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Insider's Guide to Brazil

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Brazil is a vibrant, dynamic destination packed with incredible experiences. From the Amazon rainforest to the iconic Copacabana Beach, Brazil offers breathtaking landscapes with endless adventures. It's perfect for families, friend groups, couples and honeymooners looking for a

mix of excitement and relaxation. Don't miss the lively samba music, bold local cuisine or Afro-Brazilian traditions like capoeira. The warm hospitality of the Brazilian people will make sure it's a destination you won't forget.

This guide to Brazil outlines some of my favorite things to do and places to stay across the country's top destinations. Connect with me to plan and book a trip to Brazil that's uniquely tailored to you.

Need to know



- **Currency:** The official currency is the Brazilian real (BRL). While credit cards are widely accepted in major cities, cash is still the preferred payment method. There also isn't much of a tipping culture as most restaurants already include a 10% "serviço" (service charge) on the bill. Avoid withdrawing large amounts of cash from public ATMs.
- **Languages:** Portuguese is the official language, but there are over 200 indigenous languages spoken in various remote regions. While English is taught in Brazilian schools, it isn't widely spoken outside of hotels and tourist areas – so dust off Duo Lingo or have Google Translate at the ready.
- **Airports:** The country's biggest international airports are in São Paulo (GRU) and Rio de Janeiro (GIG).

- **Transportation:** Brazil is a large country, mostly connected by hundreds of private bus companies. Its limited passenger rail system means domestic air travel is the preferred method to get to other cities. Once in a destination, however, taxis are readily available, as are metros/subways in many major cities. Private guided tours with transportation are your best bet for sightseeing. Avoid using unmarked taxis.
- **Best time to visit:** The best time to visit Brazil varies depending on the region, but it's between December and March is the summer season, the perfect time to enjoy the beaches and Carnival celebrations. For slightly less crowds and milder weather, visit during the shoulder months of October–November and April–May. If you're looking to visit the Amazon Rainforest, Iguazu Falls and northern regions, however, the dry season is typically between June and August.
- **Ideal length of stay:** A full week is recommended, but 10 nights or up to two weeks is ideal to allow ample time to experience what Brazil has to offer.
- **Signature dishes:** A visit to Brazil isn't complete without the national dish feijoada (a hearty black bean stew). Pão de queijo (cheesy cassava flour bread) is another delicious favorite, as is churrasco (Brazilian barbecue), and brigadeiro (a bite-sized chocolate dessert).
- **Key phrases:** Ola (hello), tchau (goodbye), bom dia/boa tarde/boa noite (Good morning/afternoon/evening), obrigado/obrigada (thank you), por favor (please), sim/não (yes/no)
- **What to wear:** Brazil is typically very hot and humid, so bring lightweight, breathable clothes. Add a light jacket for cooler months, but comfortable walking shoes are a must year round! Pack smart-casual wear for upscale hotels and restaurants. Dress modestly at religious or historic sites.
- **Safety and health:** Do not bring valuables to the beach. Stick to bottled water, even for brushing your teeth.
- **Accessibility:** Many popular beaches provide ramps and services for visitors with mobility needs. Connect with hotels to ensure accessibility needs are available.

Where to stay



Image courtesy of Fairmont Rio de Janeiro Copacabana

Visitors to Brazil typically visit a couple of the country's highlights. Here's the breakdown of where to go:

- **Iguazu Falls** offers a breathtaking display of cascading waterfalls surrounded by lush rainforest.
- **Rio de Janeiro**'s iconic beaches, vibrant nightlife, and world-renowned landmarks make it a top attraction.
- **São Paulo** is Brazil's cultural and culinary capital, known for its eclectic food scene, art museums, and urban energy.
- **Trancoso**'s laid-back charm is highlighted by its pristine beaches and colorful historic square.
- **Salvador** is a hub for Afro-Brazilian culture set against a backdrop of colonial architecture and beautiful coastlines.

Iguazu Falls

Hotel das Cataratas, A Belmond Hotel, Iguazu Falls: As the only hotel located within the Iguazu National Park, this retreat immerses guests in a unique blend of luxury and adventure.

- **Fora's Belmond Bellini Club** partner perks include a hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Rio de Janeiro

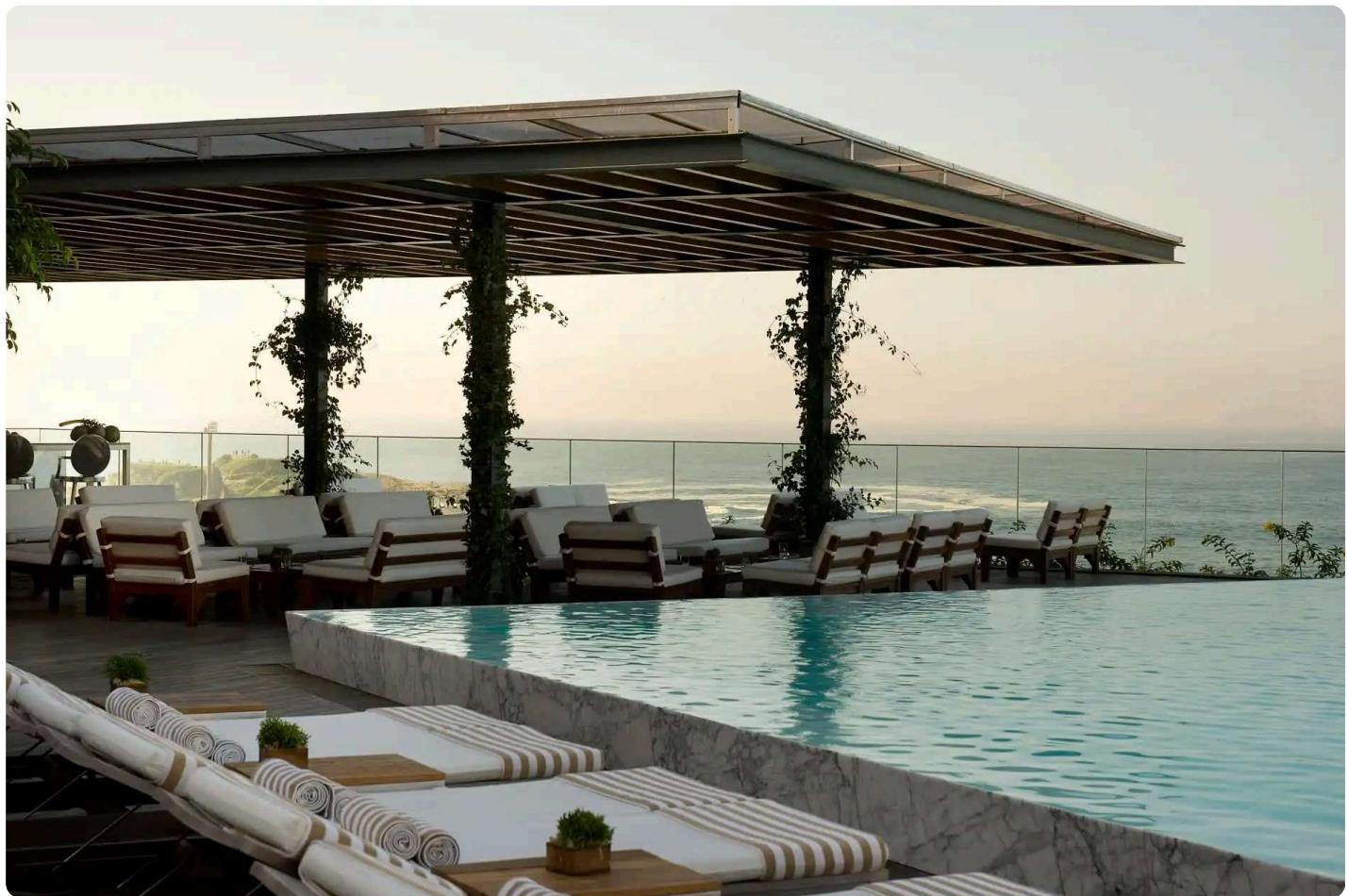


Image courtesy of Hotel Fasano Rio de Janeiro

Copacabana Palace, A Belmond Hotel, Rio de Janeiro: The perfect luxury stay for guests in a central location, with a rooftop pool and stunning views.

- **Fora's Belmond Bellini Club** partner perks include a hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Hotel Fasano, Rio de Janeiro: A sophisticated, modern stay in Rio's Ipanema neighborhood with panoramic ocean views and easy access to shopping and dining.

- **Fora Perks** include a complimentary 50-minute massage, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Fairmont Rio de Janeiro Copacabana: The contemporary, upscale retreat is the perfect blend of historic glamour and beachfront luxury overlooking Copacabana Beach.

- **Fora's Accor - HERA** partner perks include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Santa Teresa Hotel RJ - MGallery: Artistic and rustic-chic, this boutique hotel provides a tranquil respite from the bustling city.

- **Fora's Accor - HERA** partner perks include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

São Paulo

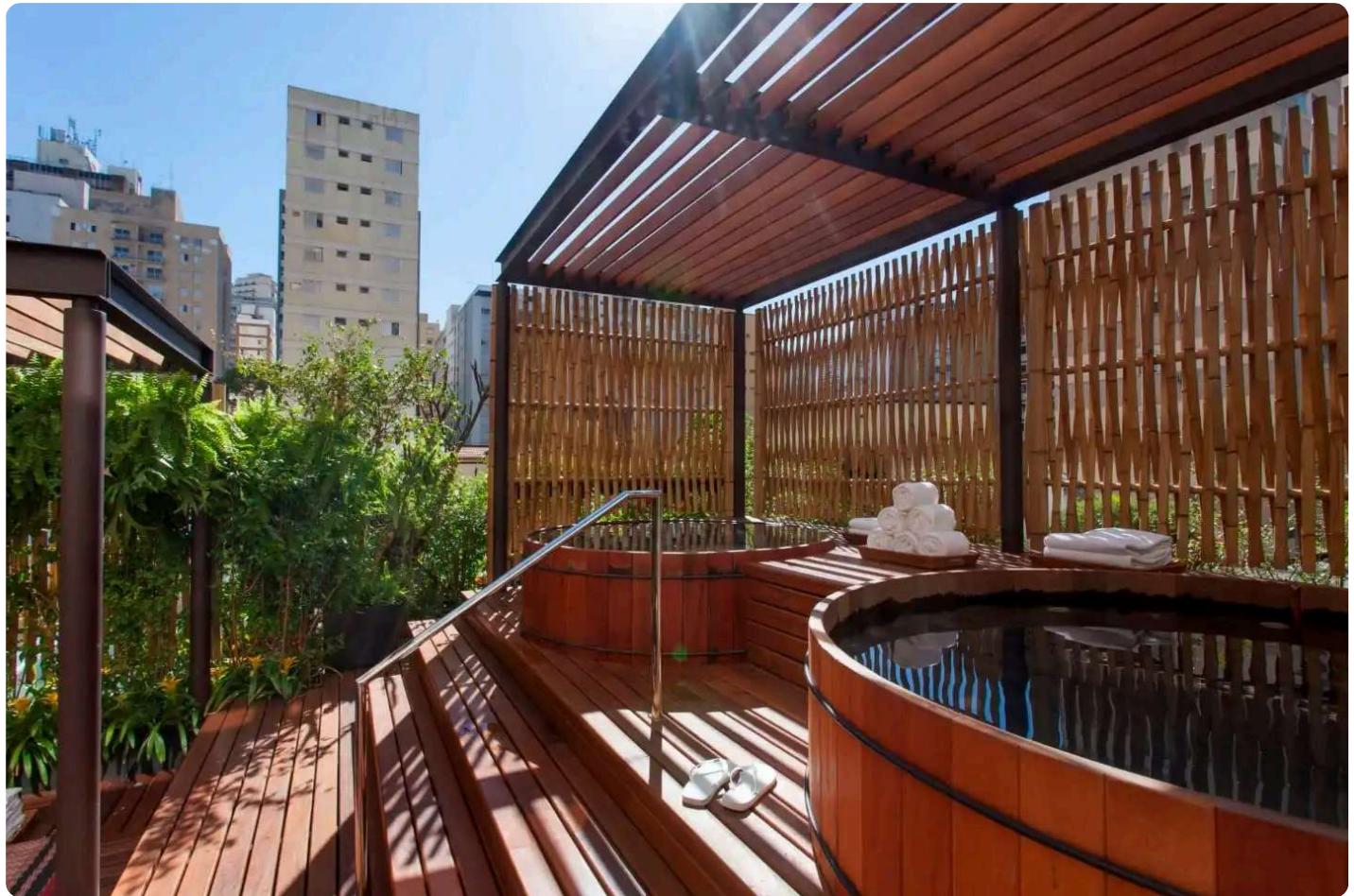


Image courtesy of Emiliano São Paulo

Hotel Fasano São Paulo Jardins: This elegant hotel with excellent skyline views is perfectly situated to designer boutiques and top restaurants.

- **Fora Perks** include a complimentary roundtrip private airport transfers, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Emiliano São Paulo: A conveniently located urban retreat, this stylish hotel is renowned for its personalized service.

- **Fora Perks** include a complimentary lunch or dinner per two guests, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Palácio Tangará: Serene and luxurious, this urban retreat combines convenience with resort-like sophistication.

- **Fora Perks** include a complimentary lunch or dinner per two guests, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Tivoli Mofarrej São Paulo: A modern luxury retreat in the heart of the city, this hotel provides a dynamic mix of convenience and cosmopolitan charm.

- **Fora's Leading Hotels (LHW)** partner perks include daily breakfast, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Trancoso

Hotel Fasano Trancoso: A tranquil and luxurious retreat, this hotel is centrally located to Trancoso's charming historic square and pristine sandy beaches.

- **Fora Perks** include a complimentary 50-minute massage, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Uxua Casa Hotel & Spa: This retreat combines rustic charm, luxury, and a laid-back vibe just steps from the beach.

- **Fora Perks** include a complimentary one-way private airport transfer, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Salvador

Hotel Fasano Salvador: This sophisticated retreat in a restored 1930s building is centrally located, and combines a boutique atmosphere with beautiful sea views.

- **Fora Perks** include a complimentary 50-minute massage, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

History and culture



Brazil is defined by its blend of indigenous roots, as well as Portuguese and African influences, all of which has created one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. Before European arrival in 1500, Brazil was home to hundreds of distinct Indigenous tribes. Today, their legacy remains an important part of Brazil's identity, reflected in festivals, artistry and spirituality, especially in the Amazon region. Portuguese colonization introduced Catholicism, the dominant religion, and colonial architecture, still visible throughout the country.

Brazilian culture is full of rhythm and celebration, from samba (music and dance born from African traditions) to countless festivals. The world-famous Carnival in Rio de Janeiro is a non-stop display of parades, energy and costumes. In Salvador, Afro-Brazilian culture takes center stage through its dance and music combined martial art, capoeira. Meanwhile, the art and theater scene of São Paulo showcases Brazil's creative community, as does its colorful street art throughout the city.

Even the country's landmarks embody both cultural heritage and its natural wonders. Christ the Redeemer towers over Rio, symbolizing unity and faith, while Brasilia's modern architecture highlights a push into the future. Ruins of Jesuit missions can be seen at São Miguel das Missões, and floating villages in the Amazon also tell the story of Brazil's history.

Activities



Brazil is full of adventures, from outdoor activities and beach going to cultural experiences. With so many options and such a vast geography to navigate, it's helpful to connect with an

expert who can guide your explorations and arrange transportation. These are some of the most common activities for travelers in Brazil:

Iguazu Falls

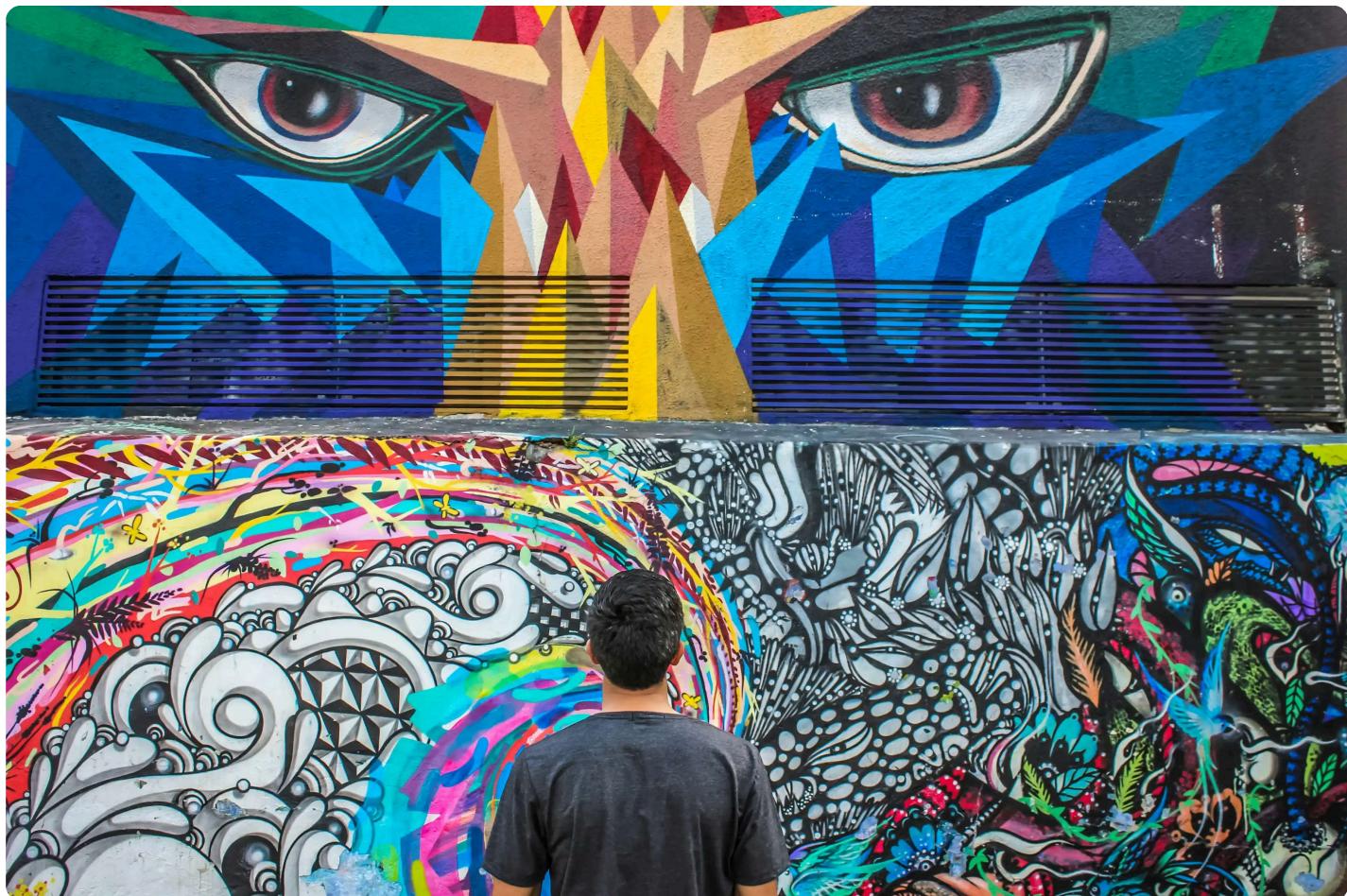
- Visit the falls up close in an exhilarating **Zodiac tour**, or take in the breathtaking aerial views with a **scenic helicopter ride**.
- Walk along the **Devil's Throat trail** to experience the most dramatic section of the falls.
- Stroll the **Iguazu National Park rainforest trails**, where you can spot wildlife such as toucans, capuchin monkeys and colorful butterflies.
- Visit the **Itaipu Dam**, one of the largest hydroelectric plants in the world and learn about its engineering and environmental significance.
- Stroll through the **Bird Park (Parque das Aves)**, home to exotic species like macaws, flamingos and harpy eagles.

Rio de Janeiro



- Visit Rio's most iconic landmarks, like the **Christ the Redeemer** statue, or take a cable car to the **Sugarloaf Mountains** for panoramic views, and delicious restaurants.
- Relax or swim at **Ipanema** and **Leblon beaches**, popular spots for sunbathing and enjoying the ocean breeze, or try surfing, paddleboarding or beach volleyball.
- Experience the energy of a football game at **Maracanã Stadium**, a hub of Brazilian sports culture.
- Join a **capoeira class** in Ipanema to learn this traditional martial art that blends music, dance and culture.
- Explore **Santa Teresa**, known for its charming streets, local art galleries and laid-back atmosphere.

São Paulo



- Visit **Beco do Batman**, an iconic street art destination in the Vila Madalena neighborhood.
- Explore the **Gardens of Roberto Burle Marx**, where you'll see picturesque landscapes and innovative design by one of Brazil's most famous landscape architects, or the **São Paulo Botanical Gardens**.
- Discover local artisan markets like **Benedito Calixto**, offering antiques, handcrafted goods and unique souvenirs.
- Tour the city's historic landmarks, such as the **São Paulo Cathedral** or **Pátio do Colégio**, to connect with its history and architecture.

- Experience a **traditional samba or forró dance night** in local cultural hubs, blending music, rhythm and community spirit.

Trancoso

- Explore the **Quadrado**, Trancoso's historic square lined with colorful houses, boutique shops and a charming white church overlooking the ocean.
- Visit **Praia dos Nativos** and **Praia dos Coqueiros**, serene beaches with soft sands, calm waters and beachfront bars serving fresh seafood.
- Discover **local artisan markets** featuring handcrafted jewelry, textiles and ceramics made by Trancoso's artisans.
- Hike to **Rio da Barra Beach** to enjoy a secluded spot for swimming and picnicking.
- Experience a traditional **forró dance night** with locals in community spaces or beachfront venues.

Salvador

- Take a **drumming class** to learn traditional Afro-Brazilian rhythms and connect with Salvador's vibrant musical heritage.
- Explore **Pelourinho**, Salvador's historic district, known for its colorful colonial architecture, cobblestone streets and lively cultural scene.
- Visit **Mercado Modelo**, a bustling market offering local crafts, souvenirs and traditional Bahian snacks.
- Walk along the **Barra Lighthouse (Farol da Barra)**, a historic landmark with views of the coastline and an on-site nautical museum.
- Relax at **Porto da Barra Beach**, a popular spot for swimming and people-watching near the historic center.
- Attend a **Candomblé ceremony** to gain insight into Afro-Brazilian spiritual traditions and rituals.

Add-on destinations



It's a long trip from the US to Brazil, so it makes sense to continue your exploration of South America. I've put together some of the top picks for extending your trip to nearby destinations.

- **Buenos Aires, Argentina — 3-hour flight:** Discover vibrant neighborhoods, tango performances and European-inspired architecture.
- **Montevideo, Uruguay — 3-hour flight:** Stroll quaint streets, enjoy local wines, and relax by the waterfront promenades.
- **Ilhabela — 4-hour drive and ferry from São Paulo:** A stunning island destination with waterfalls, hiking trails and unspoiled beaches, ideal for nature lovers and relaxation seekers.
- **Lima, Peru — 4.5-hour flight:** A culinary hotspot and gateway to Machu Picchu, blending ancient history with interesting restaurants and cuisine.

Brazil

Get in touch with Gregory

Reach out for travel inspiration, hotel bookings or customized itineraries.

*Email Address

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*Last Name

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