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‘Boa Morte’ Festival-Brazil

11-day trip departing August 13th

15-day trip includes optional 4 –day extension to Brazil’s colonial mining towns

Overview

This trip will introduce you to the rich, living traditions of Brazil, with an emphasis on the Afro-Brazilian culture. It will coincide with the picturesque and justly famous *Boa Morte* celebration held each August in the historic town of Cachoeira, near Salvador.

The pace will be very active, but balanced by the fact that we concentrate our stay in and around two cities, Salvador and Rio, during the 11-day trip. This way, we’ll be exposed to an enormous amount of culture, people, sights and sounds, without the drain of constant, city-to-city travel.

While our days (and a couple of nights) will be full of walking, talking and participating in various aspects of Brazilian life, our accommodation will be an oasis of calm. We’ll stay in comfortable, charming 3 and 4-star hotels in Rio, Salvador and on our extension.

Signature Experiences

- Participating in the world-famous ‘Boa Morte’ (good death) festival in Cachoeira
- Optional service day in Salvador. We’ll spend part of the day helping Valmir, a respected Capoeira master, fix up his modest school where he runs free classes for kids in his economically depressed neighborhood (project still to be determined)
- Culture Xplorers’ Immersion Challenge
- Live roots samba at a restored, downtown Rio music club
- Positive impact walk through one of Rio’s little understood ‘favelas’
- Midnight market in Rio, where immigrants from the Northeast gather to buy, sell, eat, drink, dance and socialize
- Explore the beautiful mining towns of Tiradentes, Congonhas and Ouro Preto with our optional extension

Thumbnail Itinerary

Friday, August 11th (evening)

Overnight flight to Salvador, Brazil

Saturday, August 12th

You’ll be met at the Salvador airport by Culture Xplorers’ bi-lingual Northern Brazil trip leader. This evening is for settling in and meeting your fellow travelers and our Salvador guide. (D)

Lodging while in Salvador be at the 4 **** *Catarina Paraguacu*, a renovated colonial mansion located in the Rio Vermelho district of Salvador.

Sunday, August 13th

Today we’ll have an orientation around town in both the upper and lower districts of the city. We’ll talk a lot about the Afro-Brazilian history of Salvador and learn about the religious tradition of Candomble. This information will help us better understand the ‘Boa Morte’ (Good Death) festival in Cachoeira on Tuesday.

We'll finish our visits today with a lunch at a beach hut in Ribiera, a working class neighborhood whose beach is crowded with locals on Sundays. (B, L)

Monday, August 14th

One of Brazil's most vibrant symbols of living culture, Capoeira was created originally by African slaves in Brazil who were forbidden to learn the fighting arts. We've been working for years with Valmir, a respected Capoeira master (mestre) who speaks with our clients about the history and philosophy of this uniquely Brazilian martial art/dance.

In addition to his regular adult classes, he offers free capoeira lessons to kids in his economically depressed neighborhood. Valmir's school serves not only to teach this gymnastic martial art, but also to instill self-esteem and to offer healthy role models and guidance for its young pupils, most of whom live in challenging conditions, both at home and on the street.

Today, we'll roll up our sleeves and join Valmir and his kids for an improvement project related to the school in the morning. Afterwards, we'll share a well earned lunch together with the students and mestre. (B, L)

We'll have the option to spend this evening in the popular Pelourinho district. Pelourinho is the perfect place to walk in the evening, packed with shops, galleries, restaurants and bars.

Tuesday, August 15th

After breakfast, we will drive roughly two hours to Cachoeira to witness the main celebration day of the 'Sisterhood of the Good Death' or *Boa Morte* festival. This celebration coincides with the date of the Assumption of the Virgin on the Catholic calendar.

Behind the Catholic trappings are deep-rooted Candomble beliefs. The members of the Sisterhood are all practitioners of Candomble, the uniquely Brazilian religion with its roots in African religious traditions.

Return to Salvador in the evening. (B, L)

Wednesday, August 16th

After a midday flight from Salvador, we'll be met at the airport by our Southern Brazil trip leader and taken to our hotel to settle in. Once everyone is freshened up, we'll take an orientation tour through the historic downtown area ending with a visit to one of Rio's iconic images - Sugarloaf. (B, L)

Lodging in Rio will be at the *Copacabana Rio* a 3 *** hotel, only one short block from the south end of Copacabana beach.

Thursday, August 17th

Today we'll take a cool (literally and figuratively) jeep ride through the Tijuca Forest, one of the world's largest urban forests, stopping at waterfalls and walking along one of its many trails. Our morning journey ends at Corcovado with its famous Christ the Redeemer Statue, his enormous arms spread out in blessing and welcome for the entire city below.

To truly understand Rio, you must gain a bit of understanding of the 'favelas' (slums) where over 2 million of its residents live. One of Rio's largest favelas, Rocinha, is in itself home to over 200,000 people.

We have joined with Rejane Reis, an inspiring woman who has created a tourism workshop program to train local favela children to become tour guides. Each semester, roughly 36 students enroll. They receive a free daily lunch, English and Spanish classes and guide training (for the oldest students).

We'll visit Rocinha in the company of Rejane's teenage guides in training, plus a professional and visit the workshop itself. It's a real learning experience for our travelers and for the kids! Our visit helps to fund this innovative, positive impact project.

After the visit, we've rented a net on Ipenema beach and invited some of the kids from the workshop to join us for some volleyball and fun at the beach. (B, L)

Friday, August 18th

We'll head south of Rio this morning, starting with a visit to an undiscovered gem of a folk art museum called Casa do Portal.

From there we'll continue on to one of Rio's prettiest and cleanest beaches, popular with local surfers and environmentalists. There'll be an optional hike up the mountain trail behind the beach (approximately 2 hours) or just lay back and enjoy the natural splendor of Prainha.

With either option you're sure to have worked up an appetite, so we'll treat ourselves to late lunch at one of Rio's best seafood restaurants, overlooking a nature preserve. (B, L)

Tonight back in Rio will be on your own. One great option is to check out the local scene in the Lapa district. Formerly a seedy area, Lapa has experienced a renaissance over the last decade and is now a bohemian night scene for local cariocas with lots of great live music and restaurants. It's still advised to stay only on the main streets of this area.

Saturday, August 19th

After nearly a week of full on exploring, **we have a free morning** to walk on the beach, shop, write postcards or practice some Portuguese with the locals.

If you're looking for some high energy activities on this free morning, there are tremendous choices.

- 1) Climb the back of Sugarloaf with Guy, a professional climber/guide (\$50/pp). You don't have to be technically skilled, just physically fit and fairly fearless! (Roughly 2 hours from base to summit).
- 2) Go hang-gliding over Rio (tandem glide led by an experienced professional). No specific skills required other than \$85 and nerves of steel!

Whatever you do this morning, we'll all meet for lunch at roughly 3pm at the *Academia da Cachaca*, specializing in Brazil's national dish, 'feijoada'. While there we'll learn to make Brazil's famous drink the 'caipirinha'. (B, L)

Tonight's optional excursion is lots of fun, but definitely not for everyone!

The weekend market of Sao Cristovao is an important gathering space for many of the city's immigrants from the Northeast of Brazil. In addition to regional foods, rope-like tobacco coils, herbal medicines, bottled hot peppers, butcher stalls and pirate CD stands, there are two stages performing live forró music with many couples dancing the night away.

Caution: if you won't enjoy a somewhat chaotic atmosphere with lots of unusual sights and smells, all set against a backdrop of loud music, please do not accompany this short evening excursion (approximately 1 hour at the market).

Sunday, August 20th

Ipanema's Sunday 'hippie market' has evolved over the years into the most diverse and popular crafts market in Rio. Nearby, Ipanema beach provides a great break for those wanting a respite from the torrid shopping! Comb the beach for 'fute-volley' (an acrobatic cross between soccer and volleyball) and of course, the dramatic mountains and beautiful bodies that make Rio's beaches famous.

Around noon, we'll head to Santa Teresa and bask in the pleasant atmosphere that pervades this eclectic arts neighborhood set high above the city. Note: this is a terrific place to pick-up some unique, hand-made art and to enjoy some great neighborhood cafes. (B, L)

Those of you not staying on for the extension to the interior towns will be taken to the airport for your early evening departures back to the US and Europe.

Monday, August 21st

Arrive Home

Optional Extension to Brazil's Mining Towns

Monday, August 21st

Sit back and relax during our drive today to Tiradentes. We'll break it up with two or three breaks for food and leg stretching! We'll arrive in the mid afternoon and have a walking orientation around this quaint town - lodging at the lovely Pousada das Gerais (www.pousodasgerais.com.br) or similar 'pousada'. (B, L)

Tuesday, August 22nd

After breakfast our visit a nearby arts cooperative in Bichinho will bring us together with some local craftsmen who maintain the traditions of Brazilian arts.

In the afternoon, we'll go on horseback to Calcada Sao Jose, a restored farmhouse in the countryside. *Note: anyone not interested in riding may go by car.* There we'll be treated to some delicious, home cooked regional cuisine. (B, L, D)

Wednesday, August 23rd

We'll start early today, leaving for Ouro Preto no later than 9am, arriving between 2-3pm, after a stop in Congonhas to see some masterpieces by Aleijadinho, one of Brazil's most beloved artists. This afternoon we'll have a brief orientation around town. (B, L).

Thursday, August 24th

Fabio, our guide throughout our time in Brazil's mining towns and a well known naïf painter in his own right, will give us an artist's perspective as we visit some of Ouro Preto's most beautiful churches.

This afternoon we'll make the 2 ½ hour drive to the Belo Horizonte airport for your connecting flights to Rio and home. (B, L).

Friday, August 25th

Arrive home