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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Chupacabras

# Rio beachcombing

## Rio de Janeiro, 2 Days

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Copacabana and Ipanema are famous the world over, but have you heard of Prainha, Praia Vermelha, or Grumari? This two-day beach combing trip outlines an ideal itinerary for exploring the best of Rio's beaches, from the crowded city sands to isolated spots in the suburbs.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Rio de Janeiro

**DAY NOTE:** Arpoador beach is perfectly located between the famous sands of Copacabana and Ipanema, and Apoador Inn sits right in front of the beach, on a quiet pedestrianised street. Enjoy breakfast at the hotel with a perfect view of the sands and the surfers, before heading on foot down to Copacabana. Find a spot on the sands (don't take a towel - girls should spread a sarong, guys should remain standing!), grab a beer or a soft drink from a street vendor and soak up some sun. If you're a keen surfer, (or keen to learn) speak to one of the instructors on the beach who can offer lessons and/or board rental. After a couple of hours catching some rays and some waves, take a bus west from Avenida Atlantica (the main road that runs past the beach), heading for the beach suburb of Barra. On weekdays the vast beach here is virtually empty, so you can sunbathe and swim/surf in peace. For a bite to eat that won't ruin that beach body, head for Pepe - a beach bar specialising in healthy sandwiches and juices. If you're looking for something more secluded, head further out to the shady, surf beaches of Recreio, Prainha and Grumari. When the sun starts to go down, take a bus back to Arpoador and head up to Arpoador Rock for gorgeous sunset views. After a quick shower and change at the hotel, stroll up the beachfront to Ipanema, where you can grab a beer or a caiprinha and a good meal at Barril 1800, the only bar/restaurant in Ipanema with views right over the beach. When you're sufficiently fed and watered, browse some of the neighbourhood's chic stores, before stopping at Choperia Torre do Barao for a few drinks, before either heading back to the hotel or taking in some of the neighbourhood's many plush drinking joints.

 **Praia do Arpoador**  
Surfing and beautiful people at the edge of Ipanema

 **Arpoador Inn**  
Perfect spot for sunseekers

 **Barra da Tijuca**  
Sun, Sea, Surf and Shopping

 **Barril 1800**  
Bar and barbeque right by the beach

 **Copacabana Beach**  
The World's Most Famous Stretch of Sand?

 **Leme**  
Copacabana's less rowdy neighbor

 **Choperia Torre do Barão**  
Good food, location, and prices

## Day 2 - Rio de Janeiro

**DAY NOTE:** Take a cab into centro to catch the ferry over to Niteroi - the trip only takes 20 minutes but offers great views over Rio - and once there take a bus 38 or 52 for 20 mins, to find some wonderfully uncrowded ocean beaches. After topping up your tan, you can enjoy a drink at one of the many beachside kiosks before taking a bus back to the ferry terminal. From Centro, grab a bus to Leblon, and a few hours sunning or surfing, while admiring some of the city's most beautiful (men and women!). If you're a sporty type, make like the locals and buy a frescobal kit. In Leblon you can fill up on salads and other healthy dishes at Celeiro, an organic restaurant with a great range of fresh, light meals. If there's still time before sundown, head to Urca, and lovely Praia Vermelha beach, which sits directly below Sugar Loaf mountain. In the evening, head to Ipanema, and grab a tasty meal or snack at New Natural, before doing the rounds of the many nearby bars.

 **New Natural**  
Great for vegetarians

 **Celeiro**  
A treat for lovers of fresh food

 **Morro da Urca**  
Next stop - Sugar Loaf!

 **Leblon**  
Chic beach

 **Niterói**  
Rio sister city

 **Arpoador Inn**  
Perfect spot for sunseekers

# Day 1 - Rio de Janeiro

## QUICK NOTE

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### contact:

tel: +55 21 2259 6165 (Tourist Information)

### location:

Copacabana / Ipanema  
Rio de Janeiro 22410-003

### hours:

Call for details

## 1 Praia do Arpoador

**DESCRIPTION:** One of the best surfing beaches in the area, even at night, with clean, almost transparent water. Locals come from all over to sunbathe on this small stretch of sand between Copacabana and Ipanema. It is also popular with elderly people who gather to play checkers every morning and families who are content to simply watch the surfers have a go at the waves. This beach gets crowded on weekends. The Arpoador rock offers a great view of both Copacabana and Ipanema and the sunset is absolutely astonishing. © wcities.com



wcities

### contact:

tel: +55 21 2523 0060  
fax: +55 21 2511 5094  
<http://www.arpoadorinn.com.br/>

### location:

Rua Francisco Otaviano 177  
Rio de Janeiro 22080-040

## 2 Arpoador Inn

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Rooms with sea views are more expensive, but well worth the indulgence if your budget can stretch to it.

**DESCRIPTION:** With a great location right on the beach at popular surf spot Arpoador, this small hotel offers fantastic value for money. Arpoador lies between the beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema, so beach bunnies will be spoilt for choice. The road in front of the hotel is completely closed to traffic, and guests eating at the hotel restaurant can enjoy their meals and drinks right on the sands. © NileGuide



Hotels.com

**contact:**  
<http://www.barradatijuca.com.br/si/site>

**location:**  
Avenida das Americas  
Rio de Janeiro 22649-900

### 3 Barra da Tijuca

#### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Like it or loathe it, don't miss the giant fiber glass 'Statue of Liberty' that stands proudly in front of the New York City Center entertainment complex.

**DESCRIPTION:** Located to the West of Rio de Janeiro, Barra da Tijuca feels like another city altogether. The modern high rise apartment blocks and wide avenues have been modelled on Miami, and it is with good reason that many Rio locals refer to the neighborhood as the United States of Barra.

But while some may mock the faux-Western attitude, it's hard to find fault with the 17km beach, whose sands rarely get as crowded as the tourist Meccas of Ipanema and Copacabana. Meanwhile, shopaholics will be in seventh Heaven - Barra is awash with vast US-style Malls, including Barra Shopping, the largest mall in Rio de Janeiro.

Be prepared for a bone-rattling white knuckle ride of a bus trip out here (or, during rush hour, be prepared to spend hours staring idly out of the window).

© NileGuide



wcities

**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.

### 4 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 2542 8080  
fax: +55 21 2542 0964  
[http://www.copacabanapalace.com.br/web/orio/orio\\_a2a\\_home.jsp](http://www.copacabanapalace.com.br/web/orio/orio_a2a_home.jsp)

**location:**  
Avenida Atlantica and Xavier da Silveira  
Rio de Janeiro 22010-000

### 5 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 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

**contact:**

tel: +55 21 2217 7575 (Tourist Information)

**location:**

Between the Morro do Leme and Avenida Princesa Isabel Rio de Janeiro

**6 Leme**

**DESCRIPTION:** The name given to the stretch of sand at the far end of Copacabana beach, Leme is quieter and less packed with tourists than the centre of the beach and the end that borders Aprozador and Ipanema. Here you'll find some good-value hotels as well as decent seafood restaurants, and a beach scene dominated by families and sports-lovers. You'll need to take a bus or taxi if you want to visit Ipanema or Leblon at night, but there are some decent nightlife options nearby. Until midnight, Leme is handy for the Metro station at Cardeal Arcoverde, which runs into Centro, the Northzone, and the other end of Copacabana beach. © NileGuide



wcities

**contact:**

tel: 55 21 2247 1835  
<http://www.torredobarao.com.br/choperia.html>

**location:**

Rua Venicius de Moraes 146, Ipanema Rio de Janeiro RJ

**7 Choperia Torre do Barão**

**DESCRIPTION:** In a prime Ipanema location, Choperia Torre do Barão is a bar and restaurant that serves up great value meals and snacks, with some delicious fresh fruit juices. Pizzas here are particularly good.



Photo courtesy of Choperia Torre do Barao

**hours:**

11am until late

# Day 2 - Rio de Janeiro

## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Take a cab into centro to catch the ferry over to Niteroi - the trip only takes 20 minutes but offers great views over Rio - and once there take a bus 38 or 52 for 20 mins, to find some wonderfully uncrowded ocean beaches. After topping up your tan, you can enjoy a drink at one of the many beachside kiosks before taking a bus back to the ferry terminal. From Centro, grab a bus to Leblon, and a few hours sunning or surfing, while admiring some of the city's most beautiful (men and women!). If you're a sporty type, make like the locals and buy a frescobal kit. In Leblon you can fill up on salads and other healthy dishes at Celeiro, an organic restaurant with a great range of fresh, light meals. If there's still time before sundown, head to Urca, and lovely Praia Vermelha beach, which sits directly below Sugar Loaf mountain. In the evening, head to Ipanema, and grab a tasty meal or snack at New Natural, before doing the rounds of the many nearby bars.

**contact:**  
tel: 55 21 2287 0301

## 1 New Natural

**location:**  
Rua Barao de Torre 171,  
Ipanema  
Rio de Janeiro RJ

**hours:**  
Sa-Su 8 a.m - 11 p.m.

### 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 2274 7843  
<http://www.celeiroculinaria.com.br>

## 2 Celeiro

**location:**  
Rua Dias Ferreira, 199  
Rio de Janeiro 22431-050

**hours:**  
11:30a-10:30p M-Tu,  
11:30a-5p W-Sa

**DESCRIPTION:** With an emphasis on fresh, natural ingredients, Celeiro has established itself as a firm favorite among models, soap opera stars and other body-conscious cariocas. The sheer range of salads - more than 40 each day - is astonishing, and the hot dishes are often veggie-friendly. Celeiro also serves low-cal versions of favorite desserts, so you can satisfy your sweet tooth without too much guilt! The food is served buffet-style and charged by weight while soups are charged separately. Perfect for a light lunch, but don't head here when you're dying of hunger or you could end up paying more than you expect! © NileGuide



Celeiro

**location:**

Praia Vermelha  
Rio de Janeiro 22290-270

**3 Morro da Urca**

**DESCRIPTION:** At just over 210 meters, Morro da Urca is the first stop for sightseers making the dramatic ascent to the top of Sugar Loaf mountain. While most people arrive here by the cable car that soars high above Praia Vermelha beach, taking in staggering views of the city, others choose the DIY approach. Seasoned climbers can frequently be seen scaling the sheer granite front of the mini-mountain, while others take the gentler option by taking the marked paths that lead from the ground up. If you choose to take this route, wear good walking shoes or sandals (flip flops are not recommended), and be prepared to sweat somewhat if you're making the ascent during the heat of the early afternoon. © wcities.com



wcities

**location:**

Rua Dias Ferreira e Avenida  
Ataúfo de Paiva  
Rio de Janeiro 22440-031

**4 Leblon**

**DESCRIPTION:** One of the most exclusive neighbourhoods in Rio, Leblon sits at the far end of Ipanema beach, with the sands separated by a small canal. This largely residential area has only a few hotels (among them the super-chic Marina All Suites), but it is home to many of the city's top end restaurants, and plenty of pricey nightspots catering to Rio's gente bonita (beautiful people). The waves at this end of the beach are generally less extreme than those of Ipanema itself, making this stretch of sand very popular with families. © NileGuide



**contact:**

<http://www.niteroi.com.br/turismo.htm>

**location:**

Niteroi  
Niterói 24020-090

**5 Niterói**

**DESCRIPTION:** A sprawling metropolis of about half a million people, Niterói has been largely neglected by visitors of Rio. This shouldn't be the case and if you have some time to spare, this will make a good day trip. Besides having its own beautiful beaches and park areas, there is also a very good contemporary-art museum designed by Oscar Niemeyer. The view of Rio from the building is breathtaking. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Lucy Bryson

**contact:**

tel: +55 21 2523 0060  
fax: +55 21 2511 5094  
<http://www.arpoadorinn.com.br/>

**location:**

Rua Francisco Otaviano 177  
Rio de Janeiro 22080-040

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Hotels.com

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traffic, and guests eating at the hotel restaurant can enjoy their meals and drinks right on the sands. © NileGuide

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# 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 charming bonde, the little yellow tram that rattles its way along the cobble streets. Be sure to check out Parque das Ruínas, 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 Marx-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 Laranjeiras 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 Laranjeiras, 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 residential 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. Laid-back 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 beach-goers. The beach itself is packed year-round 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 Farma 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 Botânico, 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 mid-range 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 in Sao Cristovao, is a

## Rio de Janeiro Snapshot continued

great day out for families, while the Feira 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 live forró music and dancing.

© NileGuide

### 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 vast favelas, Rio's baile 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 the Costa Verde (Green Coast).

6. Brazilian football fact: The Maracanã Stadium holds the record for the largest attendance of any football (ok, soccer if you insist...) match in history. A record-smashing 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, or blocos,

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 rendezvous 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 of lurve.

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