

Brazil (*Brasil*)



Brazil, originally a Portuguese colony, gained independence in 1822 and became a republic in 1889. The name “Brasil” supposedly comes from the pau-brasil (brazil wood) trees that were the primary export in the first decades of the Portuguese colonization in the 16th century. Brazil is the largest Portuguese-speaking country in the world. Portuguese and Spanish, the most spoken languages in South America, are both Romance languages, yet distinct and not mutually intelligible.

QUICK FACTS

Population: 201 million

Area: Slightly smaller than the United States; fifth largest country in the world

Capital: Brasília

Languages: Portuguese (official), but about 180 indigenous languages are spoken in Brazil

EDUCATION

Brazil has a developed education system, but quality is still lacking. It has a compulsory 12-grade education system for ages 6 to 17. The public university system offers free higher education to a small fraction of applicants, with yearly admission based on a comprehensive and highly competitive exam taken at the end of high school. The national literacy rate for 15 and over is 91.5%.



RELIGION

There is no official state religion, however Catholicism has been the dominant religion since Portuguese colonization began in the 16th century. Brazil holds the world's largest population of Catholics. The 2010 census showed a population of 64.6% Catholics, 22.2% Evangelicals, and 2% Spiritists. The remaining groups include Afro-Brazilian and indigenous spiritual practices, Mormonism, Buddhism and Judaism.

ETHNICITY

The term "Brazilian" refers to anyone born in Brazil. Similar to the United States, Brazil has received immigrants from all corners of the world throughout its history. Significant immigrant groups include those from Portugal, Germany, Italy, Spain, Lebanon, Japan and Korea. There is also a greater concentration of African-descendants, especially in the northeast of the country, since Brazil received almost half of the slaves from the Atlantic Slave Trade (the U.S. received less than 5%).

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Due to cultural and economic factors, Brazilian youth tend to live with their parents until they are married. Historically Brazilian families have been large but as the country has modernized, birth rate has been reduced to that of a developed country. In Brazil handshakes are common in formal settings, but a hug is a more common way to greet friends, and a kiss on the cheek appropriate between women or between a man and woman. National holidays include Labor Day (May 1), Independence (September 7), Proclamation of the Republic (November 15), Day of the Public Servant (October 28) and Christmas (December 25).



CONTEMPORARY BRAZIL

Following economic and political turmoil in its first few decades as a Republic, Brazil suffered a military coup in 1930 and was primarily ruled by military dictatorships until the 1980s. This period was punctuated by a decade of temporary governments, which were not authoritarian, from 1954-1964, before another military coup. In the 1970s, Brazil had good economic performance, but the military regime brutally suppressed opposition and censored expression. In 1985, the country returned to democratic governance.

In 1994 Brazil's finance minister Fernando Henrique Cardoso instigated the Plano Real ("Real Plan"), establishing the real as Brazil's new currency. The real has been successful so far, suffering only minor inflation in comparison to the country's many previous currencies. During the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva ("Lula") from 2003-2011, Brazil attained the 6th highest GDP in the world.

Brazil's economic expansion, fueled by a commodity boom and demand from East Asian markets, has slowed in recent years. Nationwide protests in June of 2013, originally spurred by an increase in bus fare in São Paulo, showed to the world public outrage directed at a number of national issues including political corruption, environmental degradation, relatively high cost of living, continued existence of extreme poverty, and faulty public services and infrastructure in spite of costly projects to prepare the country for the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.



Iguazú Falls on the Argentine frontier

BRAZILIANS IN THE USA

A tradition of middle-class Brazilians traveling to Miami for shopping sprees has developed in the past two decades. Naturally, South Florida has accumulated a significant immigrant population of Brazilians. However, Brazilians are still a small minority; the 2012 United States Census reported less than 400,000 Brazilians living in the U.S., far from the millions of Hispanic immigrants reported to be living in the country.



The Brazilian flag was originally adopted in 1889. The inscription translates as "order and progress." There is some dispute, but most believe that the green represents the forest, yellow is for gold, blue for the sky, and white for peace.



Variety of Exotic Fruits Cultivated in Brazil

NAMES

Biblical names are common in Brazil and often have literal translations into English. Surnames are often formed by combining the mother's surname with the father's surname. Many Portuguese names look similar to Spanish names in writing but the pronunciation is quite different due to phonetic differences between the two languages.

FAMOUS BRAZILIANS

A few Brazilians famous in the U.S. include: Santos Dumont (inventor), Tom Jobim (composer), Paulo Freire (educator) Oscar Niemayer (architect), Walter Salles (filmmaker), Alice Braga (actress) and Gisele Bündchen (model).

PORTUGUESE WORDS

- Hi Oi
- Bye Tchau
- Good morning Bom dia
- Yes Sim
- No Não
- Please/You're welcome .. Por favor/Por nada
- Thank you Obrigado/a
- How are you? Como você está ?
- I do not understand Não entendi
- Do you understand? Entendeu?
- What is your name?..... Qual é seu nome?
- My name is Meu nome é...
- Where are you from? Você é de onde?

USEFUL LINKS

- [CIA World Factbook: Brazil](#)
- [World Bank: Brazil](#)
- [National Geographic Travel: Brazil](#)