Recent Embassy Notices for American Citizens

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: The fifth largest country in the world, Brazil is a Portuguese-speaking country with a robust economy. It consists of 26 states. Tourist facilities are excellent in major cities, but vary in quality in remote areas. Read the Department of State’s Background Notes on Brazil for additional information.

Back to Top

SMART TRAVELER ENROLLMENT PROGRAM (STEP) / EMBASSY LOCATION: We encourage U.S. citizens living or traveling in Brazil to sign up for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate to obtain updated information on local travel and security. U.S. citizens without internet access may sign up directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Enrolling is important; it allows us to keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements. It will also help your friends and family get in touch with you in an emergency.

Local embassy information is available below and at the Department of State’s list of embassies and consulates.
U.S. Embassy, Brasilia
SES 801 - Avenida das Nacoes, Lote 3
Telephone: 011-55-61-3312-7000
Emergency after-hours telephone: 011-55-61-3312-7400
Facsimile: 011-55-61-3312-7676

Consular Agencies in Brasilia’s Consular District:

U.S. Consular Agency Belem
Avenida Conselheiro Furtado 2865,
Edificio Sintese 21, Rooms 1104/1106
Telephone: 011-55-91-3259-4566

U.S. Consular Agency Manaus
Rua Franco de Sa, 230, Sao Francisco,
Edificio Atrium, Room 306
Telephone: 011-55-92-3611-3333

U.S. Consulate General Recife
Rua Goncalves Maia, 163, Boa Vista
Telephone: 011-55-81-3416-3050
Emergency after-hours telephone: 011-55-81-3416-3060 or 011-55-81-9916-9470
Facsimile: 011-55-81-3231-1906

Consular Agency in Recife’s Consular District:

U.S. Consular Agency Fortaleza
Avenida Santos Dumont 2828, Aldeota, Suite 708
Telephone 011-55-85-3021-5200
Facsimile: 011-55-85-3021-3888

U.S. Consulate General Rio de Janeiro
Avenida Presidente Wilson, 147, Castelo
Telephone: 011-55-21-3823-2000
Emergency after-hours telephone: 011-55-21-3823-2000
Facsimile: 011-55-21-3823-2093

Consular Agency in Rio de Janeiro’s Consular District:

U.S. Consular Agency Salvador da Bahia
Avenida Tancredo Neves, 1632, Caminho das Arvores,
Salvador Trade Center - Torre Sul, Room 1401
Telephone: 011-55-71-3113-2090/2091/2092

U.S. Consulate General Sao Paulo
Rua Henri Dunant, 500, Chacara Santo Antonio
ENTRY / EXIT REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. CITIZENS: Brazil requires U.S. citizens to carry a valid U.S. passport and visa when traveling to Brazil for any purpose. You must obtain your Brazilian visa in advance from the Brazilian Embassy or Consulate nearest to your place of residence in the United States. There are no "airport visas" and immigration authorities will refuse entry into Brazil to anyone not possessing a valid visa. The U.S. government cannot assist you if you arrive in Brazil without proper documentation.

Travelers under 18 years of age and their parents should carefully review the visa application requirements. The adjudicating official at the Brazilian Embassy or Consulate may require a birth certificate and notarized travel authorization to issue a visa to a minor.

Visit the web site of the Brazilian Embassy in Washington, D.C. for the most current visa information.

U.S. citizens and other foreign travelers must fill out a small immigration form on arrival that will be stamped and handed back by immigration officials at the airport. It is important to retain this form to hand back to immigration officials upon exit from the country. According to the Brazilian Embassy’s website, visitors who lose this form will have to get clearance from the Brazilian Federal Police to leave the country and may have to pay a fine.

Remember that while in Brazil, you are subject to local law. Showing contempt to a Brazilian government official at the port of entry, or elsewhere, is a serious offense.

Additionally, if you have recently visited certain countries, including most other Latin American countries, you may be required to present an inoculation card indicating you had a yellow fever inoculation or you may not be allowed to board the plane or enter the country. Check with the Brazilian Embassy for more information.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Brazil.

For current entry and customs requirements for Brazil, travelers may contact the Brazilian Embassy, which is temporarily located at 1025 Thomas Jefferson St., NW, Suite 300 W (3rd floor),
Special Entry/Exit Requirements for Dual Nationals: U.S. citizens who also have Brazilian nationality cannot be issued Brazilian visas and must obtain a Brazilian passport from the Brazilian Embassy or Consulate nearest to their place of residence to enter and depart Brazil. In addition to being subject to all Brazilian laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Brazilian citizens. Information about dual nationality can be found on our website.

Special Entry/Exit Requirements for Minors: Brazilian minors age 17 years and under, including minors who have both Brazilian and U.S. citizenship, are subject to strict exit requirements. Brazilian minors departing Brazil, if not accompanied by both parents, must prove that both parents authorized the departure. If accompanied by only one parent, the minor must have a notarized letter from the other parent indicating permission to depart the country, a court order proving that the accompanying parent has sole custody, or a Brazilian court order authorizing the child’s departure. If accompanied by neither parent, the minor must have a notarized letter from both parents authorizing departure, or a Brazilian court order authorizing the same. There are no exceptions, even if the child remained in Brazil only a short time. The authorization must be notarized by a Brazilian notary to be considered valid by the Brazilian authorities. If prepared in the United States, the authorization must be in Portuguese or accompanied by an official translation into Portuguese, and must be notarized by either the Brazilian Embassy or a Brazilian Consulate, or notarized by a U.S. notary public and then authenticated at the Brazilian Embassy or Consulate. Prior to departing the United States, parents traveling to Brazil with children who are Brazilian nationals may wish to obtain an authorization for each parent to return with the children to the United States without the other parent, just in case. Note that children adopted from Brazil are still considered Brazilian citizens and must be documented as such should they return to Brazil.

Minors age 17 years and under who are not Brazilian nationals are not technically subject to the same strict travel requirements as Brazilian minors. However, there have been cases where the travel of non-Brazilian minors has been delayed or prevented when accompanied by only one parent or a third party. To avoid potential difficulties, parents of non-Brazilian minors may want to follow the procedures above if their children will be traveling to Brazil accompanied by only one parent or by a third party.

Parents contemplating separation or divorce should resolve custody matters before leaving the country. Pursuant to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, to which both Brazil and the United States are party, custody will ultimately be decided by a court in the country where the child is a habitual resident. Information about the prevention of international child abduction can be found on our website. The State Department hotline for Child Abduction Prevention during regular business hours is: (202) 663-3330 and after hours: (888) 407-4747.
For further information about customs regulations, please read our customs information page.

Back to Top

**THREATS TO SAFETY AND SECURITY:** Demonstrations and political or labor strikes can occur in urban areas and may cause temporary disruption to public and private transportation. Protests anywhere in the world have the potential to become violent. U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Brazil are advised to take common-sense precautions, avoid large gatherings or other events where crowds have congregated to demonstrate or protest, and comply with the instructions of local authorities.

Individuals with ties to criminal entities and traffickers operate along all the Brazilian borders. These organizations are involved in the trafficking of illicit goods and drugs. U.S. citizens crossing into bordering countries should consult the Country Specific Information for those locations.

Colombian terrorist groups have been known to operate in the border areas of neighboring countries. Although there have been reports of isolated small-scale armed incursions from Colombia into Brazil in the past, we know of no specific threat directed against U.S. citizens across the border in Brazil at this time.

Colombian groups have kidnapped residents and tourists along the Colombian border. If you are traveling or residing in these areas we urge you to exercise caution when visiting remote parts of the Amazon basin, and respect local laws and customs. You should ensure that your outfitter/guide is familiar with the Amazon region.

Brazil's beaches can pose a threat to the safety of travelers. Many beaches have very strong and dangerous riptides, including those in Rio de Janeiro and Fortaleza. Make sure to observe posted flags and signs for strong swells and currents, and never swim while under the influence of alcohol. Even if the water looks safe there may be strong riptides. Ocean currents and waves are unpredictable, even in well-populated beaches frequented by tourists. In 2011, one U.S. citizen suffered serious injuries and two died while swimming in Copacabana beach. Travelers are advised to adhere to local authorities' guidance and refrain from swimming alone in areas marked with red warning signs or at beaches where there are no municipal lifeguards and first responder services. There is a possibility of shark attacks in the waters of many of the beaches in northeastern Brazil, including those in Recife, Natal, and Maceio. We advise visitors to heed signs posted on any beach they visit.

Blackouts in the large cities have struck areas with high concentrations of hotels and resident U.S. citizens. During these blackouts, local authorities responded quickly to increase police presence and maintain public security. In addition, most tourist hotels are equipped with generators, minimizing the impact of a blackout on visitors. Nonetheless, you should use caution in the event of a blackout during your visit to Brazil. Residents should keep flashlights and sufficient supplies of food and potable water in their residences to prepare for blackouts.

Flooding and mudslides can occur throughout the country, and can be fatal. Monitor news and weather reports and adhere to municipal advisories before traveling to areas prone to flooding or...
landsides. Many of Brazil’s larger cities have frequent heavy rainstorms that may cause flash flooding and cripple traffic for hours.

The U.S. Embassy restricts travel of U.S. government employees in areas where narcotics traffickers and other criminals have recently engaged in violence. The violence is usually directed against rival groups, local security forces, local government authorities, and occasionally civilians. The travel of U.S. government employees is restricted in all shanty towns, or “favelas,” in the following areas: Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, any area within 150 km of the borders with Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, Paraguay and, between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., in Brasilia’s “satellite cities” of Ceilandia, Santa Maria, Sao Sebastiao and Paranoa. This restriction does not include commonly used transit routes that often pass near or through favelas.

Strikes by police and other emergency service providers are not uncommon. Police strikes in Fortaleza, Ceará, in December 2011 and Salvador, Bahia, in January 2012 undermined public security and caused a worrisome increase in crime and lawlessness.

Stay up to date on safety and security information by:

- Bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution.
- Following us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook.
- Downloading our free Smart Traveler iPhone App for travel information at your fingertips.
- Calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free within the U.S. and Canada, or a regular toll line, 1-202-501-4444, from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).
- Taking some time before travel to consider your personal security. Here are some useful tips for traveling safely abroad.

Back to Top

CRIME: Brazilian police and media report that the crime rate remains high in most urban centers, including the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, and is also growing in rural areas within those states. Brazil’s murder rate is more than four times higher than that of the United States, and rates for other crimes are similarly high. Criminal convictions for crimes are rare.

Street crime remains a problem for visitors and local residents alike. Foreign tourists, including U.S. citizens, are often targets, especially in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and Recife. While the risk is greater during the evening and at night, street crime also occurs during the day, and safer areas of cities are not immune. Incidents of theft on city buses are frequent. You should keep a copy of your passport with you while in public and keep your passport in a hotel safe or other secure place. You should also carry proof of your health insurance with you.

In May/June 2012, armed groups in Sao Paulo targeted restaurants, robbing patrons during busiest parts of the day. These criminal events are not isolated to one area of the city and target both rich and poor neighborhoods.
The incidence of crime against tourists is greater in areas surrounding beaches, hotels, discotheques, bars, nightclubs, and other tourist destinations and is especially prevalent prior to and during Carnival (Brazilian Mardi Gras), but also occurs throughout the year. Several Brazilian cities have established specialized tourist police units to patrol areas frequented by tourists.

Use caution with regard to evening and night travel through rural areas and satellite cities due to reported incidents of roadside robberies that randomly target passing vehicles. Robberies and "quick-nappings" outside of banks and ATMs occur regularly. In a "quick-napping," criminals abduct victims for a short time in order to receive a quick payoff from the family, business, or the victim's ATM card. Some victims have been beaten and/or raped. You should also take precautions to avoid being carjacked, especially in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and other cities.

In airports, hotel lobbies, bus stations, and other public places, pick pocketing and the theft of hand-carried luggage and laptop computers are common. You should "dress down" when in public and avoid carrying valuables or wearing jewelry or expensive watches. "Good Samaritan" scams are common. If a tourist looks lost or seems to be having trouble communicating, a seemingly innocent bystander offering help may actually be a participant in a scam. Take care at and around banks and ATMs that take U.S. credit or debit cards. Travelers using personal ATM or credit cards sometimes receive billing statements with unauthorized charges after returning from a visit to Brazil or have had their cards cloned or duplicated without their knowledge. If you use such payment methods, carefully monitor your banking for the duration of your visit.

While the ability of Brazilian police to help recover stolen property is limited, we strongly advise you to obtain a "boletim de ocorrencia" (police report) at a "delegacia" (police station) if any of your possessions are lost or stolen. This will facilitate your exit from Brazil and assist with insurance claims. Be aware, however, that the police in tourist areas are on the lookout for false reports of theft for purposes of insurance fraud.

Do not buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. These goods are illegal in the United States, and if you purchase them you may also be breaking local law.

**Brasilia:** Brasilia has significant crime problems. Reports of residential burglaries continue to occur in the generally affluent residential sections of the city. Public transportation, hotel sectors, and tourist areas report the highest crime rates, but statistics show that these incidents can happen anywhere and at anytime. The "satellite cities" that surround Brasilia have per-capita crime rates comparable to much larger cities. Police reports indicate that rates of all types of crime, including "quick-nappings," have risen dramatically in Brasilia in the last two years. Brasilia's Central Bus Station or "Rodoviaria" is a particularly dangerous area, especially at night. This location is known to have a large concentration of drug dealers and users. Illegal drugs such as crack cocaine and "oxi" (a derivative of cocaine base produced with cheaper chemicals) have become very common in the "Plano Piloto" area and satellite cities.

**Rio de Janeiro:** The city continues to experience high incidences of crime. Tourists are particularly vulnerable to street thefts and robberies in the evening and at night especially in areas adjacent to major tourist attractions. There have been attacks, including shootings, along trails leading to the famous Corcovado Mountain and in other parts of the Tijuca Forest. If robbed, do
not attempt to resist or fight back, but rather relinquish your personal belongings. At all times, pay close attention to your surroundings and the behavior of those nearby. There have been reports of thieves and rapists slipping incapacitating drugs into drinks at bars, hotel rooms, and street parties. While crime occurs throughout the year, it is more frequent during Carnival and the weeks prior.

Choose lodging carefully, considering location, security, and the availability of a safe to store valuables. Do not answer your hotel room door until you positively confirm who is on the other side. Look out the peephole, or call the front desk to confirm the visitor. There have been several recent incidents where mass holdups of guests have occurred at hotels and hostels in the city.

Rio de Janeiro's favelas are a subject of curiosity for many U.S. citizen travelers. A favela pacification program, instituted in 2008, has installed police stations in some favelas, primarily in the Zona Sul area. However, most favelas exist outside the control of city officials and police. Travelers are urged to exercise caution when entering any "pacified" favelas and should not go into favelas that are not "pacified" by the state government. Even in some "pacified" favelas, the ability of police to provide assistance, especially at night, may be limited. Several local companies offer "favela jeep tours" targeted at foreign tourists. Be aware that neither the tour company nor the city police can guarantee your safety when entering favelas.

Be vigilant while on the roads, especially at night. There have been shootings and carjackings on the Linha Vermelha, which links the airport to the Southern Zone of the city. In Rio de Janeiro, motorists should be especially vigilant at stoplights and when stuck in traffic. Carjackings and holdups can occur at intersections, especially at night.

Visitors should also remain alert to the possibility of manhole cover explosions. There have been multiple manhole cover explosions in Rio de Janeiro in the past few years, with a higher incidence in the Centro and Copacabana neighborhoods.

Report all incidents to Rio's tourist police (DEAT) at (21) 2332-2924. The tourist police have been very responsive to victims and cooperative with the U.S. Consulate General.

**Sao Paulo:** All areas of Greater Sao Paulo have a high rate of armed robbery of pedestrians and drivers at stoplights and during rush hour traffic. The "red light district" of Sao Paulo located on Rua Augusta north of Avenida Paulista and the Estacao de Luz metro areas are especially dangerous. There are regular reports of young women slipping various drugs into men's drinks and robbing them of all their belongings while they are unconscious. Armed holdups of pedestrians and motorists by young men on motorcycles ("motoboys") are a common occurrence in Sao Paulo. Criminals have also begun targeting restaurants throughout the city including, but not limited to, establishments in the upscale neighborhoods of Jardins, Itaim Bibi, Campo Belo, Morumbi and Moema. Victims who resist run the risk of violent attack. Laptop computers, other electronics, and luxury watches are the targets of choice for criminals in Sao Paulo.

Efforts of incarcerated drug lords to exert their power outside of their jail cells have resulted in sporadic disruptions in the city, violence directed at the authorities, bus burnings and vandalism at ATM machines, including the use of explosives. Be aware of your surroundings and exercise...
caution at all times. Respect police roadblocks and be aware that some municipal services may be disrupted.

As in Rio de Janeiro, favela tours have recently become popular among foreign tourists in Sao Paulo. We advise you to avoid Sao Paulo's favelas, as neither the tour company nor the city police can guarantee your safety when entering favelas.

**Recife:** Recife has one of the highest per capita murder rates in all of Brazil. As in Rio de Janeiro, tourists in Recife should take special care while on the beaches, as robberies may occur in broad daylight. In the upscale Boa Viagem neighborhood, carjackings can occur at any time of the day or night.

Back to Top

**VICTIMS OF CRIME:** If you or someone you know becomes the victim of a crime abroad, you should contact the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate (see the Department of State’s list of embassies and consulates). We can:

- Replace a stolen passport;
- Help you find appropriate medical care if you are the victim of a violent crime such as assault or rape;
- Put you in contact with the appropriate police authorities and contact family members or friends;
- Help you understand the local criminal justice process and direct you to local attorneys, although the investigation and prosecution of the crime are solely the responsibility of local authorities.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Brazil is: 190 - Policia / Police 192- Ambulancia / Ambulance 193- Bombeiros / Fire Department.

Please see our information for victims of crime, including possible victim compensation programs in the United States.

Back to Top

**CRIMINAL PENALTIES:** While in Brazil, you are subject to its laws even though you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Brazilian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking of illegal drugs in Brazil are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. There are also some things that might be legal in Brazil, but still illegal in the United States. For instance, you can be prosecuted under U.S. law if you buy pirated goods. In addition, engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the U.S. In November 2008, Brazil passed a series of laws designed to strengthen protection of children against sexual exploitation. Brazilian police in tourist areas such as Rio de Janeiro are on the
lookout for foreigners inappropriately touching or photographing minors. If you break local laws in Brazil, your U.S. passport will not help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It is very important to know what is legal and what is not where you are going.

Based on the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, and customary international law, if you are arrested in Brazil, you have the option to request that the authorities alert the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. We recommend that you carry with you the contact information for the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

**SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:** Brazilian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Brazil of items such as firearms, antiquities, mineral samples, tropical plants, medications, and business equipment. In the Amazon region, there is a special concern for the export of biological material, which could have genetic value. People propagating or exporting biological material without proper permits run the risk of being accused of “bio-piracy,” a serious offense in Brazil. Contact the Brazilian Embassy in Washington, D.C. or one of Brazil’s Consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. Please also see our information on customs regulations.

**Accessibility:** While in Brazil, individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from what you find in the United States. Brazilian law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical and mental disabilities in employment, education, and access to health care, and the federal government effectively enforces these provisions. While federal and state laws have provisions ensuring access to buildings for persons with disabilities, states do not have programs to enforce them effectively. Accessibility to public transportation and the ability to accommodate the needs of physically disabled persons are limited in many areas.

**MEDICAL FACILITIES AND HEALTH INFORMATION:** Medical care is generally good but it varies in quality, particularly in remote areas, and it may not meet U.S. standards outside the major cities. Expatriates regularly use the Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo. It is inspected and certified by the Joint Commission International and offers international service assistance. The hospital phone is 011-55-11-3747-1233.

In Rio, many expatriates go to Hospital Samaritano (Rua Bambina 98, Botafogo; tel. 2537-9722) or Pro-Cardiaco, which specializes in cardiac care but offers other specialty services (Rua Dona Mariana 219, Botafogo; tel. 2537-4242, ambulance tel. 2527-6060; http://www.procardiaco.com.br/)

Prescription and over-the-counter medicines are widely available. Emergency services are responsive. Travelers may call a private ambulance company or call 192 and request an ambulance for a public hospital. Callers must stay on the line to provide the location as there is no automatic tracking of phone calls. Other important phone numbers include, Emergency 199, Police 190, and Fire Department 193.
All travelers should visit either their personal physician or a travel health clinic 4-8 weeks before departure, as some vaccines and malaria prophylaxis must be given a few weeks before travel. The following vaccines or vaccine boosters are recommended for all travelers, regardless of country of destination: Hepatitis A, typhoid, hepatitis B, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), and Td (tetanus-diphtheria). Yellow fever vaccine is only recommended if traveling outside the coastal areas between Fortaleza and Uruguay border, and then only given to children older than 9 months of age. Note that yellow fever vaccination is recommended if traveling to Iguaçu Falls. Cholera, polio and rabies vaccines are not recommended except under specific circumstances. Consult the CDC Yellow Book for more information.

Travelers’diarrhea (TD) is the most common travel-related ailment. The cornerstone of prevention is food and water precautions: (1) Do not drink tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected. (2) Do not drink un-bottled beverages or drinks with ice. Do not eat raw or undercooked meat or fish, including ceviche. The most important measure for TD is rehydration, best performed with oral rehydration solution available almost universally in pharmacies in Brazil.

Insect-borne illnesses are common in Brazil. In addition to yellow fever, malaria, leishmaniasis, and dengue, for which there are no vaccines, are the principal ones. Dengue usually presents with fever, rash and body aches, or without symptoms, and clears relatively quickly; however, it can be rapidly fatal in a minority of cases, if severe. Consult CDC Yellow Book for the signs and symptoms of severe dengue. Malaria is present throughout the year in forested areas of the Amazon region, but tends to be seasonal (southern summer) elsewhere in the country; mostly on the periphery of cities and towns in the Amazon region. There is little to no risk of malaria in other areas of Brazil.

The first-line protection against all insect bites is the use of insect repellents (less than or equal to 30% DEET content—above 2 months of age), but mosquito nets, mosquito coils, aerosol sprays, protective clothing, use of screens or staying in air-conditioned environment, when available are also alternatives. Medications to prevent malaria infection (prophylaxis) are available, and travelers should consult with their health care provider or travel health clinic. Chagas disease (American trypanosomiasis) transmission has been eliminated in every state except Bahia and Tocantins through an aggressive program of insecticide spraying.

Brazil is an endemic area for schistosomiasis, a water-borne parasite, and travelers should avoid wading, swimming or other contact with fresh water.

Brazil is a high-burden country for tuberculosis, but short-term travelers are not considered at high risk for infection unless visiting crowded environments, hospitals, prisons or homeless shelters. Consult with your health care provider or travel health clinic for possible use of tuberculin skin testing before and after return from travel.

Plastic and other elective/cosmetic surgery is a major medical industry in Brazil. While Brazil has many plastic surgery facilities that are on par with those found in the United States, the quality of care varies widely. If arranging plastic surgery, make sure that emergency medical facilities are available. Some “boutique” plastic surgery operations offer luxurious facilities but are not hospitals and are therefore unable to deal with unforeseen emergencies.
Several U.S. citizens have died while visiting non-traditional healers outside of urban areas. While this is not surprising given that this type of treatment often attracts the terminally ill, U.S. citizens are advised to ensure they have access to proper medical care when visiting such sites. In the unfortunate event of a death, relatives or friends of any deceased U.S. citizen are advised to immediately contact the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia or the U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, or Recife, and not to contract local mortuary services before seeking embassy assistance.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site, http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/, and the Yellow Book. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad and for general health information for travelers, consult the World Health Organization (WHO) website, http://www.who.int/ith/en/.

**MEDICAL INSURANCE:** You should not assume that your medical insurance will go with you when you travel. The Department of State strongly urges you to consult with your medical insurance company PRIOR to traveling abroad to determine whether the policy applies overseas and whether it covers emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. It is very important to find out BEFORE you leave whether your medical insurance will cover you overseas. You need to ask your insurance company two questions:

1. Does my policy apply when I’m out of the United States?
2. Will it cover emergencies like a trip to a foreign hospital or a medical evacuation?

In many places, doctors and hospitals still expect payment in cash at the time of service. Your regular U.S. health insurance may not cover doctors’ and hospital visits in other countries. If your policy does not go with you when you travel, it’s a very good idea to take out another policy for your trip. For more information, please see our medical insurance overseas page.

**TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS:** While in Brazil, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Brazil is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travelers should consider obtaining an Inter-American Driving Permit to carry along with their valid U.S. license if they plan to drive while in Brazil. Such permits can be obtained through AAA or other sources.

Road conditions in Brazil vary widely throughout the country. State roads (especially in the south) are often excellent, while federal, interstate roads (designated "BR") are often very poor due to lack of maintenance. There are occasional stretches of modern divided highway that rival European or U.S. roads. In municipal areas, however, signs, shoulders, exits, and merge lanes
tend to be haphazard. There are many potholes and surfaces are frequently uneven and bumpy. Some stretches of federal roads and rural state roads are so potholed that high-clearance vehicles are needed to traverse them. Pedestrians, bicyclists, and horse-drawn vehicles all pose hazards and can be encountered even on major routes. Travel after dark outside city centers is not recommended because of animals and disabled vehicles. Dirt roads are the rule in remote areas. These vary widely in quality and may quickly become more dangerous, even impassable, in rainy weather. Passenger car travel can be reasonably safe in most areas if you take into account the prevailing conditions described above and exercise due prudence and caution. Passenger-bus hijacking, usually non-violent, occurs at random in some areas of the country.

Driving on Brazil’s inter-city roads can pose significant risks. As is the case elsewhere in the region, poor driving skills, bad roads, and a high density of trucks combine to make travel via roads considerably more hazardous than in the U.S. There are no laws requiring truckers to take mandatory rest stops and they often drive for excessive periods of time. All major inter-city routes are saturated with heavy truck traffic and for the most part have only two lanes. Road maintenance is inadequate and some long-distance roads through the Amazon forest are impassable much of the year. There are few railroads and passenger train travel is almost nonexistent. Private cars and public buses are the main modes of inter-city road travel. Buses can range (depending on the route and the price) from luxurious and well-maintained to basic and mechanically unsound.

The Brazilian Federal Government maintains a (Portuguese language) website with up-to-date information on road conditions throughout Brazil; the site also has downloadable state roadmaps. A private Brazilian company, Quatro Rodas, publishes road maps that contain local phone numbers to ascertain the current conditions of roads on the map. Apart from toll roads, which generally have their own services, roadside assistance is available only very sporadically and informally through local private mechanics. The fastest way to summon assistance in an emergency anywhere in the country is to dial 193, a universal number staffed by local fire departments. This service is in Portuguese only. Many motorists in major urban areas and more developed parts of the country carry cellular phones, and can be asked to assist in calling for help.

Brazilian traffic laws impose severe penalties for a number of traffic offenses. Enforcement ranges from sporadic to non-existent, so motorists should not assume that others will necessarily follow even the most fundamental and widely-accepted rules of the road. Some important local rules and customs include the following:

**Seatbelts / Child Car Seats:** Brazil requires the use of seatbelts for everyone in the car. Brazilian federal law requires car seats for all children under the age of 7 ½. From age 7 ½ years to 10, children cannot ride in the front seat of the car, and must be in the back seat wearing a seatbelt.

**Speed Limits:** The maximum speed limit on major, divided highways is 120 kmph (74 mph). Lower limits (usually 60 kmph/40 mph) are often posted in urban areas, depending on the road and the nature of the neighborhood. Speed limits are widely ignored and rarely enforced. However, an increasing number of towns and cities have electronic/photographic devices (marked
"Fiscalisacao Electronica"), which verify speed and take photos of violators' cars and license plates as a basis for issuing speeding tickets. Brazilian drivers tend to brake suddenly when encountering these devices. Many cities and towns have erected speed bumps, which are sometimes severe and may be unpainted and unmarked.

**Yielding the Right of Way:** Drivers must yield the right of way to cars on their right. Compliance with stop signs is rarely enforced; so many motorists treat them as yield signs.

**Driving Under the Influence:** Drivers with any measurable content of alcohol in their blood are in violation of the law. Checkpoints are often set up in urban areas where randomly chosen drivers are required to exit their vehicles and perform a breathalyzer test.

**Turns at Red Lights:** Not permitted, except for right turns where there is a sign with an arrow pointing to the right and the words "Livre a Direita."

**Penalties for Drivers Involved in an Accident Resulting in Injury or Death:** In addition to possible criminal charges and penalties, compensatory and punitive damages may also apply.

**Local Driving Customs:** Drivers often use flashes or wave a hand out of the window to signal other drivers to slow down. In addition, pedestrian "zebra" crossings are strictly observed in some places (especially in Brasilia) and ignored most everywhere else.

For specific information concerning Brazilian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, please contact the Brazilian National Tourist Organization offices in New York.

Additional information, in Portuguese only, can be found on the websites of the Brazilian Federal Highway Police and Ministry of Transportation.

Please refer to our road safety page for more information.

**AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT:** The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government of Brazil's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Brazil's air carrier operations. Further information may be found on the FAA's safety assessment page.

**CHILDREN'S ISSUES:** For information see our Office of Children's Issues web pages on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction. If you have an emergency call the U.S. State Department’s emergency after hours phone number: (888) 407-4747, or the American Citizen Services officer at the closest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.
This replaces the Country Specific Information for Brazil dated December 7, 2011, to update sections on **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program/Embassy Location**, Threats to Safety and Security, Crime, and **Medical Facilities and Health Information**.

Back to Top