



# Brazil

## Culture

### Marriage and Family

For a wedding to be official, a legal civil ceremony must be performed. Many Brazilians also have a religious ceremony. Wedding parties are often elaborate, with much food, drink, and music. Common-law marriages are not unusual.

Families are traditionally large. Maternal and paternal sides of the family are considered equally important. The elderly who cannot care for themselves live with their children; it is considered improper to send them to a nursing home. The tradition of male authority in the Brazilian family is gradually giving way to more equality between the sexes, and more careers outside the home are becoming available for women. Children usually leave home when they marry, and male children may leave sooner for employment reasons. Family members rely on one another for assistance, and young people often work outside the home to help support their families.

### Socializing

Brazilians tend to greet each other with a handshake, but good friends often embrace. Women often kiss each other on both cheeks, although in reality they may actually only touch cheeks and kiss the air.

### Holidays and Celebrations

On New Year's Eve (31 December), in addition to the traditional New Year's Eve parties, thousands of practitioners of the Candomblé and Umbanda religions hold a special festival on Brazil's beaches to honor Iemanjá, the goddess of the sea. This festival is particularly popular in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Bahia. Tablecloths encircled by lit candles are laden with gifts brought by devotees to the goddess. At midnight those gathered, dressed in blue and white, move into the sea bearing their offerings. If the gifts are swept out to sea, it is a good omen; if they are spat back onto the shore, it is a bad omen.

Carnaval, a five-day festival preceding Ash Wednesday in February or March, is the most famous Brazilian holiday. It is marked by joyous street parades, music, samba dancing, parties, and elaborate costumes. Most shops and offices are closed for the duration of the festival. Many Brazilians put significant time and money into their participation in Carnaval, using an entire year to prepare for the next festival's floats, costumes, and dances.

Brazilians celebrate the Easter holy days from Good Friday (the Friday preceding Easter) through Easter Sunday. On 21 April Tiradentes Day is observed as part of Inconfidência Week, which commemorates the unsuccessful Brazilian independence uprising of 1789. Joaquim José da Silva Xavier was martyred during the uprising. He was called *Tiradentes* ("Tooth Puller") because he worked as a dentist.

Labor Day is observed on 1 May. Corpus Christi, a Roman Catholic celebration of the Eucharist, is a legal holiday on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, which occurs sometime in May or June. The *Festas Juninas* (June Festivals) are mainly for children and are celebrated locally with fair-type activities. They coincide with the feasts of Saint John and Saint Peter. Independence Day (7 September) celebrates Brazil's liberation from Portugal in 1822. *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* is a public holiday on 12 October. All Souls' Day is observed on 2 November. Proclamation of the Republic Day, on 15 November, commemorates the day in 1889 when Brazil was proclaimed a republic. Brazilians exchange gifts and eat the main Christmas meal on Christmas Eve. Gifts from Papi Noel (Santa Claus) appear on Christmas morning (25 December). Brazilians also observe a variety of local and state holidays.

### Recreation

The national sport is *futebol* (soccer). Futebol was introduced to Brazil around the time of World War I (1914-1918) by Scottish railway engineers. Brazil's national team has been one of the best in the world for many years. The national team has several World Cup victories to its credit. Brazilians are so passionate about soccer that businesses and schools may close during important international matches. Fans from different clubs usually mingle peacefully inside the grounds of the stadiums, although in recent years soccer rivalries have sometimes sparked violence in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Other popular sports include basketball, volleyball, tennis, boating, swimming, and auto racing. The country went into mourning when Ayrton Senna was killed in a crash during the

1994 Formula One Grand Prix season. Other leisure activities include going to the beach, socializing, watching television and films, dancing, and listening to music. Regional festivals and traditional dances are often lively events.

### **Food**

Breakfast usually consists of *café com leite* (coffee with milk), bread, cheese or marmalade, and butter. Lunch and dinner may include beans, rice, meat, salad, fruit, potatoes, and bread. Cuisine varies from region to region. In Bahia and other northern states where there is a strong African influence, foods are often flavored with *dendé* (palm) oil. In Rio de Janeiro, a popular dish is *feijoada*, which originated as a clever way of using up small quantities of leftover meats and is made from black beans with beef, pork, sausage, tongue, and sometimes a pig's ears, nose, and tail. People in the south enjoy *churrasco*, a barbecue with a variety of meats. *Bife a cavalo com fritas* (meat with egg and fried potatoes) is popular in many areas. In addition to coffee, alcohol, and soft drinks, Brazilians in the south drink *chimarrão*, an herbal tea without sugar. *Batidas* (shakes) made of fruit juices and alcohol are also popular. Conversation following a meal often takes place over a *cafezinho*, a small cup of thick, black coffee. *Cafezinho* may be drunk several times a day. In restaurants, the bill is requested with the phrase *A conta, por favor*. People often eat a late dinner and socialize late into the evening.

### **Music:**

(Play CD)

Brazilian *samba* music emerged in the 19th century as part of pre-Lenten Carnival festivities in Rio de Janeiro. During the 1920s *samba* groups were organized into "schools" that would compete against one another during Carnival for prizes. *Samba*, which also refers to an accompanying dance form, is of African descent with its percussion-dominated rhythms being traced to religious possession dances. The various drums, or *bateria*, are considered powerful instruments with supernatural connections to pagan gods.

### **Language:**

Common greetings are *Como vai?* ("How are you?") and *Tudo bem?* ("Is everything fine?"). Friends may greet each other with a simple *Oi* ("Hi"). When joining or leaving a small group, it is polite to shake hands with everyone present. *Tchau* ("Good-bye") or *Até logo* ("See you soon") are common terms for parting.

### **Geography:**

Brazil is located in Eastern South America, bordering the Atlantic Ocean. The terrain is mostly flat to rolling lowlands in north; some plains, hills, mountains, and narrow coastal belt. The factors of size, relief, climate, and natural resources make Brazil geographically diverse. Planners divide the country into five macro-regions: (1) North, (2) Northeast, (3) Southeast, (4) South, and (5) Center-West.

### **Method of Transportation:**

We can travel to Brazil from the United States by car, boat, plane or train.

### **Climate:**

Brazil's mild tropical climate allows for much time outdoors. Many homes are built with open but shaded patios and interior courtyards. Sidewalk cafés and garden restaurants are common. The climatic pattern is largely shaped by Brazil's tropical location and by topographic features. Most of Brazil has high annual average temperatures, above 22°C (72°F). Only in the South and in the highest elevations does the average fall below this. In the higher elevations, the seasonal variation in temperature is more marked.

Source: Encarta Interactive World Atlas

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