

FREE PLANNING GUIDE

The Brazil Trip Planner

Seasons, regions, routes and the mistakes that cost the most days.
Written by the local operator who plans Brazil trips every working day.

Authentic Brazil Travel · Florianópolis, Brazil

BEFORE YOU START

Why this guide exists

Almost every disappointing Brazil trip we hear about was lost in the planning, not on the ground. Brazil is larger than the continental United States, its regions run on different calendars, and the order in which you decide things matters more than any single choice.

This guide gives you that order. Read steps one to three with a calendar open, then use the rest as a reference while you plan. It comes from a local operator who lives in Brazil and plans Brazil trips every working day.

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> You will not find a price list here. You will find the questions that decide a price: when you go, how many regions you add and what you book last.

STEP 1

Choose the region before the route

The best seasons of the Pantanal, the Amazon, the dunes and the coast do not overlap. Fix your travel window first and let it decide where you go.

Region	Best months	What you get
Rio de Janeiro and the Costa Verde	April to June, September to November	Warm clear days, calm sea for boat days, no summer crush
The Amazon	January to June, or July to December	High water by boat through the flooded forest, or low water with wildlife on the riverbanks
The Pantanal	July to October	Dry season wildlife gathered at the last water
Lençóis Maranhenses	June to August	Lagoons full, deep blue and warm enough to swim
Florianópolis	November to April	Beach season, busiest December to March, best in April
Northeast coast around Salvador	September to November	Reliably sunny after the April to July rains

> September to November suits most of the country at once. July to October opens two wild places together: the Pantanal dry season and Amazon low water.

STEP 2

Seven places, honestly

Rio de Janeiro

Best: April to June, September to November · Plan: four nights

Stay in the Zona Sul: Copacabana, Ipanema, Leblon, Botafogo or Flamengo. It is where you will swim, eat and walk anyway, and the most policed part of the city. Ipanema is the one we book most, with beach, restaurants and evenings within a few blocks. Visit Santa Teresa, do not sleep there: a morning on foot makes more sense from a base by the beach.

Iguazu Falls

Best: April, May, September to November, though any month works · Plan: three to four days

See both sides. The Brazilian side gives you the panorama in half a day, the Argentine side is a full day of catwalks ending at the lip of the Devil's Throat. Go at the edges of the day, early or in the last hour, and it is a different national park. Bring your passport, because the Argentine side is another country. You will get wet anyway.

Salvador and the Bahian coast

Best: September to March · Plan: one or two nights, then the beach

The core is the UNESCO listed Pelourinho and its Afro-Brazilian museums, a Bahian food tour built around acarajé and moqueca, and a capoeira taster with a local mestre. A third day only for a day trip. Most travellers finish with beach days at Praia do Forte.

STEP 2

Seven places, honestly, continued

The Amazon

Best: January to June by boat, July to December on the riverbanks · Plan: four days minimum

Come for the forest, not for the animals. If wildlife is the point, the Pantanal is the better trip. Lodges sit three to four and a half hours from Manaus, so plan a city night: nobody lands at four in the afternoon and sleeps in the jungle the same night.

The Pantanal

Best: June to October, peak July to October · Plan: five or more days, book six to nine months ahead

North or south decides the trip. The north, reached from Cuiabá, means jaguars: we recommend the western Pantanal around Cáceres first, with Porto Jofre a strong option. The south, reached from Campo Grande, means a working ranch, horses, birds and Bonito. We normally do not combine the two halves. One half, done properly.

Lençóis Maranhenses

Best: June to August · Plan: about seven days on the northeast dunes

The rain-water lagoons between the dunes fill from May to September and are at their best from June to August, deep blue and warm enough to swim in. Cross the dunes on foot between the lagoons, or drive the coast from Maranhão to Ceará.

Florianópolis

Best: November to April, April is our favourite

Our home island, so this is a local opinion. December to March is beach summer and the busiest stretch, especially January. Take the edges: November is warm and still quiet, and in April the sea has all summer stored in it, the light turns golden and the crowds have gone home.

STEP 3

Two or three regions, never five

Every change of region costs about half a travel day. Two weeks buys two or three regions done properly, not five done badly. Eight to ten days is the realistic minimum for a first trip, fourteen to eighteen when you combine a city with a nature region.

The classic first trip

Rio de Janeiro, Foz do Iguaçu and the Amazon. City, waterfalls and rainforest, linked by short domestic flights. 12 to 14 days.

Wildlife

Rio plus a proper Pantanal safari, the best place to see wild jaguars. Fewer stops, deeper days. 14 to 16 days.

Culture and history

Rio, the colonial port of Paraty and the baroque gold towns of Minas Gerais. Short drives, no long flights.

Coast and culture

Rio, then Salvador for Afro-Brazilian culture and food, ending with beach days at Praia do Forte. The most relaxed of the four.

Plan in this order

1. Fix your travel window.
2. Choose two or three regions that are at their best in it.
3. Settle the ground plan: lodges, guides, boat departures.
4. Book internal flights last. Lodge arrival days and boat departures decide which flights are usable.

STEP 4

Dates and budget traps

Three dates raise prices across the whole country every year. Know them before you pick a window.

Carnival

It follows Easter: Carnival Tuesday falls 47 days before Easter Sunday, and in 2027 it is 9 February. It is not a public holiday, so what shuts varies by city. The surge is nationwide, the Pantanal included. Either commit and book far ahead, or give the window room. Travelling through it by accident is the one choice that costs money for nothing.

New Year on the coast

Rio and the coast fill up and minimum stays appear. Book early or travel just outside it.

July school holidays

Domestic demand lifts prices in the popular regions. The Pantanal dry season overlaps with it, so book that early too.

STEP 4, CONTINUED

Four more traps behind the price

Flights and entry costs sit outside every quote. International and internal flights are priced on top, and stacked remote regions raise the total further.

Stacking remote regions. The Pantanal and the Lençóis carry the highest daily rates, because the lodges are small and remote and the guiding is specialist work.

The single supplement. Solo travellers pay a surcharge. Ask for it to be stated openly in the quote.

The overseas agency margin. Booking with an operator based in Brazil typically saves the 20 to 30 percent an overseas agency adds.

A word on budget

Privately guided travel with accommodation, transfers, guides and activities runs roughly US$200 to US$400 per person per day, international and internal flights not included. Where you land inside that range depends on the standard of the accommodation and how full you want the days to be.

STEP 5

Five mistakes that cost the most days

Booking flights before the season. A good fare can land you on dry dunes. Choose the window first.

Adding a fourth region. It never adds a place. It removes days from the three you had.

Treating São Paulo as a destination. Two days is plenty unless food and art are why you came. Use it as the hinge of the trip, not its centre.

Underestimating the Portuguese. Fine in a Copacabana hotel, a real problem at a bus terminal with a delayed connection. Outside international hotels English is rare.

Booking the famous thing, not the good thing. The best guides and boat captains are often not the best known. Ask who is actually leading your day.

> And one that beats them all: starting too late. Lodges, boats and the good guides are booked long before most travellers begin to look, and every week of delay narrows the choices.

STEP 6

Getting around, safety, entry

Getting around

You move around Brazil four ways: domestic flights between regions, private transfers where no airport reaches, buses where the road is good, and boats. On the Costa Verde, in the Amazon and in the Lençóis the boat is the road.

Staying safe

Risk is concentrated in specific places and specific hours: petty theft in crowded spots, certain neighbourhoods after dark. A private local guide removes most of those decisions. Arrange your airport pickup, because arrival is when you are most tired and least sure where you are.

Entry

US citizens need an e-Visa since April 2025. Apply online a few weeks before you fly, because airlines check it at check-in. Always confirm the current requirement for your passport on the official government site.

Do you need an agency?

Not for a single beach week in Rio: book it yourself and keep the money. For a multi-region trip, very likely, because internal flights move without warning and guides work by WhatsApp. Every legal Brazilian operator is listed in CADASTUR, so check the registration.

STEP 6, CONTINUED

Money, phone, language, packing

Money

Cards work almost everywhere, restaurants included. Carry a small cash reserve, not much. Tips are usually 10 percent and already on the bill.

Phone

Get an eSIM before you fly. A local SIM needs a CPF, the Brazilian tax number visitors do not have. Install it at home, keep your home SIM in for bank codes, and expect Brazil to run on WhatsApp.

Language

English works at hotels, lodges and on guided tours, not reliably with taxi drivers, in small restaurants or in the interior. An eSIM, a translation app, ten phrases and a guide at the gate cover the weak spots.

Packing

Pack per region, not per country. Closed shoes you have already worn in, one warm layer, a dry bag, a refillable bottle. Leave the wheeled suitcase at home if you visit Paraty or Ilha Grande. June to September is winter in the southern hemisphere.

Travelling with kids

Build each day around who is in the group, and split it for a day if interests differ. For the Amazon and the Pantanal we suggest from about five years old, as a guideline. One region per week is plenty.

Travelling solo

Easy and normal. The real hurdles are cost and logistics, not danger: hotels and lodges charge a single supplement of roughly 20 to 50 percent. Start where distances are short: Paraty, Ilha Grande, Salvador's old town.

Your pre-booking checklist

- [ ] Travel window fixed, region first
- [ ] Two or three regions, not more
- [ ] Half a travel day counted for every change of region
- [ ] Carnival, New Year and July holiday dates checked
- [ ] Ground plan agreed before any internal flight is booked
- [ ] Airport pickup and transfers arranged
- [ ] Passport and e-Visa requirement confirmed
- [ ] eSIM installed, cards and a small cash reserve ready
- [ ] Packing planned per region
- [ ] Travel insurance in place
- [ ] Budget planned per day, flights on top

Want this turned into a route for your dates?

Tell us when you can travel and what you want to see. You get a written, privately guided proposal from a local operator who lives in Brazil.

Book a call with Robin

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