



CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | ICONIC RIO DE JANEIRO



Iconic Rio de Janeiro

How to get the bigger picture in South America's most stunning city

Brazil's beachy pin-up is brimful of world-famous sights, from the statue of *Christ the Redeemer* floating on high, to the curvaceous sandy sweeps of Copacabana and Ipanema. How best to get the perfect line-up on your camera (and in your memory)? With our handy shortlist of icons, which brings the whole fabulous city into focus. **By Alex Robinson**



SEE & DO

● Rio's most famous view is literally iconic: the *Christ the Redeemer* statue on Corcovado mountain (1 on map), with rainforest, beaches and skyscrapers at its feet. Most visitors go in the hazy afternoon thinking they'll catch a great sunset, but the location is wrong (the sun disappears at an anticlimactic angle, behind the mountain). Instead, do what locals (known as Cariocas) do: catch the first funicular up at 8am (tremdocorcovado.rio; from £13). You'll arrive when it's still cool and clear, before the monkeys and tropical birds retreat into forest shade.

● Only tourists eat on the beach, but taking lunch in Rio's 200-year-old Jardim Botânico (jbrj.gov.br; £3; 2), below Corcovado mountain, is very Carioca. The towering royal palms, lawns dotted with bromeliad-dripping kapok trees, and lily ponds fed by tinkling waterfalls keep the gardens shady and cool even when the city swelters. Its Jarbó (jarbocafe.com; mains about £7) has bruschetta, tartines and all-day brunch alfresco, bolstered by birdsong and butterflies.

● Thanks to flat, beach-hugging cycleways, Rio's coast is best explored by bike (bikerentalrio.com; £2.50 an hour; 3). The prettiest stretch, between luxurious Leblon in the south and the colonial-era city centre, is easily seen in an afternoon. You'll pass many Rio icons — Ipanema 4, Copacabana 5, the Sugar Loaf 6 — and can stop to swim or sip acerola-cherry

HELL-VISION
The ultimate view of *Christ the Redeemer*? Take an eight-minute helicopter flight over the statue and the Corcovado rainforest from the Jardim Botânico (heli.sight.com.br; £85pp), best in the early morning when the air is clearest

Morning glory: sunrise over the Sugar Loaf and Botafogo Bay; below, the royal palms in the Botanical Garden; beach volleyball is a Carioca essential

juices from beach kiosks. Or try a cycle tour (rionatural.com.br; £42; 7).

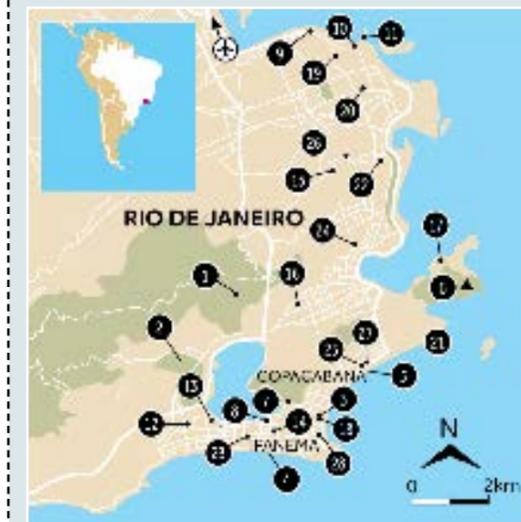
● Art Deco Bar Lagoa (Ave Epitácio Pessoa 1674; drinks about £5; 8) is the place to go for that archetypal Rio rum cocktail — the cachaça-laced Caipirinha. In the evening, **Christ looms above — lit in white neon — and city lights shimmer on Rodrigo de Freitas Lagoon**. Grab a lake-shore table and order a Caipilé, a Caipirinha made with grapes and served with a lemon lolly.

● The classic Carioca day includes a **game of beach volleyball or football, wearing nothing but a swimsuit and sunglasses**. Newbies will need to hone their moves — this is best done in the cool of the morning on Ipanema 4 or Copacabana Beach 5, under the expert guidance of Pelé Da Praia (facebook.com/peledapraia; from £20 and hour). You'll be match-ready in a couple of hours, then Pelé can fix you up with locals to play a proper game.

● Later, visit Rio's Instagram-perfect new museum district, south of the centre, where **once-derelict docks are now filled with post-modern buildings and four-storey-high murals**. Explore by tram (vltrio.com.br; 75p), and hop off at the aquarium (aquariomarinodorio.com.br; £23; 9), the MAR contemporary art gallery (museudeartedorio.org.br; £4; 10) and science-focused Museu do Amanhã (museudoamanha.org.br; £4; 11) — a bone-white curve of concrete that looks like a hovering spaceship.

● The perfect sunset view? It's from Sugar Loaf mountain 6 — **the 400-metre-tall boulder crouching over a wineglass-shaped bay and deep blue sea**. Ascend by cable car (bondinho.com.br; £23) to watch the sun sink opposite, silhouetting ripples of rainforest-swathed ridges and turning the sky orange and pink.

● Want a taste of the samba-fuelled glitz of Rio Carnival? Avoid the gaudy shows advertised in hotels. Instead, **tour the warehouses where the floats are built, then visit real carnival champions** — the Mangueira samba school — in the evening. You'll see Rio's top dancers and percussionists practising for the main event (bravie tour.com.br; £63pp for two people).



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EAT

● **Brazilian speciality**
ACADEMIA DA CACHACA (Mains about £10)

Because: *Feijoada* — a meat and bean stew — is Rio's answer to Sunday roast. This is one of the few restaurants to serve the dish daily. **Travel's tip:** Dine at the Leblon branch — the original and still the best. *Conde de Bernadotte 26; 00 55 2125292680, academiadacachaca.com.br; 16*

● **Tip-top spit-roast**
CHARBON ROUGE (Mains about £15)

Because: Brazilian steaks are among the world's best, and nowhere in Rio does them better than this spot on the shores of Rodrigo de Freitas Lagoon. **Travel's tip:** For a typical Brazilian slice, order *picanha* — tender, full of flavour and locally considered to be a cut above fillet. *Borges de Medeiros 829; 00 55 21 9767 67998, charbonrouge.com.br; 18*

● **Beachside seafood**
SATYRICON (Mains about £18)

Because: Where better to eat fresh seafood than on Ipanema Beach? This open-plan Italian-Brazilian favourite is lined with modern art and tropical foliage. **Travel's tip:** Decline the olives, bread and appetisers brought to your table at the start: if you eat them you'll be charged £7. *Barão da Torre 192; 00 55 2125210627, satyricon.com.br; 14*

● **Table with a view**
APRAZIVEL (Mains about £20)

Because: This is Rio's most romantic dining spot. Fish and spicy stews are served under stars in Santa Teresa, surrounded by tropical gardens and with Guanabara Bay spread out below. **Travel's tip:** Pre-order a cab for your return — the surrounds are remote and taxis can be hard to secure last-minute. *Aprazivel 62; 00 55 21 2508 9174, aprazivel.com.br; 15*

● **Hipster fine-dining**
LASAI (Tasting menus from £59)

Because: In this restored Portuguese-colonial mansion in boho Botafogo, Cariocas congregate for Michelin-starred plates (tropical ingredients, Cordon Bleu techniques). **Travel's tip:** Book ahead and arrive just before sunset for skyline views and a cocktail at the rooftop lounge. *Conde de Irajá 191; 00 55 213449 1834, lasai.com.br; 16*

TOP TIPPLES

It's traditional to drink a glass of cachaça — Brazilian rum — with *feijoada*. The Academia da Cachaça stocks the best bottles in the city, including Vale Verde, the cachaça equivalent of a top single malt (from £2.50 a glass)

IT'S SAMBA TIME...

Try to come on a Monday, when live samba bands play on the Pedra do Sal steps right outside the bar

POST-WALK DRINK?

The Quiosque Chopp beach bar, right next to the fort entrance overlooking the sand, serves ice-chilled fresh coconuts, beer and Caipirinhas (about £2)

DRINK

● **Sundowners at Sugar Loaf**
BARE RESTAURANTE URCA

Because: It's simple (wood tables, beer in plastic coolers), but there's no better bar for sunset views. **Travel's tip:** Try Casquinha de Siri (swimming crab; £4), with local Itaipava-label beer. *Cândido Gaffrée 205; barurca.com.br; 17*

● **Bossa nova beats**
BIP BIP

Because: Bossa nova literally began round the corner in Nara Leão's flat in 1957, and all the greats, from Nara herself to João Gilberto, have played in this tiny bar. **Travel's tip:** Wednesday is bossa nova night. Arrive before 7pm to get a table (€6). *Almirante Gonçalves 50; facebook.com/barbipbip; 18*

● **Local samba secret**
TRAPICHE GAMBOA

Because: In the 19th century, samba was born in the streets outside this retro-fitted bar, where the city's top musicians still play (ask your hotel to book a table). **Travel's tip:** Dress down, come by cab and arrange a pick-up time (the streets are poorly lit). *Sacadura Cabral 155; trapichegamboa.com; 19*



ASK THE LOCAL

Rodrigo Braz Vieira was born and raised in Rio de Janeiro and is a TV researcher and film fixer

Coffee and Portuguese tarts are a Rio essential!

But avoid eating at the much-touted Confeitaria Colombo, and head instead to nearby Casa Cavé (casacave.com.br; 20) — it's better and cheaper. Need a break from the crowds? The historic Duque de Caxias Fortress (21), on a boulder by Leme Beach, is a great alternative to Sugar Loaf, with a similar perspective — and it costs less than £1 to visit. Finally, if you want to feel like a local, head to Villa Aymoré (Metro: Glória; 22), a street of renovated Belle Époque houses filled with galleries and arty cafes. There are beautiful vistas of Corcovado mountain and on Fridays there's free outdoor jazz music.



STAY

● **Ipanema flashpack**
IPANEMA BEACH HOUSE (Doubles from £36, room only)

Because: It's a simple, hostel-style spot on a quiet street in safe, well-heeled Ipanema, a block from the beach — proof you needn't blow the budget to bag a great location in Rio. It has beds in shared dorm rooms from £10, as well as private doubles, and there's a pool. **Travel's tip:** Book tours independently, not through reception — you'll get better value for money. *Barão da Torre 485; beachhouseipanema.com; 23*

● **Value with a view**
YOO2 (Doubles from £90, B&B)

Because: At this price, you couldn't ask for more: its modern, minimalist rooms have sublime vistas of Sugar Loaf and *Christ the Redeemer*. After a day exploring, sink into loungers at the rooftop bar. **Travel's tip:** Ask about bike hire at reception — the Sugar Loaf and Copacabana are only 15 minutes' ride away, along good cycle paths. *Praia de Botafogo 242; yoo2.com; 24*

● **Cut-price Copacabana**
WINDSOR EXCELSIOR (Doubles from £90, B&B)

Because: It's got a five-star location (Copacabana beachfront) and fit-out (rooftop bar with over-the-ocean sunrise sightings), at a three-star price. Ask for a room on the 10th floor or higher to avoid traffic noise from the seafront boulevard. **Travel's tip:** Too tired to go far for dinner? Cross the street to La Trattoria (latrattoriario.com.br; mains about £9), a family-run Italian bistro serving Copacabana's best pasta. *Ave Atlântica 1800; windsorhoteis.com; 25*

● **Creative pad**
MAMA RUISA (Doubles from £132, room only)

Because: This is Parisian panache in Rio's version of arty Montmartre, Santa Teresa. Perched on a cobbled street, it has views of the Christ, Sugar Loaf and Guanabara Bay. **Travel's tip:** Spend just £35 to upgrade to one of the hotel's suites — where the likes of Bianca Jagger have stayed — for priceless Amazonian art and the Sugar Loaf framed by



FAMOUS BEACH BASH

Both the Windsor and Copacabana Palace are ideally sited to watch the New Year's Eve fireworks display and party on Copacabana Beach — the biggest in Latin America. Book three months ahead to get the best rooms at the best prices

Pool resource: clockwise from top left, Belmond Copacabana Palace; Michelin mouthful at Lasai; celeb-magnet hotel Emiliano; balmy breakfast at Mama Ruisa; Caipirinha cocktails at the Academia da Cachaça

tropical foliage in your window. *Santa Cristina 132; mamaruisa.com; 26*

● **Art Deco icon**
BELMOND COPACABANA PALACE (Doubles from £289, B&B)

Because: It's romantic, golden-era Rio, with glitzy chandelier-lit ballrooms, balcony windows overlooking the beach, and a vast pool where suited waiters serve cocktails to your lounge. **Travel's tip:** Avoid the modern Tower Wing, which overlooks the inner patio and the city. It's worth spending £150 more for an ocean-view balcony room in the original Art Deco building where Princess Diana, Orson Welles, Marilyn Monroe and other legends have stayed. *Ave Atlântica 1702; belmond.com; 27*

● **Luxury lifestyle**
EMILIANO (Doubles from £491, B&B)

Because: This is the hotel where supermodels and film stars come to enjoy sea views of the choicest bit of Copacabana Beach. It drips glamour, from the high-thread-count Egyptian cotton bedlinen to the vertical garden in

the restaurant. **Travel's tip:** For celeb-watching and fine-dining, book a table in the hotel's Franco-Brazilian fusion restaurant, Emile, run by Alain Ducasse-trained chef Damien Montecor. *Ave Atlântica 3804; emiliano.com.br; 28*

GET ME THERE GO INDEPENDENT

Norwegian flies from Gatwick from £440 return, but you'll need to add £50 each way for a checked bag and a meal. **BA** flies from Heathrow from £449. **TAP** flies from Manchester, Gatwick and Heathrow, via Lisbon, from £726.

GO PACKAGED

Journey Latin America (journeylatinamerica.co.uk) has nine days in Rio and the Green Coast from £1,804pp, B&B, with Heathrow flights. **Brazil Revealed** (brazilrevealed.co.uk) has nine days in Rio from £1,949pp, B&B, with flights. Or try **Bespoke Brazil** (bespokebrazil.com).

FURTHER INFORMATION

See **visit.rio**. For local tours, try **bravietour.com.br**