



Brazil



Full name: Federative Republic of Brazil

Population: 194.2 million (UN, 2008)

Capital: Brasilia

Largest city: Sao Paulo

Area: 8.55 million sq km (3.3 million sq miles). It is the fifth largest country by geographical area, occupying nearly half of South America and has a coastline of over 7,491 kilometers.

Major language: Portuguese

Major religion: Christianity Roman Catholic 80%

Monetary unit: 1 real = 100 centavos

Main exports: Manufactured goods, coffee, oranges, other agricultural produce. Brazil's natural resources, particularly iron ore, are highly prized by major manufacturing nations, including China. Thanks to the development of offshore fields, the nation has become self-sufficient in oil, ending decades of dependence on foreign producers.

Number of people living below the poverty line 40 million

Life expectancy at birth: 68 years (men) 76 years (women)

Number of political candidates charged with fraud 1535

President: Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is Brazil's left-leaning president. He is popular among the poor but his party has been beset by corruption claims; he won a second term in 2006



History Brazil was a colony of Portugal from 1500 until its independence in 1822. The country has been a republic since 1889.

Economy

- Brazil has Latin America's largest economy and the world's tenth largest economy; there has been steady growth under Lula but millions live in poverty. It has a history of economic boom and bust and its development has been hampered by high inflation and foreign debt. #
- From the 1500s to the 1800s, Brazil provided nearly 75 percent of the world's supply of coffee. After independence, Brazil expanded its production of rubber, sugar, and gold. Brazil also created manufacturing industries. As of the late 1990s, Brazil was the world's tenth-largest economy. However, not all Brazilians have prospered along with the economy; many Brazilians still live in poverty.

Landscapes Dense forests in northern regions including Amazon Basin; semiarid along northeast coast; mountains, hills, and rolling plains in the southwest, including Mato Grosso; midwestern savannahs; the world's largest wetland area; and coastal lowland. The climate is mostly tropical or semitropical with temperate zone in the south.

Food

In Brazil food revolves around three key things: Arroz which is white rice, feijao which are black beans, farinha which is like flour.

A few typical Brazilian dishes include caranguejada which is cooked crab; feijoada which is Brazil's national dish, a meat stew with rice and a bowl of beans and xinxim de galinha which is chicken flavoured with garlic, salt and lemon.

The national cocktail of Brazil is the Caipirinha. It is made with cachaça, sugar and lime. cachaça is Brazil's most common distilled alcoholic beverage and made from sugarcane.

Culture

Carnival in Brazil is one of the world's most famous festivals. It is celebrated for the five days preceding Ash Wednesday. It brings the country to a halt as Brazilians take time off work to join street festivals, dance contests, and other activities. The major Carnival parade takes place in Rio de Janeiro. Elaborate costumes and floats are the result of many months' preparation. During Carnival, dance balls and samba contests are held. The festivities last well into the morning hours.



Living Conditions

Brazil is a land of contrasts. Its cities combine modern skyscrapers, suburban houses, and impoverished slums. Known as *favelas*, Brazil's urban slums have been estimated to be home to as many as twenty-five million people.

Dress

Brazilian dress in urban areas is very modern. Young people wear jeans and skirts. Among women short skirts and dresses are also very common. Business attire is very similar to that worn in the United States. Dress varies more widely outside of urban areas. In the south plains regions near the border with Argentina, the *gaucho* (cowboy) style is still worn. This includes ponchos, wide straw hats, baggy pants known as *bombachas*, and boots. In the Amazon, native Amerindians wear face paint and traditional tunics. In the predominantly Afro-Brazilian region of Bahia, women wear bright, colorful skirts and head scarves.



Sport: Football is close to a national obsession in Brazil. The soccer stadium in Rio de Janeiro seats 200,000 people and is the largest stadium in the world. It is more than one mile (1.6 kilometers) in diameter, and has a nine-foot (three-meter) moat to keep the fans from running onto the field to disturb the soccer players or the officials. Brazil has won more World Cups than any other country.

Music and Dance: Brazil has a wide variety of folk and modern music. Samba is perhaps the most popular and well-known internationally. However, samba is but one of Brazil's many rhythms and musical traditions. In the northeast, Portuguese guitar, introduced during colonial times, is still popular. African dances and percussion endure in Afro-Brazilian culture and are used in religious ceremonies. African influences are strongly felt in modern music as well.