Rio de Janeiro

With its glorious coastline, dramatic mountains and urban rainforest, Rio de Janeiro is a city that hits you between the eyes with its natural beauty. But there’s plenty to discover here that isn’t instantly self-evident. From lively neighbourhood bars and an intricate beach culture to sculptural gardens and concrete modernist buildings, there is a lot more to Rio than bronzed bodies on Ipanema Beach.

Need to know
Get to grips with the basics

01 When in Rio: When asked about safety in the city, any local will be quick to say that you should be fine – as long as you are alert. “Street-smart”
02 First past the post: The city’s beaches are broken down into sections according to numbered posts (“posts”), each of which offers a different atmosphere.
03 Make a day of it: The most important meal is lunch and it does not necessarily end after. “Cold”
04 Meet and greet: Brazilians are known to be quite touchy-feely. Just extending your hand with no extra touching comes across as a little “cold” to most Cariocas.
05 Dress to impress: Rio is extremely informal but don’t mistake casualness for lack of style. The majority of venues will have no dress code; quite touchy-feely.
06 When you’re in Rio: It can be a day-long event. “Street-smart”

Hotels
At home in the Marvellous City

1 Fasano, Ipanema
Design-centric digs
The Fasano’s location is second to none but only about half of the rooms have a sea view, so be sure to ask. There are three Deluxe Ocean-Front Suites and these are easily the best. The Fasano’s other assets include a rooftop infinity pool.
Avenida Vieira Souto, 80
+55 (21) 2108 8442
fasano.com.br

2 Mama Ruisa, Santa Teresa
Personalised service
Owner Jean Michel Ruis prides himself on giving each guest a unique experience; he can recommend a personalised itinerary for your visit.
Rua Santa Cristina, 132
+55 (21) 2508 8442
mamaruisa.com

3 Gero, Ipanema
Old-school Italian
When hotelier Rogério Fasano opened Gero in 2002 he raised the gastronomic bar for the whole city. The menu is heavy on classic Italian staples such as lamb shanks and veal ravioli; our top pick is the saffron risotto with ossobuco.
Rua Arquibancada Mendonça, 157
+55 (21) 2239 8158
fiasco.com.br

4 Aconchego Carioca, Praça da Bandeira
Comforting Brazilian food
This relaxed pub-style restaurant serves food that is typical of Brazil’s northeast. If you need a break from Rio’s carnivorous leanings this is a good option.
Barão de Iguatemi, 379
+55 (21) 2273 9025

5 Sushi Leblon, Leblon
Japanese with a twist
The sleek dining room has specialties such as sukiyaki agulho branco (butterfish and fried quail egg nigiri with truffle oil) and tuna tartare, all served on crockery by São Paulo-based Japanese potters Hideko Honma and Kimi Nii.
Rua Dias Ferreira, 256
+55 (21) 2512 2956
sushileblon.com

6 BB Lanches, Leblon
Juicy secret
Sample some lesser-known Amazonian fruits such as the lychee-like graviola, the bitter orange acerola fruit or the purple açaí, which some say tastes like a mix of berries and chocolate.
Rua Arquibancada Mendonça, 157
+55 (21) 2273 9025
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Food and drink
Dining Carioca-style

1 Belmond Copacabana Palace, Copacabana
Old-school glamour
The most sophisticated address in Rio has ushered the rich and famous across its marble threshold since it opened in 1923. The Palace’s rooms are a masterclass in simple grandeur.
Avenida Atlântica, 1702
+55 (21) 2548 7070
belmond.com/copacabana-palace-rio-de-janeiro

2 Tata da Bossa, Botafogo
Bossa nova central
Carlos Alberto Afonso, now in his sixties, set up this record shop dedicated to bossa nova in 1993 and originally named it Toca da Bossa Nova (Den of Bossa Nova). Rua Vinicius de Moraes, 129
+55 (21) 2247 5207
tocadabossanova.com.br

3 Osklen, Ipanema
Beach plus
Global sportswear brand Osklen was founded in 1989 and the first Rio shop opened two years later. The flagship store offers high-end casualwear while Osklen Praia, a short walk away, hosts a range of T-shirts and shorts.
Rua Maria Quitéria, 85
+55 (21) 2227 2911
osklen.com

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Vocabulary
Local lingo

01 Bom dia: Good morning
02 Boa tarde: Good afternoon
03 Boa noite: Good night
04 Carioca: Local resident of Rio
05 De nada: You’re welcome
06 Lindo(a): Beautiful
07 Obrigado: Thank you (for men)
08 Obrigada: Thank you (for women)
09 Olé: Hi
10 Tchau: Good bye
11 Tudo bem?: How are you?