

## Rio Carnival

Right, so you're heading to Rio. Get **psyched**, because here's the *real* lowdown, told by me.

## Flights

- When to book - as early as possible but check out airline sales. If you can find flights from London for ~£600 or less for carnival dates, book immediately as if you leave it late it could cost you double.
  - Millions travel to and within Brazil for carnival so it gets quite pricey and availability drops last minute
- Rio has 2 airports. Galeão International Airport (GIG), is the big international one. Any flights longer than 2h fly from here and then Santos Dumont Airport (SDU) which is like their version of London city which does regular ones to São Paulo. If you can fly into SDU as its right in town and small and has great views so get a window seat
- Either way get an **uber not** local taxi man from GIG or SDU when you land
- Public transport from the airport isn't advised. It's likely you'll have big bags. A train/metro doesn't go right there so you'll need to change and connect and it'll take ages. Ubers are pretty affordable so take one
- You can sometimes find cheaper flights into São Paulo and then make the short hop ~1h flight to Rio. There are so many in a day it can sometimes work out cheaper but don't underestimate the time it takes in São Paulo to go from their small regional airport São Paulo–Congonhas Airport (CGH) to their main international one São Paulo/Guarulhos International Airport (GRU) and visa versa. It can take an hour and that's without traffic
- Consider an Air tag incase you have connections and so you can stash it with a valuable or suitcase
- TAP do lots of flights all over Brazil that connect in Portugal from all across Europe
- LATAM is the big South American international airline
- GOL is the domestic Brazilian airline along with Azul
- Avianca also does flights but its Colombian
- BA flight direct. If you have avios check for reward flights both into São Paulo and Rio
- Consider doing more of Brazil than just Rio. Also you can get pretty affordable flights to Buenos Aires in Argentina if you want to do that too

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## Where to Stay

- **When to book** - as early as possible. Millions travel to and within Brazil for carnival so it gets quite pricey and availability drops last minute
- **Copacanema** (right in-between Copacabana and Ipanema beach) is **ideal** for sun, sea, sand, and walk-ability. It's the sweet spot. You can find some decent spots on **Airbnb** here: . Very touristy
- Copacobana: very touristy and famous. You'll see more hotels and condos. Check the reviews. You don't need to optimise for beach views as it's all a 5/10 mins walk away. If budget isn't an option the Hilton near Leme has a dope rooftop pool and good views and there of course is the world famous Copacobana Palace.

- Ipanema - you'll find fewer hotels here but more Air bnbs. Good area too. It's all safe but The Safest most boozie part is all the way to Leblon of the south zone of Rio IMO. A bit more expensive than Copacabana
- **Botafogo and near Flamengo** is a bit cheaper and fine, but the beaches aren't as good in terms of water quality and sand. Think convenience, and nearby pretty spots
- **Barra**. More quiet and fewer good food and drink options. You'll need to get an Uber everywhere but it is cheaper and better value for money. About **30 mins away from anywhere** you'll want to be.
- **Centro**, cheaper but more dodgy. A bit closer to Lapa and Pedra do Sal for nightlife but **zero beaches**. If you stay there, make sure you get **Ubers, especially at night**.
- **Leblon**. Expensive and **boozie**. If you've got the cash, sure, go off. It's the nicest best located part
- **Santa Teresa**. In the hills and can be cute. Check the reviews as it's mainly Airbnb and not hotels up there so you don't want to be too secluded or a target for break ins. Again you'll need a taxi to get to most places and it's hilly so even places you can walk to you'll probably want to get an Uber coz of the heat
- Lagoa/ Humaita - fine. Cheaper than other spots but a short ride to most places
- **Anywhere else i'd avoid**

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## Good Food (You Know I Got You)

- Have brunch here. **Best views of Botafogo bay** (I think the prettiest and most iconic in the world, just saying): **Yoo2 Rio de Janeiro** (Praia de Botafogo 242, Botafogo).
- **Fogo de Chão**. World famous, and the **Botafogo** one (Av. Repórter Nestor Moreira, s/n – Botafogo) is the main one. Expensive for Brazil, but an absolute **churrascaria classic**.
- **Kinjo Culinária Japonesa-Peruana (Nikkei) | Copacabana**. Amazing all-you-can-eat Japanese Peruvian fusion. **My fave**, hands down.
- **Canastra Bar** (R. Jangadeiros, 42 – G – Ipanema). Good Italian and a super buzzing street corner spot.
- **Aussie Coffee** (R. Visc. de Pirajá, 98 – loja 2 – Ipanema). Good Aussie brunch. Get your flat white fix.
- **Zona Sul** does good fruit bowls. Your daily health kick.
- **Galezzo Restaurante** decent food but does this nice steak and gnocchi.
- **Nosso** amazing octopus and cocktails. More fancy, so dress up, you know
- **Churrasqueira RJ** - great steak and all meats and affordable. Good in a group.
- **Risoteria Gourmet** another decent food spot.
- **Belmonte ipanema** is a **a mid** spot for food and drink. A bit overrated but has Nice view of Ipanema if you go upstairs. Always busy so be prepared. The other branches are more mid
- **Nam Thai**, nice Thai.
- **Restaurante Guacamole Taqueria**. Good tequila and Mexican.
- **Zaza Café**

- **Aprazível** fancy but got recommended.
- **Térèze** fancy but recommended.
- **Pendê Café** - good brunch in Copacobana
- **Cantina da Praça** - nice pizzas
- **Bayam Sushi Bar** - good sushi fancier
- **Temakeria** - Ipanema - all you can eat sushi but like a buffet
- **Guacamole** - good mexican
- Try the tapioca at a **Tapí Tapioca**
- I'd avoid street food in Rio. It's unlikely to be fab and you can't control the sanitation and hygiene
- If you order caipirinhas or other drinks from street vendors watch them make it to be sure
- Tap water is fine to shower with and I've never had issues brushing my teeth with it, but don't drink it. Bottled water is cheap and easily available. Check if your air BnB has a filter but buy bottles or have a refill one

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## Must-Do Activities (Don't Miss These)

- **Cristo Redentor** - Go early to avoid the crowds, and when I say early, as **early as you can**. **Must do**. Get the Uber and don't try to hike up or down as it's **dangerous** ( I know someone who got robbed at knifepoint).
- **Sugarloaf**. I'd say go on a **Friday for sunset**. It is a 3 station 1 stop cable car set. You go from the base to a mid point where the DJs are playing. They have toilets and food vendors and views. You then have to queue to go to the actual sugaloaf one which requires another cable car. Each wait in Highseason even with a ticket can be 45mins. They have DJs playing on the first stop and it's a good vibe. You also get to see Botafogo bay in the day and at sunset and night. Book tickets in advance and don't underestimate, even with a ticket you will queue, you may be waiting up to an hour for the cable car itself and that's for both stops (especially around Carnival). Leave a good chunk of your afternoon. I'd say get there and in the first queue for **3 PM latest**. Go at sunset so you get the day and night. Sunset in Rio is around 6pm. Friday and Saturday have the dj's so the vibe is a1
  - **Tickets:** <URL for the official Sugarloaf Mountain ticket site:  
<https://bondinho.com.br/en/>
- Go to **Alto Vidigal**. Go to Vidigal for a favela (**safe**) experience and have a drink overlooking Rio up there. Request an uber to vidigal and the Uber will drop you at the bottom. The roads are too small and windy for a car so you'll need to then pay a local to hop on a motorbike up it. Pay in cash in reals and agree the price in advance
- Go on **Airbnb experiences** or ask me for a recommended guide and climb **Dois Irmãos** if you want a hike and an iconic Rio view and pic. Again, go at **sunset**. U can go without a guide but I wouldn't recommend as coming down in the dark can be a challenge and therefore dangerous for a few reasons (falling, robbery, etc)
- **Parque Lage** (Rua Jardim Botânico, 414 - Jardim Botânico). Iconic photo spot and cute.

The main house is stunning.

- **Pedra do Sal** (Rua Argemiro Bulcão, - Saúde). Iconic alfresco street party. Big all weekend but **Monday** is the famous night. Have a caipirinha and if you want the queer bar it's the purple one: Espaço Cultural Casa de Zungu>. Get an Uber there and back. Traffic is a bit crazy but you don't want to be walking downtown drunk late at night.
- **Lapa**. Outdoor all night, it's the party district. Loads of bars for all music and tastes. No dress code. Go there if you want lots of mixed bars. **Watch your stuff** for spiking and pickpockets. Best caipirinha on the street is famous and here. (Espaço Cultural Casa de Zungu)
- **Selarón Steps**. They are right in the heart of Lapa and always busy. If you want them empty(ISH), you probably need to go at **6 AM**, otherwise they're quieter at night, which is **my tip**.
- **Arpoador** right between Ipanema and Copacabana. Watch **sunset** from here one night. Locals gather and everyone claps as the sun crosses the horizon. It's a whole event. At night people get freaky there
- **Casa Black**. Black nightclub and party in Rio. Now this is in the ghetto, so **definitely Uber and go in a group**, but it's fun. Don't get there too late as it becomes 1 in 1 out and there is a last entry around 2.30am. Can take **45 mins from Ipanema** in a taxi. Saturday is the big night but it's also open on Friday

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## **Maybes (If You Have Time)**

- **Rocinha** is a big mega favela. Not as safe as Vidigal, but it's okay in the day.
  - If you want to go to party in Rocinha, check with locals. There is a cool spot, **Novo Visual Restaurante - Rocinha**, where I got my drone pic and it offers some dope views. Go in the day.
- **Sambadrome**. It's Carnival. Get tickets in advance, but you may as well soak it up and see it, right? You'll only want to be there for two hours or so as it gets a bit same-ish after a while. My pro tip is to go on the second Saturday of carnival which is the champions parade. You'll see the best schools and give yourself more time in the first week of carnival to soak up vibes and blocos. You can get there for 9/10pm and stay for a few hours and then go on to your next stop. It runs all night til around 6am. Each school takes an hour to walk through the length of the sambadrome. The champions go last at the end of the night
  - Bare in mind it's super busy and roads are blocked off around it so you'll need to walk a bit before and after it to get a Uber there or after it. U can walk from lapa for about 25mins but just try to stick to well lit roads and in a group
  - Getting a taxi and stuff after is a nightmare
  - There is the usual Rio street food, toilets and drinks in the sambadrome facility
  - Make sure you work out what entrance you need to go to
  - Get a seat high up. You'll get the best views even if the tickets are cheaper
  - It's a standing event so prepare to be on your feet for hours.

- **Waterfalls.** Be careful as there is a lack of signal but head to **Cachoeira do Chuveiro - Horto RJ.** The Uber will drop you off and go. You'll see a trail. You'll need to do a bit of climbing and rope work, but it's largely fine. **Wear good footwear** and bring a bag, change of clothes and a towel as you'll want to get the pic and take a dip. Watch out for nature. You're in a rainforest
- **Lagoa** - Hire a bike and go for a cute ride around it at dusk and along the beaches, or if you like running, run around the lake. A circuit is about **10k**.
- Madureira is considered the Black Mecca of Rio de Janeiro. It's a neighborhood in Rio where 70% percent of residents are of African descent. There isn't much there and it's where casa black is but go on a Friday and Saturday night and you'll see lots of samba or baile de viaduto (dance of the viaduct)

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## Things to Do

- **Museu do Amanhã** (Praça Mauá, 1 - Centro). Cute museum and nice photo spot.
  - **Tickets:** online
- Right next to it is **The Mural of Ethnicities** (Etnias) which is a big outdoor expo of street art so do them together. It has world record for number of murals
- **Portuguese Reading Room (Real Gabinete Português de Leitura)** (Rua Luís de Camões, 30 - Centro). Beautiful inside and dope for a pic.
- I'd say book a tour that takes you to many of the highlights in one day, including things like the **Cathedral**, street art and some will do a favela tour too or cristo or/and sugaloaf. It'll be a long day but the best and most organised way to make sure you see everything
- If you like football, go to the **Maracanã**. You can book a tour, but do this in advance. Get an Uber there and back; it's **not a traditionally safe area**. On this, if Flamengo are playing, go on Airbnb and book an experience to go for a game. Best way to go with a local fan who can help you navigate.
  - **Tour Booking:** <URL for the official Maracanã Tour ticket site:  
<https://en.tourmaracana.com.br/ingressos>
- Get the **tram in Santa Teresa** and get the one that goes over the Lapa viaduct.
- Hire a boat for a few hours with friends and go out to a sunset boat party in Botafogo bay (**TBH, I'm probably gonna do one Thursday 19th, so hit me up**).
- If you want a quiet beach where the rich locals go. Get the Uber down to **Barra de Tijuca**. **20-30 mins from Ipanema**, but a lot bigger and quieter and nicer than the packed touristy beaches.
- **Helicopter.** You can get one that leaves from Sugarloaf or one that takes off from the heliport near Lagoa. **Book in advance**.
- **Paragliding.** A lot of people do it at the ones that end at Praia de São. Never done it before to comment.
- **Jardim botanicos** - beautiful and peaceful gardens next to parque lage

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## Shopping

- **Shopping Leblon** is a boutique mall.
- You'll see the **night markets on Copacabana** to pick up your Brazil T-shirts or any souvenir.
- There is a weekend market too, **Praça General Osório** right in Ipanema.
- You're unlikely to find anything special or differentiated if you travel far for a different market
- **Shop around before buying to compare prices**, otherwise you'll get ripped off.
- You can buy booze pretty cheaply in any supermarket or corner store
- **Shopping RioSul** if you want another mall.
- At street markets haggle most will barter a bit

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## Getting Around

- **Uber is cheap.** It shouldn't cost you more than a <Local currency amount, e.g., R\$40> to get around the city. Even cheaper if you're splitting it.
- If you get a yellow taxi, make sure it's on a **meter and it's working**. They should take card, but check before you leave.
- **Try not to walk alone anywhere** outside of Ipanema and Copacabana, and **defo not outside those area at night**. Try and stick to well-trafficked areas. If you do walk short hops at night, do so in a group 3+ people
- On Carnival days, expect delays because of **Blocos and road closures**.
- You can get the **Metro**, and sometimes this is a better option when the roads are closed off. Just be careful and plan where you're going. Also if it's carnival millions may be joining you on the metro so be aware of your belongings. Zip things like bags and pockets and be wary of phone snatching as the doors shut
- **Uber "Moto":** If you are comfortable on the back of a bike, Uber Moto is often cheaper and faster than a car during Carnival because they can weave through the street closures that trap cars for hours. It's an adrenaline rush, but it saves you miles of walking. **Always wear a helmet** (I know people who have had road accidents), and think twice if you've had a few drinks about getting one as you will want to be aware of holding on

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## Barber

- I have afro hair and usually get a fade so
  - I go here: BARBEARIA FELIPE 1 in Copacobana
  - Or if in Centro: **Barbearia J.I**
- Take a pic of a cut you like if you can't describe what you want in Portuguese



## Language and locals

- Learn some phrases.
- Make sure you have translate on your devices. Most Brazilians are very friendly and understanding
- Understand what **obrigado** (thank you) and **tudo bem** (everything okay/how are you) mean.
- Greetings: Brazilians are warm—two kisses on the cheek is common for greetings (regardless of the gender) but a handshake is fine if you're unsure.
- Ola - hello
- Voce - you
- Eu- I
- Com licença - Excuse me
- Maracuja - passion fruit
- Morango - strawberry
- Banana - banana
- Abacaxi - pineapple
- Limao - lime
- Frango - chicken
- Fruita do dragao - dragon fruit
- Bife - steak (beef)
- Salada - salad
- Bebida - drink
- Comida - food
- Agua - water
- Foder (fode) - to fuck
- Ah caralho - AHH fuck (like amazing)



## Sim Cards

- If you're not using an eSIM, when you land at GIG in arrivals, go to the **pharmacy at the very end**. Basically, once you come out of the duty free keep walking the length of the terminal on that level straight. If you are looking at the road, if you're looking towards the street turn left inside the terminal and keep going to the end of the arrivals terminal. You can pick up a **TIM PAYG SIM card** at the pharmacy there.
- **Set it up there and then** before you leave the airport as you'll need to ring a number and you'll have WiFi and the shop assistants who can help you.
- Download an offline version of the city on Google maps incase you're even short on signal in carnival or lose data
- Taxi men will try and get your attention, just **order an Uber**. It's the same price and more

safe.

- Consider having a **burner phone** if you're likely to lose yours.
- You'll probably need more data than you think. Using maps a lot, uploading snaps/stories, streaming music on the beach
- Beaches don't have WiFi so you'll need data

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## Gym

- **Smart Fit** does a pay as you go and are all over the city
- Body tech is the fancy boogie chain
- **Bruk Ipanema** if you want a Crossfit one.
- **Academia Pública** basically head there for the outdoor beach gym you see lots of people working out in Rio at on social media with the yellow weights. <Location of the Academia Pública>.
- Along Ipanema and Copacobana you'll find early morning workout classes on the beach and volleyball early and after sunset too. In the day it's largely too hot to do exercise outside
- If you want a nice run. A lap of Lagoa is flat and around 10k
  - One full return lenght of Copacobana and ipanema is 8km and 7km respectively
  - You can run from one end of Copacobana to Ipanema which is about 15km. It's relatively flat although Copacobana has a camber for around 2km
  - You can run around flamengo park too
- There are free workout stations along the beaches. Bare in mind it gets super hot so after a few dips and pull ups that's probably you done. They're Good for getting a pump before a pic though
- They do sell protein and creatine although for creatine it's probably more affordable to just bring your own

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## Beaches

- **Rasta Beach** is where I see lots of the iconic people doing kick-ups on the beach. It's near Leme at the north end of Copacobana. You'll find a good number of black people here too.
- Leme is at the north end of Copacobana. At the back of it is a small favela so you get a more diverse crowd there
- **Copacabana** - very touristy.
- **Ipanema** - more for the locals. Busy too, and where the gays go.
- **Flamengo** - on weekends, you'll see lots of food stalls and stuff. Great views of the planes taking off.
- **Botafogo**, not actually a nice beach re: the sand, and the Guanabara bay water there is still, so not fab to swim in, but pretty and probably the prettiest in the world because of

the view of sugaloaf

- You shouldn't be spending about than **R\$10 reals** for a beach chair and maybe 20-30 depending on the size for an umbrella for the day. If they try and charge you more, they're ripping you off. **Always agree the price before you sit down** and never get ripped off. There is more supply than demand. If in doubt walk away and go to another vendor. Or ask someone on the sand how much they paid. People are friendly and will tell you.
- **Praia Vermelha** is cute and has nice views of Sugarloaf.
- **Leblon** is the fancy end of Ipanema. Expect higher-end restaurants and clientele.
- If you want a quiet beach where the rich locals go. Get the Uber down to **Barra de Tijuca**. 20-30 mins from Ipanema, but a lot bigger and quieter and nicer than the packed touristy beaches.
- **Vidigal Beach**. More locals, but you get the view of Ipanema.
- **Abricó**. The nude beach is here. It's about 45min taxi from main Rio. Has areas for straights, queers and folks who like to get freaky outside too. Be mindful of your stuff as you'll have to leave a lot of it on the beach so best to go with friends

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## Hikes

- **Dois Irmãos**. Easy and starts and ends from Vidigal. Highly recommend
- **Pedra da Gávea** a lot harder and actually involves climbing a rock face, but you get that hanging-off-a-rock pic for the views and gram. Not good if you don't like heights.

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## Cash vs. Card

- Brazil is affordable but it's not Asia cheap. It's cheap to get around, and food id say is on average  $\frac{1}{2}$  the price of the UK although In carnival it can be more expensive
  - Excursion prices are pretty standard
  - Shopping isn't anything special so I wouldn't recommend massively outside of Brazilian specific things
  - Accommodation depends on when you book
  - Alcohol is cheap
  - You can be super cheap without sacrificing a lot. If your hotel has breakfast included eat a big one and that'll do you til dinner. If you have an air BnB do a shop and get some cereals and eggs or whatever for breakfast. If you're only paying for one meal a day everything is better
  - Supermarkets are generally affordable although not cheap so get beach snacks or water there. Fruit shop around
- Most places accept card. If someone wants cash, check they're not ripping you off.
- **Their version of cash app is called pix**. You'll need a CPF (Brazilian tax number to set up an account) so don't worry about it. I have a cpf so if you need to book something with

one ask me

- **Don't walk around with large amounts of cash or jewellery.**
- Have a little **fanny pack/money belt/pouch** to keep your stuff with. I recommend this style of money belt <https://share.google/tFqOtMiJyD9QN3iTI> so you can hide it in your shorts as having a 'bait' one makes it an super obvious target for theft.

General prices

1. Açaí R\$10-18 (normal)
2. Água de coco R\$5-8
3. Caipirinha on the beach R\$12-18
4. Beach chair + umbrella B\$10 each
5. Uber around South Zone R\$8-18
6. Taxi from GIG to Copacabana R\$65-90

Quanto tá?" (How much?)

"Aceita cartão?" (Do you take card?)

"Tem preço melhor?" (Is there a better price?)

"É esse o preço mesmo?" (Is this the real price?)



## Blocos (Carnival Street Parties)

- Blocos all have different starting times. Some start at 7 and some finish at 6am so just check out what you want to do. Don't over do it. Just do one a day. They're intense
- Bring as little as possible with you as I know people who have had stuff broken and stolen. If you lose each other agree a meeting point and time ahead of arrival as sometimes signal is hard to have in the middle of the crowds
- I went to this one: **Bloco das Carmelitas**. Very busy, like NHC, in Santa Teresa.
- Banda de Ipanema is good and queer and in ipanema but good for everyone
- Take a look on the internet and take your pick. There was a cute one I went to near jardin botanicos
- Bloconce was fun if you like Beyonce
- The big one Anita does locks down the city so be prepared to struggle to get an uber
- Cordão da Bola Preta (Centro) - Black and white polkadots, starts at 7am and finishes once it gets too hot. The biggest in Rio, attracts million
- **Suvaco do Cristo**, which hilariously translates to "**Christ's Armpit**. Is in the Botanical gardens and is nice
- **New Kids on the Bloco**: Plays 90s/00s boy band hits and pop anthems, with a huge

queer following.

General rule of thumb

- **Morning is better than afternoon.** The blocos that start at 7:00 or 8:00 AM are generally safer, more musical, and filled with "real" Carnival lovers. By 4:00 PM, people have been drinking caipirinhas in 35°C heat all day, and the vibe can get a bit more aggressive/sloppy. Having said that it requires you to go early so pick accordingly
- **Stay South:** Jardim Botânico, Gávea, and Ipanema blocos are generally safer and easier to navigate than the massive "human seas" in Centro.

Queer friendly ones include

- Carnakoo follow @batekoo it's dope and black and queer
- Agrada Gregos for the queer folks
- Banda de Ipanema is good and queer and in ipanema but good for everyone

**App: "Blocos de Rua"** (Available on iOS/Android). This is the gold standard. It lists every bloco by date, time, and neighborhood with a built-in map.

**Instagram:** [@blocosderuati](#) or [@diariodorio](#). They post the "official" schedule (The *Anotação Preliminar*) usually in late December/early January.

**The "G1" Carnival Map:** The news site G1 (Globo) releases an interactive map every year where you can filter by "Queer," "Family Friendly," or "Big Crowds."



## What to Wear (Keep It Light, Keep It Safe)

- **Rio can get to 40°C/104°F** with high humidity in feb in the day so less is best, Skin out! Sometimes there is a sea breeze and sometimes not so much. Check your air BnB has working air con
- **Beach Uniform:** You absolutely should do as the locals do and get some **sungas** (the Brazilian speedo/brief cut) or Speedos. free the leg lol. Don't forget your classic **swim shorts** if you're not ready to commit or get excited easily 😅
  - Go to the gym. People go to Brazil looking their best
- **Safety & Shine: Don't take or wear anything too expensive.** No real point, and it only makes you more of a target. You're there to have fun, not flash your **<Brand name of expensive watch/jewelry>**. It's not the holiday for that! I had a smart watch and that's generally ok. Better if it's waterproof so u never have to take it off even if you go in the sea.
- **Sun Protection: Sun cream is non-negotiable.** The sun is **intense**, even on cloudy days. You will burn regardless of your skin hue. Plus it's a good way to ask someone to do your back 😊
- **Sunglasses?** Yes, mandatory but don't do too fancy as they'll maybe get broken or nabbed

- **The Vibe:** Rio is super casual. It's hot and humid 30+ in the day 20+ at night that time of year), so less is genuinely more. As people largely wear shorts and t shirts/vests everywhere
- **Daytime:** Think shorts, t-shirts, tank tops, and **Havaianas** (flip-flops). You can literally wear this everywhere.
- **Nighttime:** You won't need more than **one pair of trousers** (chinos/dark jeans are fine) in case you go somewhere fancy like **Nosso** or a proper posh churrascaria. 1 collared shirt (like a nice linen or polo) or a decent dress shirt is all you need for that and often fancy shorts are fine.
- **Flamengo** is the biggest football team in Brazil and one of the biggest in the world. You'll see a lot of its iconic red and black around. Other teams you may see are fluminense (green) and botofogo (white) if you wear ANY football top be aware some establishments depending on their affiliation may deny entry and certainly if you're going anywhere apart from Rio's south zone I'd probably avoid wearing any football kit. Foreign ones will make you stand out too and not in a great way. It's fine to wear them to cristo and sugaloaf and the hikes though
- **Bring a tote or easy to spot beach bag** as you'll want to take things to the beach like towels water sun cream speakers liquor etc

**Outerwear:** Coats/jackets are absolutely **not necessary**. If you get cold easily, maybe a **single light hoodie or a denim shirt** for that late-night Uber home, but honestly, even that is a stretch.

### What extra bring.

- **Bug repellent** You don't get bitten much by mosquitos but there are a few especially if you go into tijuca rainforest, do the waterfalls or hike so up to you
- Speakers. You'll want to play some tunes on the beach or when you're getting ready
- Money pouch - see above. A must
- Lots of underwear. You'll probably want to shower at least twice a day or be prepared to do laundry
- Sunglasses - nothing too fancy if you can avoid it
- Condoms, prep, doxycycline etc. Brazilians like sex. If you have some stay safe
- Reals. Bring some cards that don't punish you for taking out reals as you'll need some cash. Never carry all of it
- ID. **Don't take your passport out.** You'll be unlikely to be asked especially at bars and never at street vendors unless you look 12 but clubs often want it
- Travel insurance. You'll leave Brazil with stories and they may not all be good ones. Insure yourself and your phone and check it covers the length of your trip and country
- Cheap clothes you don't care too much about. If someone threw paint at it or spilled a drink on it. Would you care too much. Use that as a guide to think about
- Comfortable footwear. You'll likely do 10k plus steps on a casual day so bring that and some havaianas or sliders or crocs for the beach and sand
- Travel adaptor. Brazil has some odd plugs. Generally the US style adaptors work and

they also use this odd 3 pronged one so if you can find it it's useful to get. If you forget, pick one at the airport duty free at the airport as it's a bit annoying and more expensive to find one in the centre of Rio

- You may think about bringing an extension lead or multi plug. If you only have access to one socket, charging your phone, watch, battery pack etc may become a challenge
- Battery pack. You'll want to take pics and videos. Plus using maps and it's likely you'll be getting Ubers and out for long stretches so bring a battery pack that's small and portable enough for you
- Wireless charger. If your phone gets wet you may not be able to charge it til the port dries so rather than leave it in rice take a wireless charger
- Burner phone - if you're clumsy or have the latest high spec phone you may want to consider either taking a burner on that night out or to the bloco, or in the worst case that yours gets nabbed or broken, you have a spare



## Nightlife

- **Casa Black.** Iconic. Look it up! It's a dope, black nightclub and party in Rio. It's located in the heart of **Madureira** (Rua Alfeu Faria Castro, 6 - Madureira). Now this is in the ghetto, so **definitely Uber and go in a group**, but it's fun. Don't get there too late as it becomes 1-in-1-out and there is a last entry around **2:30 AM**. Can take **45 mins from Ipanema** in a taxi.
- Basically, opposite Casa Black is the **Viaduto de Madureira**, which is basically a party underneath a motorway flyover. It plays samba and Afro-Caribbean music (**Charme**) so it's good vibes too. **Saturday night is the one.** This is a massive, historic cultural institution, known as the *Baile Charme*.
- **Bar da Laje in Vidigal** has good vibes and is dope. You get one of the most incredible views over Rio from up there. Check out the IG for what they have on. They often have samba on weekends.
  - **Address:** R. Armando Almeida Lima, 8 - Vidigal.
  - **Getting There:** The bar can arrange a VW van transfer from the Leblon beachfront for around **R\$ 10-20** per trip/person, which is a good idea. Check their website/WhatsApp: Bar da Laje Instagram
- **Lapa** is where most things happen at night, so go and have fun round there. I can't really recommend anywhere in particular in Lapa, as, well, you'll see when you get there. Just walk by and see what takes your fancy—the street is the party.
- See my tips on **Pedra do Sal** too (Monday night!).
- It's common for a lot of bars to be open late in Rio, along with street vendors, so unless it's somewhere fancy, last orders aren't that early/common. You can drink well past 4 AM in Lapa.
- Clubs will ask for ID
- U can't book tables or things like that

- Only the most popular club nights will sell out in advance. If you want to go to one check if you can buy a ticket early to guarantee a place and save some cash. Last minute mega carnival parties can cost £50+ gbp



## Drinks and Bars

- **Nosso** (Rua Farma de Amoedo, 180 - Ipanema). Great fancy cocktails and a nice setting, definitely for a more **upmarket** vibe.
- The street cart next to the **Arcos da Lapa**. Best **caipirinha** in town is Espaço Cultural Casa de Zungu This is their national drink, but you can get other things.
- **Pro Tip:** If you don't like how much sugar is used, say "**sem açúcar**" (sin as-u-car, meaning without sugar) when you order, or "**pouco açúcar**" (po-co as-u-car) for less sugar.
- **Rio Scenarium** (Rua do Lavradio, 20 - Centro). It's pretty famous and worth a stop if you get time. It's in Lapa but it's more of a multi-level cultural hub/antique shop/club with live samba and music. It's quite the spectacle.
  - **Tickets:** You can often pre-book tickets or tours here: <URL for Rio Scenarium ticket booking or official site>
- **Boteco Belmonte** (various locations, e.g., Praia do Flamengo, 300). It's fine and standard, but most places are fine. It's a reliable spot for a good chopp (draft beer) and snacks.
- **Isabel Lounge (Hilton Copacabana):** This offers best, "curved" view of the entire Copacabana beach and its high end.
- **Xian Rio:** Located at the Bossa Nova Mall (right by SDU airport). If you're waiting for a flight or just landed, the view of Christ the Redeemer and the planes taking off over the water is unmatched.
- **Bar Urca:** Not a rooftop, but a "mureta" (little wall). You buy your beer and **empadas** (try the shrimp one) at the counter and sit on the sea wall. It's the local sunset ritual.
- Alcohol is cheap so you may want to leave room in your suitcase to bring some back. Outside of that you probably don't need to pre drink with your own booze and definitely don't need to import any from your departure locations. Bars are pretty affordable well stocked with all the normal drinks and they free pour so you'll get exactly what you want
- Stay hydrated. Water is cheap. Drink a lot of it. It's hot and humid. On days going to the attractions or hikes you may want to use a refillable one that keeps it cold as you may have limited chances to buy more and it'll get warm quickly



## The Queer Scene

- **Rua Farma de Amoedo (Ipanema): This is the "Gay Street.**

- **Sauna Rio G Spa** (Rua Teixeira de Melo, 16, Ipanema) is the main Rio gay sauna. During carnival it becomes busiest after sunset and isn't 24h (I think it shuts at 11pm) so will get to 1in 1 out with a queue if you don't go early (sunset)
- Head to **Posto 8-9** and **Cabana 63 "Denise"** for the gay beach. You will know once you're there. Rainbow flags, 95% men and lots of sungas
- **Abraço Beach** in Grumari is about a **45 min taxi from Ipanema** and is where the nude beach is. It's here all the beach porn Brazil is filmed. Arrange how you're going to get back as **signal is bad there**, and it's quite difficult once it gets dark as it's not particularly well-trafficked. **Be prepared to be naked**. The lifeguard will stop you from entering or ask (tell you) to leave if you wear ANYTHING.
  - There is one bar where you can buy some food drinks and get some WiFi. It shuts at sunset so order your Uber from there
  - Bring your own snacks and booze is my tip
  - After sunset it's super dark so most people go around that time although folks with their own transport are known to get up to some fun under the starlight
  - Be careful with what you bring. It's best to go in a group or if you're going solo find someone on Ipanema who's down to go with you and make a friend. You'll at points have to leave your stuff on the beach (to go in the water or something) so make sure you're with people you trust. You don't want to be stranded clothes less and phoneless
- **Arpoador** right between Ipanema and Copacabana. **At night, people cruise here**
- **The home**: the big circuit gay club in Rio. Has two floors and has a room not just playing circuit. Also has a super cool smokers area. Must go to once to see it. Will be sold out around 24h before the parties it hosts on the days of main carnival so decide what day and get your ticket early to avoid paying more than necessary or missing out entirely will be open every night in carnival
- **Pink Flamingo** (R. Raul Pompéia, 102 - Copacabana) is a gay club in Ipanema/Copacabana. Smaller than the home and more pop/drag vibes. Again during carnival will become 1 in 1 out so if you want to go leave earlier than the crowd from silencio
- **Silêncio** is a gay bar people go to once sunset has happened on the beach. Gets super busy but is a usual pre drinks meeting spot. It's just up the road from the sauna on the gay street
- You'll find people doing their own parties, drinks etc and more so just keep an open mind as your plans may change depending who you meet on the beach or out and about that day
- Go to the queer spot ipanema beach and be social. Say hey, chat to folks and your time will be 100x more better. Nearly Everyone is friendly and all there for the same reason as you, to have a good time and enjoy carnival.
- On the main carnival days on Ipanema beach at sunset there are sound systems and people play music and dance well into the night.
- If you're DL; Don't be DL in Rio. Live and be free for once in your life. It may just change it for ever.

- Don't really pre drink inside. **Bars are cheap and more social**
- Check this page out for what's queer and going on that night in Rio: <https://www.instagram.com/riofervo>
- Apps. Grindr has a lot of pay for play but some genuine. Jack'd is used out there too.
- Hooking up. Eye contact is often enough but if you're in the south zone if Rio bare in mind most Brazilian are a lot poorer than you so will expect to go back to yours and maybe for you even to cover their Uber home if they're not local
- Take extra precautions if you go back to a locals and especially in an area outside the beaten track
- **Never invite someone you just met on an app directly to your hotel or apartment.** Meet for a drink at a "Kiosk" on the beach first or outside somewhere and go back once you've sussed them out.
- "Good night Cinderella" (*Boa Noite Cinderela*) is a local term for drink spiking; never leave your drink unattended or with a stranger.



## Queer Clubs/Promoters and the Like

Sambay. Gay samba. Here is the page: <[Sambay Instagram](#)>. Buy your ticket on the door. Must do. Super cute vibe. A Sunday night fixture

The Home is the home of Brazilian circuit. Experience it once. It's down the road from Pedra do Sal. They do BIG carnival parties

The other big gay club in Lapa: portal

Baketoo black, queer, and dope.

Black cat. Copacobana, smaller dark room and kink sort of vibe

Pink flamengo - queer club in Copacobana

Some of the clubs will sell out before the day of the event so if you're 100% committed get your ticket early to save some cash

Events I know of

02/14: BLOCO DA BLACK

02/14: THE HOME: 18+

02/16: THE HOME: XLSIOR MYKONOS

02/17: CARNARARA 26

02/17: QUERO +MAIS

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[https://www.instagram.com/p/DSdlpVvDfMJ/?img\\_index=16&igsh=c2Vrem0ybzd1MTN5](https://www.instagram.com/p/DSdlpVvDfMJ/?img_index=16&igsh=c2Vrem0ybzd1MTN5)

## WhatsApp Groups

- Gay one: <https://linktr.ee/gaypartygroups>

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That should cover your trip, you're welcome.

### **About me**

@akainsley. I've spent months of my life in Rio so I thought it would be good to write a guide like this. A typical brit abroad

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