploring this bucolic neighborhood. © NileGuide



#### contact:

http://www.lanalapa.com.br

#### location:

Rua da Lapa Rio de Janeiro

#### hours:

Th-Sa 10p-6a



## Lapa Street Party

DESCRIPTION: If youre looking for the best weekend nightlife action there's only one place to head - Lapa. And for those on a budget, the good news is that you don't even need to pay to enter a club in order to party until dawn. From Thursday to Saturday (Fridays are busiest), the area around the Lapa arches fills up with partiers, live music, and countless vendors selling food and drink - be sure to try some of the mouthwatering cocktails made with vodka and mango or strawberry. The crowd is mainly young and dress is very relaxed. Live music can crop up anywhere but is most often



Lapa Street Party



.

found on the square next to the famous arches - take care here and in other crowded paces as the area is rife with pickpockets. © wcities.com

#### location:

Escadaria do Convento de Santa Teresa Rio de Janeiro RJ 20241-130



### Escadaria Selarón

DESCRIPTION: The steps between Lapa and Santa Teresa have been turned into an ongoing work of art by eccentric Chilean artist Selarón. The artist has used painted and decorated tiles from across the world to create something truly unique - musicians such as Snoop Dogg and Pharell have shot promotional videos here.



Photo courtesy of Lucy Bryson

#### location:

Ladeira de Santa Teresa Rio de Janeiro 20241-140



### Santa Teresa

#### **OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

When taking the bonde line that heads towards Paulo Mattos, most tourists jump off at the busy Largo do Guimaraes. Stay on until the end of the line, however, and you'll reach Largo das Neves – a wonderfully tranquil square headed by a pretty whitewashed church and lined with several small bars serving very good food and tasty cocktails.

DESCRIPTION: Once home to Rio's wealthiest inhabitants, the charming hillside neighborhood of Santa Teresa began to fall into disrepair during the 1960s and 70s, when the emergence of favelas nearby drove the rich towards the city's beaches. Artists and musicians moved into the abandoned mansions. and today Santa Teresa is known as Rio's most bohemian neighborhood. Vintage clothes stores, artists workshops and wonderfully laid-back bars and restaurants make the neighborhood well worth a visit, and the iconic yellow tram that clatters its way along the twisting streets is a joy to ride. Despite its close proximity to the city centre, Santa Teresa has preserved a charming small-town atmosphere, and there is a real community atmosphere to the place. Santa Teresa is wellpoliced and its reputation as a dangerous area to visit is largely undeserved, however, do take the usual precautions, and take taxis between here and Santa Teresa at night. © NileGuide



#### contact:

tel: 55 21 2252 7246

#### location:

Rua Almirante Alexandrino 316, loja B Rio de Janeiro RJ 20441-260



#### **Bar do Arnaudo**

#### **OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Go easy with the chilli sauce brought to your table at Bar do Arnaudo. It's something of an aquired taste, and fiery to say the very least!



Photo courtesy of Lucy Bryson



5

DESCRIPTION: If you're looking for good food that will fill you up without blowing the budget, Bar do Arnaudo is the place to come. This traditional, homely restaurant (no, it's not actually a bar...) serves delicious food from the North East of Brazil in absolutely enormous portions. The set meals for one easily serve two or even three – take your pick from sundried meat or queijo coalho (a hard white cheese, similar to halloumi, served grilled), with brown beans, yucca, rice and pumpkin farofa (toasted seasoned yucca flour). Wash it down with a large, ice cold bottle of beer to share, or - even better – a delicious coconut or passionfruit batida. These creamy drinks are made with fruit, condensed milk and cachaca, the sugar cane rum that is Brazil's national drink. Beware, however, that although they may taste innocent they really pack a punch! © NileGuide

#### contact:

tel: 55 21 2287-2928 www.riohostel.com

#### location:

Rua Joaquim Murtinho, 361 RJ



#### **Rio Hostel**

DESCRIPTION: Rio Hostel is within a five minute walk from the busy center of Rio de Janeiro and the most electrical nightlife of Lapa. Santa Teresa and the biggest urban rainforest in the world are also located nearby. This youth hostel is the perfect choice in a city of millions of people and a great deal of charm and swing, with unforgettable dashes of samba and soccer, lust and rest, summer and carnival. This hostel has a pool, bar, and internet access.



Photo courtesy of Rio Hostel



## Day 2 - Rio de Janeiro

**QUICK NOTE** 

#### contact:

tel: 55 21 2227-1846 www.wavehostel.com

#### location:

Travessa Cristiano Lacorte. 46 RJ

## Copacabana Wave Hostel

DESCRIPTION: This hostel is located in a guiet/safe street in the heart of Copacabana (2 min walk to the beach). It is recommended by Lonely Planet as one of the nicest hostels in Rio. Arpoador beach is within walking-distance to Arpoador beach, one of most consistent breaks in the city and perfect for travelers wishing to catch great surf.



Photo courtesy of Copacabana Wave Hostel

#### contact:

tel: 55 21 523 0085 fax: 55 21 521 5111

#### location:

Avenida Vieira Souto, 110 Rio de Janeiro 22420-000

#### hours:

M-Su 11 a.m - 1 a.m.

## **Barril 1800**

DESCRIPTION: Barril 1800 sits directly opposite Ipanema beach, serves some of the best draught beer in Rio, and its Saturday feijoada (bean and meat feast) is the stuff of legend. The barbequed meats are also excellent, as is the seafood. The service here is formal but the atmosphere very relaxed - you won't look or feel out of place here in your shorts and flip flops. And don't feel you have to eat - this is also a lovely spot to just kick back and relax with a cold beer or caipirinha cocktail. © NileGuide



"Photo courtesy of Barril 1800"

#### contact:

tel: +55 21 25447992 (Tourist information)

#### location:

Avenida Epitácio Pessoa Rio de Janeiro 22471-001



### Lagoa

DESCRIPTION: Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas (or Lagoa, as it is popularly known) is the perfect place to come to unwind. A vast lagoon surrounded by dramatic mountains, Lagoa attracts fitness fanatics making use of the running track and exercise stations; families taking to the water on peddle boats; couples and groups of friends wining and dining at the many waterside bars and restaurants; and pensive types mulling things over as they stroll around the lake and take in the stunning views. The 7.5 kilometre running/cycling/walking track is a great way to exercise in beautiful surrounds, and the nearby Parque Catacumba, entrance to which is free, boasts walking trails that will lead you through bamboo groves to a lofty viewpoint with stunning vistas across the lake and over to Ipanema beach. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Lucy Bryson



#### contact:

tel: (21) 2538 - 1879 http://www.rio.rj.gov.br/fpj/pql age.htm

#### location:

Rua Jardim Botânico, 414 -Jardim Botânico Rio de Janeiro RJ



## **Parque Lage**

DESCRIPTION: A dramatically different park that has featured in videos for Snoop Dogg and Pharell Williams as well as the Black-Eyed Peas, Parque Lage sits right next door to Rio's famous Botanical Gardens, but remains something of a secret to tourists. The park is set in teh grounds of a beautiful 1920s mansion, now a coffee house and art school, and the grounds are dotted with little caves that are filled with tropical fish tanks. Teh cafe is a beautiful spot to enjoy a leisurely breakfast or brunch, or make like local families and bring along a cool box filled with picnic goodies and wine. For the more adventurous, trails run into the Tijuca National Park from here. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Parque Lage

#### contact:

tel: 55 21 3813 2526

#### location:

Rua Maria Quiteria 37, Ipanema Rio de Janeiro

#### hours

Nightly, from early evening until 4a



### **Emporio**

DESCRIPTION: Open nightly until around 4am, Emporio gets particularly busy on Mondays, when people spill onto the streets. Attracts hordes of local people but is also a good spot to meet other travellers. DJs spin a mix of American and UK alternative and rock music, with a bit of vintage Brazilian MPB.

#### contact:

tel: 55 21 2287 0301

#### location:

Rua Barao de Torre 171, Ipanema Rio de Janeiro RJ

#### hours:

Sa-Su 8 a.m - 11 p.m.



## **New Natural**

#### **OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

New Natural is a great spot for a snack or light lunch, but if you're on a budget it's not the place to come when you're absolutely ravenous. The food is priced by weight and, at nearly R\$4 per 100 grams, you might find yourself spending more than you planned if you head here on an empty stomach.

DESCRIPTION: New Natural is a fantastic health food buffet. It's largely veggie-friendly, with a lot of soy dishes, although chicken and fish do make an appearance. The nourishing and delicious soups, pastries and hot dishes are popular with Ipanema's health-conscious beachgoers, as well as with travelers staying at 'Hostel Alley', the strip of backpacker accommodation next door to the restaurant. © NileGuide

#### contact:

tel: +55 21 2542 8080 fax: +55 21 2542 0964 http://www.copacabanapalac e.com.br/web/orio/orio\_a2a\_h ome.isp

#### location:

Avenida Atlantica and Xavier da Silveira



## Copacabana Beach

DESCRIPTION: Possibly the most famous stretch of sand in the world, Copacabana beach is synonymous with the hedonistic side of Rio – with sun, sea, beautiful bodies and New Year celebrations on the beach. Stretching for around five kilometers (the beach is called Leme at its northern end), Copacabana boasts soft white sand that is crammed with locals in tiny bikinis and shorts. Stalls selling ice-cold beers





#### Rio de Janeiro 22010-000

and caipirinhas line the beachfront, and joggers run along the pavements – famous for their distinctive wave-patterned black and white tiling. Copacabana beach is overlooked by the attractive, jungle covered hill of Morro do Leme, and Sugar Loaf mountain is resplendent in the background. Avenida Atlantica is the busy road running along the beachfront, and across from the sands the road is lined with towering high rise hotels and apartment blocks, as well as any number of places to eat and drink. Be warned, however, that while a visit here is a must, Copacabana is not the best place to sunbathe. The water is too dirty for swimming, the beach is rife with pickpockets, and vendors selling tourist tat are annoyingly relentless in their drive to relieve you of your tourist dollar. © NileGuide



## Rio de Janeiro Snapshot

#### **Local Info**

This sizzling city of over six million people is the second largest in Brazil. Tourists flock to the wealthy Zona Sul(South Zone), where the world-famous beaches of Ipanema and Copacabana host throngs of beautiful people all year round. A city of contrasts, Rio's working class North Zone is a far cry from the glamor of the beach areas, while the hillside favelas(shanty towns) are notorious the world over. But despite its social problems. Rio is a city that loves to party-- Rio Carnaval and New Year's in Rio are two of the world's biggest and most colorful celebrations -- and Rio moves to a constant musical beat. Once described as"The most sinful city every to be blessed by Christ," Rio goes about its business under the ever-watchful gaze of Christ the Redeemer(Corcovado), who towers above the city, embracing saints and sinners alike in his outstretched arms. The staggering natural beauty of the city is best appreciated from above, and a trip to the top of Corcovado mountain is a great way to take in a panoramic view of this most stunning of cities. The dizzying cable car ride up to the top of Sugar Loaf mountain is another tourist must-do, and provides another opportunity to take in the spectacular cityscape below. Beautiful people, beautiful landscapes, magical music and memorable moments: they are all part and parcel of a trip to Rio de Janeiro, the Cidade Maravilhosa (Marvelous City).

#### Centro

The city center is the financial and business heart of Rio, and is also home to most of the city's historic monuments and buildings. Centro is awash with excellent cultural centers, many of which are free of charge, and the crumbling colonial buildings are an attraction in themselves. Centro is also home to Lapa-- a major party district that throngs with revelers at the lively weekend street parties. In Lapa's historic center, around Rua do Lavradio and Avenida Mem de Sa, visitors will find handsome colonial buildings that now serve as bars. restaurants, and samba clubs. Centro's interesting museums and cultural centers make it a good rainy day option, and visitors should be sure to check out the Monumento Nacional aos Mortos da II Guerra Mundial, the Teatro Municipal, the

Museu Nacional de Belas Artes(National Fine Arts Museum), the Museu de Arte Moderna(Museum of Modern Art) and the Sambódromo, where the Carnaval parades take place every year.

#### Santa Teresa& Glória

High on a jungle-clad hillside, beautiful Santa Teresa is notable for its bohemian atmosphere as well as its beautiful mansions, its excellent restaurants and lively cultural scene. Awash with artists, musicians, writers, and assorted eccentrics, Santa(as it is affectionately known by locals) is best reached by the charmingbonde, the little yellow tram that rattles its way along the cobbled streets. Be sure to check out Parque das Ruinas, a reformed mansion home with terrific city views, and the adjoining Museu Chácara do Céu. Downhill from Santa Teresa lies Gloria, a relaxed residential area that is home to one of the city's most attractive churches: the 18th-century Baroque Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Glória do Outeiro.

#### Flamengo& Catete

These residential areas benefit from being served by the city's efficient metro system, and hotel and hostel prices here compare favorably with the beach zones of Copacabana, Ipanema and Leblon. Flamengo's beach is pleasant, if not the city's finest, and the Burle Marxe-designed Parque do Flamengo is an oasis of calm in this bustling city. Catete boasts some handsome historic buildings, good value restaurants, and tourist attractions such as the Folklore Museum and Museum of the Republic.

#### Laranjeiras& Cosme Velho

These leafy, largely residential areas are pleasant escapes from the hustle and bustle of the city center, and Laranieiras in particular is becoming increasingly famous for its lively bar and restaurant scene. Pleasant pavement cafes are springing up beneath the orange trees, and some of the city's more interesting nightclubs can be found here. These two districts are located between Flamengo, Corcovado, and the Rebouças Tunnel. The Guanabara Palace, seat of the state government, is in Laranieiras, while closer to the entrance of the tunnel, in Cosme Velho, are the colonial-style houses of the Largo do Boticário and the railway station for the train that goes up Corcovado mountain.

#### Botafogo

A relatively wealthy and largely residencial suburb. Botafogo is a good bet for budget travelers heading to Rio thanks to its good hostel scene. Many of the hostels here, such as Tupiniquim, are housed in attractive colonial buildings, and prices compare very favorably with the tourist Meccas of Copacabana and Ipanema. While the neighborhood's own beach is not the cleanest or most popular in Rio, Botafogo's metro station puts it within a few minutes' reach of Rio's more celebrated sands. Handily located between the city center and the Zona Sul, Botafogo sits directly beneath the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue, and is home to a lively, relaxed bar scene and some highly regarded restaurants, such as Miam Miam. A handful of decent museums and some good shopping centers combine to make Botafogo a good base for a holiday in Rio.

#### Urca

Urca's main tourist draw is the legendary Sugar Loaf mountain, but it would be a shame to visit here without taking the time to explore a little further. The quiet streets are lined with some of the finest colonial buildings to be found anywhere in the city, and the little bay with its bobbing boats is a nice place to take in the view. Laidback neighborhood bars largely cater to locals rather than a tourist crowd, and Praia Vermelha, the little beach right by Sugar Loaf, is a favorite spot for families.

Adventure tourists in Rio can try their hand at abseiling or climbing here, and the trail that runs around the base of Sugar Loaf makes a very pleasant short walk-- keep an eye out for monkeys in the trees overhead.

#### Copacabana& Leme

Possibly the most famous stretch of sand in the world, Copacabana Beach boasts over four kilometers of sands, crashing waves and the magnificent backdrop of Sugar Loaf mountain. Copacabana Beach is the spot for the biggest of Rio's New Year celebrations, and the neighborhood is awash with hotels and restaurants. However, the once-chic neighborhood has lost out to neighboring Ipanema in recent years, and the congested back streets, strip clubs and red light activity can make the neighborhood feel more than a little seedy at night. Although the beach is now



## Rio de Janeiro Snapshot continued

floodlit after dark, it's still not a safe spot for late-night walks, although the many beach bars are generally trouble-free(you will be approached by a million and one hawkers, however, selling everything from sarongs and sunglasses to plastic miniatures of the Christ statue). Modern glass and chrome kiosks have recently replaced many of the traditional beach kiosks, and it's now possible to enjoy fine dining and champagne right on the sands. Like many spots in Rio, tourists should avoid flashing any valuables here, but with a little caution Copacabana can be a fascinating place to stay. For those with the budget for it, the legendary Copacabana Palace Hotel remains one of the most glamorous places to stay in Rio, and continues to attract visiting celebrities-- Tom Cruise, Madonna, Will Smith and the Rolling Stones being just a few of the famous names to have stayed here of late.

#### **Ipanema**

Together with neighboring Leblon, Ipanema is the destination of choice for chic beachgoers. The beach itself is packed yearround with beautiful Brazilian girls and boys, and this is the place to head for if you're looking for your own girl(or boy) from Ipanema. The neighborhood is home to countless upscale restaurants, shops and bars, and the elegant Fasano Rio hotel added some much needed glamor to the Ipanema hotel scene when it opened in 2007. You'll pay through the nose for a hotel room along Ipanema's beachfront, but there are some more reasonably priced options, including lots of hostels, to be found in the neighborhood's tree-lined back streets. Ipanema and Leblon are where the city's beautiful people come to party, so dress to impress if you're heading to bars and nightclubs here. Ipanema is also a key spot for gay visitors to Rio-- Rua Farme do Amoeda is packed with gay-friendly bars and restaurants, and the adjacent section of the beach is also earmarked for gay and lesbian beach-goers-- just look out for the large rainbow flag. Further along the sands, Posto Nove(lifeguard post 9) is the hangout for young, beautiful sun-seekers, while other sections of the beach are popular with families and sporty types. A small canal separates Ipanema and Leblon, a good spot for families, while Arpoador Beach connects Ipanema with Copacabana. With its crashing waves and jutting rocks,

Arpoador is a popular destination for surfers in Rio.

#### Lagoa

Surrounded by towering jungle-clad mountains, Rio's vast city lake is another of its picture-perfect spots. A seven-kilometer running, walking, and cycling track runs the perimeter of the lake, and free workout stations add to the appeal for athletic types. Families flock here on weekends, taking to the water aboard swan boats, while the many bars and restaurants dotted along the water's edge are wonderful places to relax with dinner and drinks as the sun sets over Rio. Throughout November and December, an enormous Christmas tree in the middle of the lake adds a sparkling centerpiece to Rio's Christmas lights.

#### Leblon

Home to some of rio's most expensive apartments, upmarket Leblon is home to smart shopping centers and chic boutiques, elegant restaurants, bars and clubs, and a beautiful beach. There are informal bars and restaurants to be found at the Cobal do Leblon, while the calmer waters at this end of the beach make Leblon a popular spot with families. There are fewer hotel options here than in Ipanema and Copacabana, but Marina All-Suites is an excellent high-end option for those who have the budget for it.

#### Gávea and Jardim Botânico

These two leafy, upper class residential areas don't have much in the way of hotels and guest houses, but there are scores of good bars and restaurants to choose from, many of them largely undiscovered by tourists. Both neighborhoods are pleasant places for a day's exploring, and Gavea's planetarium is a major draw for families visiting Rio de Janeiro. In Jardim Botanico, meanwhile, the vast botanical gardens that lend the area its name are a leafy haven from the hectic pace of Rio's city life. Nearby Parque Lage is a perfect spot for a quiet picnic and a wander around the gardens.

#### São Conrado

Perfectly summing up the vast wealth disparity in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Conrado is an exclusive beach neighborhood packed with vastly expensive condominiums, yet it sits directly next door to Rocinha, Brazil's largest favela(slum). Surfers and hang-gliders populate the beach, while a designer shopping arcade sells

upscale brands to the wealthy. Meanwhile, favela residents are now seeing some improvements in their quality of life, with increased public services, more paved roads and improved sanitation. As a snapshot of the rich and poor in Rio, things couldn't get more explicit.

## Barra da Tijuca& Recreio dos Bandeirantes

Jokingly referred to as the United States of Barra by some Rio locals, Barra da Tijuca feels like a city in itself. The wide avenues and towering apartment buildings of this wealthy neighborhood were modeled on Miami, and the sprawling shopping malls that dot the landscape feel more like the US than Rio de Janeiro. This is not the place to come for cultural activities, but if you're after a shopping splurge, Barra is the place. Barra Shopping is the largest shopping mall in Rio, packed with everything from midrange chain stores to chic boutiques, and there are cinemas and bowling alleys to be found elsewhere in the area. Tellingly, Barra da Tijuca is where you will find the Rio de Janeiro branch of Hard Rock Cafe. Barra is also home to theme parks and a motor racing circuit, as well as a spectacular 15km beach that attracts tanned and toned locals. Nearby, Recreio is a more humble beach neighborhood, whose sands are popular with local surfers.

#### Floresta da Tijuca

A vast expanse of tropical rain forest in the middle of one of the world's major metropolises, the Floresta da Tijuca(Tijuca Forest) offers a great number of opportunities for hikes, climbs, and other outdoor activities. Natural pools and waterfalls, magnificent flora and fauna, and some spectacular views await the adventurous, but the sheer scale of the place makes it essential to come here with a guide or knowledgeable local. Attempts to explore the place by yourself are bound to end in tears, so ask at your hotel or hostel about trips to suit your tastes.

#### Zona Norte

Few holidaymakers in Rio will make the trip out to the city's North Zone, which is largely made up of residential apartment buildings and cinder block favelas. The Zona Norte is a long way, both literally and metaphorically, from the beautiful beach zones of the Zona Sul(South Zone), but there are some points of interest for tourists. The City's zoo, located inSao Cristovao, is a



### Rio de Janeiro Snapshot continued

great day out for families, while theFeira Nordestina(Northeastern Fair), also at Sao Cristovao, is a vast space dedicated to Northeastern culture and cuisine. Open during the daytime on weekdays, the fair opens its doors on Friday morning and doesn't close them again until Sunday evening, making it a great place to come and sample inexpensive and absolutely delicious food from Brazil's North, while taking in liveforro music and dancing.

#### **Fun Facts**

- 1.Interesting fact: when explorers arrived in Guanabara Bay on New Year's Day 1502, they mistook the bay for the mouth of a mighty river. Hence they called the place Rio de Janeiro- literally, 'River of January'.
- 2.Random fact: Funk music here bears no resemblance whatsoever to James Brown style funkiness. Carioca Funk is a style of music featuring lyrics shouted over tinny keyboards. Born in the city's vastfavelas, Rio'sbaile funks(funk parties) are legendarily debauched. There are some socially conscious funksters out there making music with a positive message, but sex, drugs and gang violence remain the principal theme for most funk anthems.
- 3. Weird fact: The city's rich elite like to dress their pampered pets in shoes, hats, and even full outfits. Poodles are the most popular dogs in Rio high society, and some

- have a different outfit for every day of the week.
- 4. Copacabana is one of the most densely populated places on the planet, with some 25,000 people per square meter. The majority of these inhabitants are squeezed into the myriad high rise apartments that dominate the neighborhood.
- 5. The state of Rio de Janeiro boasts more than 50 kilometers of beaches, with some of the best spots outside the city being located along theCosta Verde(Green Coast).
- 6. Brazilian football fact: The Maracaná Stadium holds the record for the largest attendance of any football(ok, soccer if you insist...) match in history. A recordsmashing 200,000 fans turned out for the decisive match of the 1950 World Cup, only to see Brazil defeated by South American rivals Uruguay.
- 7. Carnival fact: Rio Carnival as we know it today is a far cry from the event's beginnings in 1641, when the Portuguese settlers celebrated Ash Wednesday with masked balls and sophisticated parties. Samba began to make its mark on the carnival festivities at the beginning of the 20th Century, with the first official Samba School created in 1928.
- 8.Fun Rio Carnival fact: The high entrance fee to the main carnival parades doesn't mean that cash-strapped travelers have to miss out on the carnival fun. Across the city, hundreds of street parties, orblocos,

- take place over carnival season, featuring samba bands, dancing, and plenty of dancing.
- 9.Random Rio de Janeiro fact: see all those tall and attractive'working girls' roaming the street? Many of them are not girls at all, but members of the city's large transvestite population.
- 10. Cultural Rio fact: The impressive Theatro Municipal, built in 1905 and located at the heart of Centro, was directly modelled on the Paris Opera House in a bid to replicate the sophistication of the French capital.
- 11. Interesting fact: Contrary to popular belief, the favelas of Rio de Janeiro are not solely populated by bandits and drug dealers. Some 20 per cent of Rio's residents live in the favelas, and the majority hold down regular jobs- security workers, cleaners, bar staff, restaurant workers...many of these hardworking individuals are living in these so-called dens of sin and vice.
- 12. Motels in Rio do not offer basic but affordable family accommodation. Rather, they are rendevous points for amorous couples. While the most basic are rather unappealing, the most lavish feature everything from jacuzzis and spas to dance floors complete with dry ice machines. Hotel Love Time and Sinless are just a couple of the less than subtle names given to these hotels oflurve.
- © NileGuide

