



Bespoke Brazil

PRIVATE SAMBA LESSONS, SECLUDED
BEACHES, AND TAILOR-MADE ADVENTURES
IN THE AMAZON TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

Home to the sultry samba, Brazil has always moved to its own rhythm. Yet the tempo here has taken on a rapid pace as South America's largest nation prepares for the 20th FIFA World Cup — the continent's first since 1978 — which will take place June 12 to July 13, 2014, in 12 host cities. Just two years later, Rio de Janeiro welcomes amateur athletes from around the globe for the 2016 Summer Olympic Games.

Now's the perfect time to explore Brazil's riveting culture and remote regions in bespoke style. Whether you want to shake things up at Carnival or move to a slower pace on one of the country's most exclusive islands, your Virtuoso travel advisor has the clout and insider connections to create the private, personalized experience of your dreams.

Clockwise from top:
A unique perspective;
samba strut; Bahia's
Praia do Forte; local
color in Pelourinho;
all smiles in Salvador,
Brazil's "capital of
happiness."



Clockwise from top left: Heavenly views of Rio de Janeiro, the “Marvelous City”; Chef Alex Atala gets fresh; traditional baskets woven in the Tapajós region; Amazon woman.

Carnival Cossetting

While Carnival — that festive period which takes place just before Lent — is observed around the world, Rio de Janeiro is home to its biggest, most famous celebration. Indeed, Rio’s four-day revelry is the largest public party on the planet, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, with some two million people daily dancing through the city’s streets.

The festivities begin on Saturday and run through the following Tuesday, with Carnival Sunday landing exactly seven weeks before Easter. During that time, the entire city is filled with merrymaking, and a number of Carnival balls, similar to those in Venice, add a touch of glamour.

Yet the main attraction is, of course, the world-famous Samba Parade. Started in the 1930s, the event has grown in popularity ever since. One of the most spectacular shows on Earth, it is broadcast to every Brazilian state as well as numerous other countries.

The parade showcases Rio’s many *escolas de samba*, or schools dedicated to the iconic African-Brazilian dance. These schools are most often associated with a

particular neighborhood (usually a shanty, or *favela*), and the local communities take great pride in choosing the themes and songs, creating the elaborate displays, and participating in the extensive rehearsals (which make for a fun warm-up to the big event). In 1984, the Sambadrome was opened as a special venue for the parading schools.

Unlike the street festivities, the Samba Parade requires (sometimes expensive) tickets, but they’re well worth the cost. Consider seats in the front boxes, known as *frisas*, or, for the absolute best viewing, book coveted seats in an air-conditioned luxury suite with waiter service. And for the full-blown Carnival experience, why not parade with a samba school? Your Virtuoso travel advisor can arrange for you to learn basic samba drumming from one of the school’s students, or take a private dance lesson with a member of a famous Brazilian samba group.

A Foodie Foray Through São Paulo

Rio may have its Carnival and beach life, but São Paulo is the newly crowned

culture capital of Brazil. The country’s largest city — indeed, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere — is recognized as a world leader in cutting-edge design, art, fashion, film, and food. Chefs here are as ambitious as counterparts in New York, Tokyo, or London, giving a new twist to Brazilian dishes while serving up sensational Japanese and Italian cuisine, as well.

For instance, Chef Emmanuel Bassoleil is taking traditional gastronomy to new heights in the rooftop Skye restaurant. The city’s rich international influences are evident throughout Bassoleil’s menu, which includes his updated take on the classic *moqueca de camarão*, shrimp stewed in coconut milk with hot chiles (he serves it in a hollowed-out pumpkin). After earning rave reviews for his flagship fusion restaurant, D.O.M. (named one of the world’s 50 best by *Restaurant* magazine), celeb Chef Alex Atala dishes up delicious Brazilian comfort food at communal tables in nearby Dalva e Dito.

There are more than 1.5 million Japanese living in São Paulo — the largest community outside of Japan — so it’s not surprising that you’d find great sushi and tempura in Liberdade, the Japanese

neighborhood. For upscale dining on imaginative dishes such as seared foie gras, check out the elegant Kinoshita. And for the best Italian fare in Brazil, head straight to Fasano Restaurante, located in its namesake hotel (a favorite of supermodels during São Paulo's Fashion Week). Owner Rogério Fasano builds upon his family's string of celebrated restaurants and cafés to create the city's most sophisticated, acclaimed venue.

Ask your Virtuoso travel advisor to create a culinary-themed excursion around São Paulo, including seats at top tables in the city's best dining venues and a private cooking class with one of its acclaimed chefs.

Tailor-Made Amazon

While tourism along the Amazon continues to increase, it has yet to touch the remote Tapajós region — and that's fortunate for you. Jacques Cousteau called Tapajós the "Caribbean of the Amazon" because of its calm, aquamarine waters and white sandy beaches, revealed each year between August and April.

Cruising the Tapajós region makes for a fabulous, fascinating vacation. While the tributary stretches some 1,200 miles, only about 150 are navigable. Within that relatively short distance, you'll experience the three types of waters that form the Amazon basin — the clear blue Tapajós, the black Arapiuns, and the yellow Amazon — each of which features its own eco-system. You can trek through virgin rain forest, and join guides for close encounters with local flora and fauna. (It's worth noting that most animals stay hidden in the deep forest, although you will see plenty of colorful birds and primates hanging in the trees.) Visit indigenous Indian communities seemingly frozen in time, and lounge on pristine, isolated beaches recognized as some of the most beautiful in the world.

There are no jungle lodges or regular cruises in Tapajós, but your Virtuoso travel advisor can charter a fully manned private yacht for you. The Tupalú yacht is the best available in the region and, while it doesn't offer luxury accommodations, it is able to sail down small tributaries and access hidden sands — perfect for a beach picnic.



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In the Mist of Iguazu Falls

Upon first seeing Iguazu (Iguazú) Falls, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt supposedly quipped: “Poor Niagara!” Three times the width of North America’s great cataract, Iguazu overwhelms with its majestic beauty and humbling power.

Comprising 275 different falls along more than a mile and a half of the Iguazu River, Iguazu Falls forms the border between Brazil and Argentina. (It also divides the river into the upper and lower Rio Iguazu.) Most of the cascades are more than 200 feet in height, some upwards of 270 — including its most impressive, the U-shaped Devil’s Throat, which stretches 490 feet wide by a mind-boggling 2,300 feet long. At one point, you can be surrounded by 260 degrees of waterfalls.

Wider than Victoria with a peak flow covering a surface area of nearly 1.3 million square feet, Iguazu boasts the

greatest flow of any waterfall on Earth. The falls are shared between Iguazu National Park in Brazil and Iguazú National Park in Argentina; both parks are designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The main city on the Brazil side, Foz do Iguazu, is easily accessed and makes for a great extension while exploring the rest of the country. A three-day stay offers plenty of time to take in the best attractions on both sides of the falls, including treks with expert guides, an exhilarating boat ride, and even a private helicopter flight for a bird’s-eye view.

Pantanal, Nature’s Paradise

If you’re one who travels the world in search of birdlife, Pantanal in southwestern Brazil is your holy grail. The astonishing avian varieties include hyacinth macaws, raptors, trogons, and

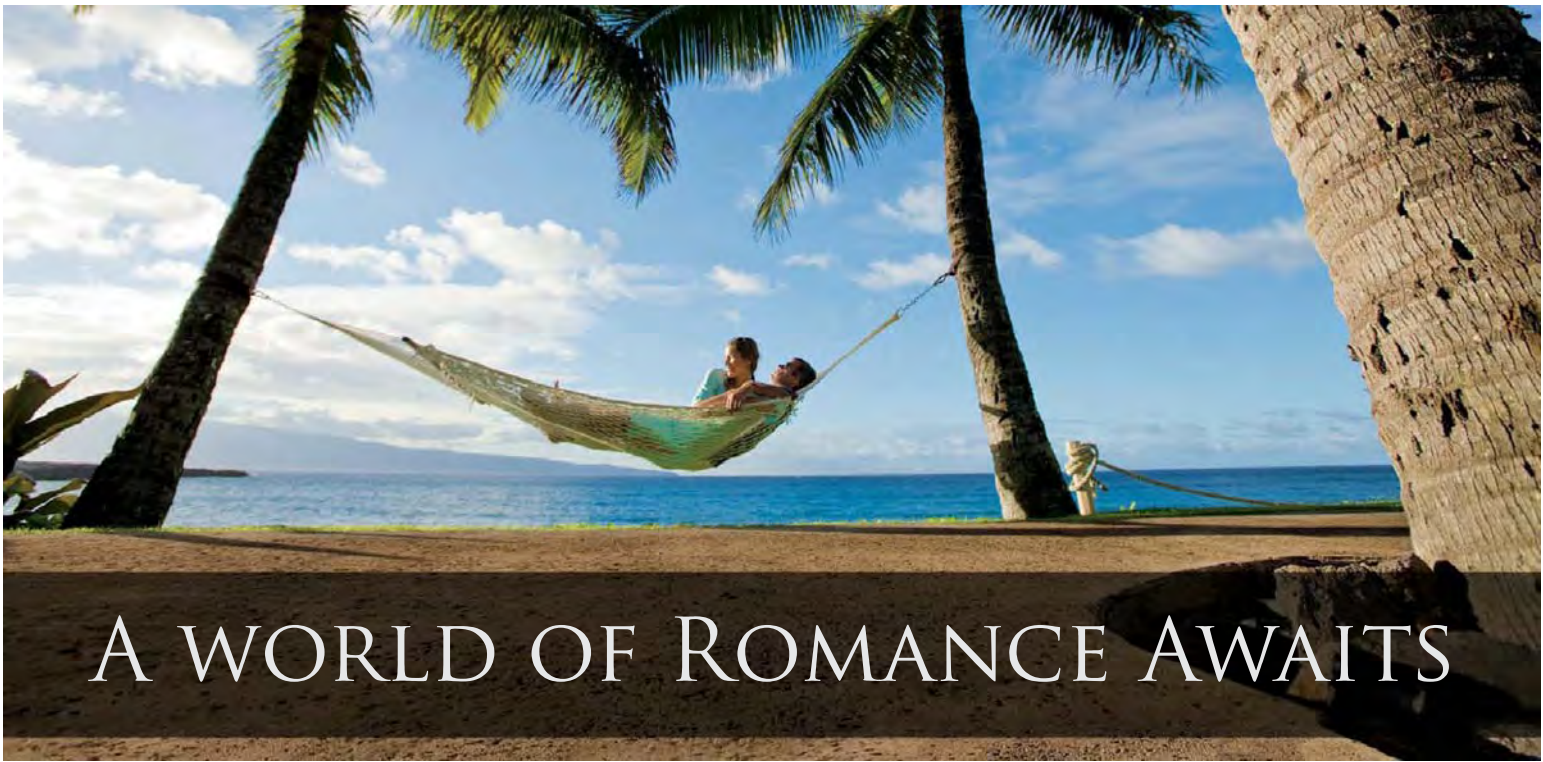
toucans. Some 650 species of birds have been identified in Pantanal National Park, one of the world’s largest freshwater wetlands. This remote region is also home to some of the most diverse creatures in the world, from giant anteaters and armadillos to howler monkeys, tapirs, capybara, and the elusive jaguar. Situated along Pantanal’s southern border, the small village of Bonito (“beautiful”) offers some of the country’s best aqua-adventures, with hundreds of waterfalls, crystal-clear lakes and rivers, and more than 80 caverns waiting to be explored.

To truly experience the region, your Virtuoso travel advisor can arrange a stay on an authentic farm such as Fazenda Barranco Alto. Situated in one of Pantanal’s most striking areas, this remote, family-run property includes a small, well-tended hotel for savvy travelers looking to experience exceptional trekking, horseback riding, and nocturnal safaris. Private hosts add even more value to your journey.



In the flow at Iguazu Falls (left), and a bird’s-eye view of Pantanal National Park (right).





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Another small farm, Fazenda Santa Esmeralda, offers a charming base for such Bonito-bound adventures as drift snorkeling and float trips along the transparent Rio da Prata, teeming with aquatic life. Spelunkers find underwater heaven in Gruta do Lago Azul (Blue Lake Grotto), a freshwater lake some 400 feet underground and part of one of the largest flooded cavities on the planet. Six-million-year-old fossils of a giant sloth and saber were found beneath its ethereal stalactites.

Island Idyll off Salvador

Brazil's African heritage is perhaps most evident in Salvador, a colorful coastal city and capital of the northeastern state of Bahia. Here, the country's slave roots run deep: You'll see it in the aerobic movements of *capoeira* — an art



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From left: Bahian beauty; wooden sculptures displayed at Bahia Mercado Modelo; the exclusive Ilha das Canas (top); Salvador staple — sizzling *acarajé* (bottom).



form mixing elements of dance, martial arts, and sports — hear it in the upbeat *axé* music (a blend of African drumming and reggae), and taste it in traditional dishes such as *acarajé*, a black-eyed pea fritter covered with peppers, shrimp, and spicy sauces. Pelourinho, Salvador's historic center, was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its perfectly preserved colonial architecture and monuments built by the Portuguese between the 16th and 18th centuries.

Just a half-hour from Salvador's coast, lies a remote island where time veritably stands still. One of Brazil's most exclusive rental properties, Ilha Das Canas is a small, private island that can accommodate

up to 26 privileged guests.

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The Main House includes a Master Suite with sweeping, 180-degree views and a private infinity pool; a variety of other bungalows, as well as the original farmhouse, are scattered about the property. There's a main swimming pool, Jacuzzi, volleyball court, and a beach kiosk where you can enjoy meals and social activities. You'll also find a full marina with every water toy imaginable, from kayaks and sailing dinghies to a 46-foot yacht. And the 30-person staff is available 24/7 to fulfill any whim.

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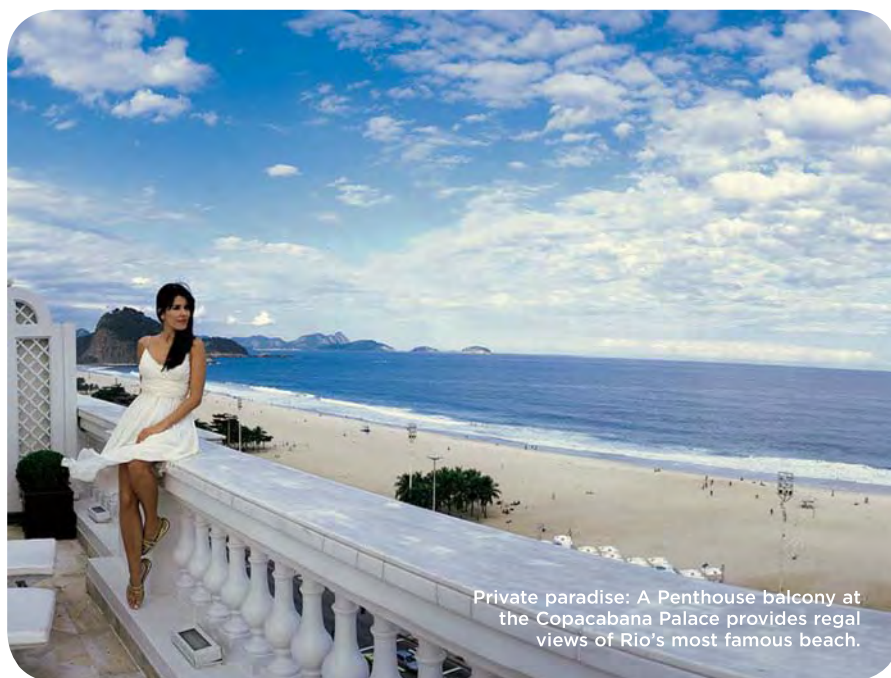


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Private paradise: A Penthouse balcony at the Copacabana Palace provides regal views of Rio's most famous beach.

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Going for Bespoke in Brazil

EXPLORE

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STAY

Reign over Rio's most famous beach at the legendary **Copacabana Palace**. Virtuoso guests receive a room upgrade upon arrival, if available; daily buffet breakfast for two; a \$100 spa credit; and late checkout, if available. *From BRL755 (approx. US\$406) per room, per night.* Or, let your imagination soar over Ipanema at the **Hotel Fasano Rio de Janeiro**. Includes complimentary room upgrade upon arrival, if available; daily Fasano breakfast for two; a \$100 spa voucher; and guaranteed late checkout. *From \$770 per room, per night.*

Savor Sao Paulo's finest Italian cuisine while sparking your imagination at the

Philippe Starck-designed **Hotel Fasano São Paulo**. Virtuoso guests receive a room upgrade upon arrival, if available; daily Fasano breakfast for two; a \$100 spa voucher; and guaranteed late checkout. *From \$770 per room, per night.* At Iguaçu Falls, you'll find sanctuary at the recently renovated **Hotel das Cataratas**, the only property located within Brazil's Iguaçu National Park. Enjoy a room upgrade upon arrival, if available; buffet breakfast daily; and one-way private sedan transfer from hotel to airport (Brazil side). *From BRL670 (approx. US\$360) per room, per night.*

CRUISE

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