

## Did You Know?

- In 2000, Brazil's Pantanal wetland was named a World Heritage site to help protect it from environmental damage. Wildlife like jaguars, snakes, alligators, and birds live there. It is the world's largest freshwater wetland.
- The Amazon River carries 20 percent of the world's river water. It is also home to anacondas, piranhas, and thousands of species of fish.
- In Brazil, Christmas is celebrated with fireworks.
- In 2001, Brazil set aside more than 7,700 square miles (19,940 sq km) of land for native reservations—mostly in the Amazon region—that are protected against modern development, logging, and mining.
- Brazil has won the World Cup five times, more than any other country.
- The Brazilian rain forest is home to millions of different kinds of insects.
- The district of Liberdade in São Paulo is the largest Japanese community outside of Japan.
- The name Brazil comes from a kind of redwood tree called *pau brasil* (brazilwood) that grows on the Brazilian coast. The red sap from the tree was once used in makeup and dye. Today, the wood is used to make bows for stringed instruments.
- Brazil shares a border with every country in South America except Chile and Ecuador.
- Brazil is the home of *bossa nova* (literally, "new trend"), a style of music that mixes African beats, American jazz, and European classical music.
- *Futebol* (soccer) is so popular in Brazil that businesses sometimes have to shut down because all their employees have gone to a match.
- São Paulo is home to one of the largest helicopter fleets in the world.

## Flag

Brazil's flag was adopted in 1889. Each of the stars represents a particular Brazilian state, and they are arranged to resemble the stars in Brazil's night sky over Rio de Janeiro on the morning the Republic of Brazil was declared. The motto *Ordem e Progresso* (Order and Progress) is found in the center of the flag. The yellow and green of the flag represent gold and trees—two of Brazil's most abundant natural resources.



## National Image

Edson Arantes do Nascimento, who most people know simply as Pelé, remains an important symbol of Brazil. He played soccer from 1956 to 1977 and is considered one of the greatest soccer players of all time. He is still known around the world as the King of Football.



## People and Places

### Land and Climate

Area (sq. mi.): 3,287,612

Area (sq. km.): 8,514,877

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world, just slightly smaller than the United States. It takes up about half of South America and is nearly 2,700 miles (4,345 km) wide at its widest point. Forests cover 65 percent of the land, including the huge rain forests of the Amazon River Basin. Grasslands lie in the west and northeast, and two highland plateaus can be found in the interior. The south has many important minerals, and its Atlantic coast is home to most of Brazil's people.

The weather is mostly tropical, and the seasons are opposite those in the Northern Hemisphere: January is the warmest month and July is the coolest. Yearly rainfall is over 100 inches in some areas but averages about 80 inches in the Amazon Basin.



### Population

Population: 202,656,788

Eighty-five percent of Brazil's population lives in cities. Most Brazilians descend from Portuguese settlers, but a little less than half of the population is of mixed race. Smaller percentages include those of Black African descent, Asians, and natives. Almost half of all Brazilians have an ancestor who was an African slave, most of whom were brought to the continent before the 1880s to work in the sugarcane fields. The *indigenous* (native) people living in Brazil include the Tupí Indians, who were among the first to meet the Portuguese settlers, and the Yanomami, who still inhabit the remote inner forests of the Amazon Basin. Some have little contact with modern society. Large immigrant groups from Japan, Germany, Italy, and Lebanon also live in Brazil. Brazil's population growth is due mostly to high rates of immigration. Around a quarter of Brazilians are under the age of 15.



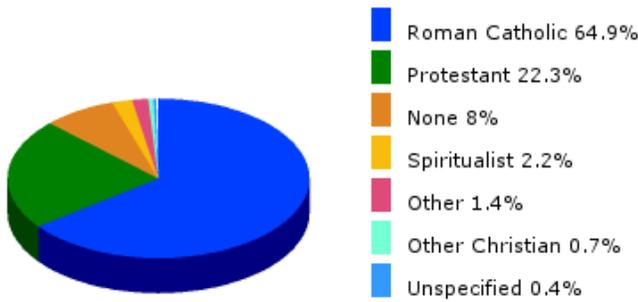
### Language

Brazil is the only country in South America where the national language is Portuguese. It is the largest Portuguese-speaking country in the world. Portuguese is a *romance language*, which means it evolved from Latin. Brazilian Portuguese is pronounced a little differently than Portugal's Portuguese and uses some different words, many of which are African. There are roughly 10,000 more words in Brazilian Portuguese than in the original Portuguese spoken in Portugal. Immigrant groups speak their own languages too, as do the native peoples.

### Can You Say It in Portuguese?

Hello	<i>Oi</i>	(oy)
Good-bye	<i>Tchau</i>	(chow)
Please	<i>Por favor</i>	(POOR fah-VOR)
Thank you	<i>Obrigado</i>	(oh-bree-GAH-doo)
Yes	<i>Sim</i>	(seeng)
No	<i>Não</i>	(nowng)

**Religion**



Source: *The World Factbook 2014. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2014.*

Brazil traditionally has been a strong Roman Catholic country. At one time, nearly 95 percent of the population claimed membership in the Catholic Church. However, membership has dropped significantly, and other Christian churches are growing. Today, the majority of Brazilians still claim membership in the Catholic Church. Although most Brazilians consider themselves quite religious, they often attend church only on special occasions.

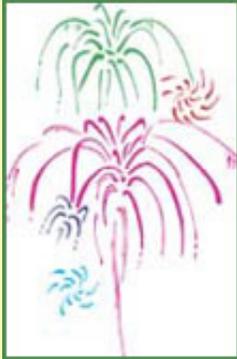
*Candomblé*, the name for a widespread religious practice that combines African religion, Catholic belief in saints, and Indian practices, is practiced by many Brazilians. Other African-based religious practices are also popular and continue to live side by side with Christian traditions.

**History**

**Time Line**

7000 BC		
7000 BC	Native groups, such as the Guarani, the Yanomami, and the Shamatari, settle in the Amazon Basin	
AD 1500		
AD 1500	Explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral finds many people living on the east coast of South America; he claims the land for Portugal	
1538	The first Africans arrive as slaves in Brazil	
1542	The first Europeans explore the Amazon River	
1549	Jesuits establish the first mission in the Amazon Basin	
1693	Gold and diamond mining begins; most work is done by slaves	

1755	Indian slavery is outlawed in Brazil
1800	
1807	Portugal's King João VI, Prince Pedro, and the royal family flee to Brazil after France invades Portugal
1815	Brazil becomes an equal part of the Portuguese empire instead of just a colony
1821	The king returns to Portugal, and the government soon votes to make Brazil a colony again
1822	Dom Pedro I declares Brazil independent and is crowned emperor
1825	War breaks out between Argentina and Brazil; Uruguay is created as a neutral area between the two countries
1835	Rebellions sweep through the empire for a decade
1850	It becomes illegal to import Africans as slaves
1871	Children born of slave mothers are declared free
1888	All slavery is abolished, but freed slaves cannot easily find land for themselves
1889	Military leaders overthrow Dom Pedro II and declare the end of the monarchy on 15 November; Brazil is made a <i>republic</i> (government in which leaders are elected)
1894	The first civilian president takes office
1895	The first competitive soccer game is played in Brazil
1900	
1931	Women over the age of 21 who can read are granted the right to vote
1932	Rebellion in São Paulo leads to civil war
	
1941	Soccer is declared the national pastime of Brazil
1960	The capital is moved from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília
1964	A military government is established that rules until 1985
1968	Workers and students protest military government
1988	A new constitution emphasizes citizens' rights
1989	Brazilians vote in the first free elections since 1960; they elect Fernando Collor de Mello as president
1992	Collor de Mello is impeached and resigns
	
1999	President Fernando Henrique Cardoso signs a bill that makes deforestation and pollution punishable crimes

2000	
2000	Brazil celebrates its 500th anniversary
	
2002	Brazilians celebrate the country's fifth World Cup championship
2003	The largest land reform in Brazil's history gives land to 400,000 poor families
2004	Brazil successfully launches its first rocket into space
2007	Brazil's state-owned oil company, Petrobras, announces the discovery of a huge new offshore oil field that could turn the country into a major oil producer
2010	Dilma Rousseff becomes Brazil's first female president
2012	Violent crime spikes in São Paulo when a police crackdown on the drug trade sparks an informal war with the city's largest crime organization; 140 people are killed in just two weeks
2013	The largest protests in more than 20 years take place as hundreds of thousands of Brazilians take to the streets to protest the rise in bus fares, the price of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games, and poor health care and education
PRESENT	

**Before 1500**

Although Brazil did not have a written history before Europeans arrived, there were likely millions of people living there at the time. Hundreds of tribes, divided into three main groups—the Mundurucú, the Tupinambá, and the Yanomami—lived on the coast, along the Amazon, and in other areas. However, life changed drastically for many of these native inhabitants after explorer Pedro Álvarez Cabral arrived in 1500 and claimed the coast for Portugal. Today, an estimated 20,000 Yanomami still live and work on a reserve near the border between Venezuela and Brazil, maintaining much the same life they did prior the arrival of the Portuguese.

**Divide and Conquer**

Because Brazil was so large and had no single kingdom to conquer, the Portuguese encouraged tribal groups to fight each other. Those captured from other tribes were given to the Portuguese as slaves and forced to work on plantations or in mines. The Europeans brought with them new diseases, like smallpox and measles, which killed many natives. The relative few who survived did so by retreating deep into the interior of the Amazon Basin, where they were able to save some of their cultural heritage.



## Rich Land

In 1494 a treaty was signed between Portugal and Spain dividing the world into two parts—half belonging to Spain and half to Portugal. Spain soon lost interest in Brazil, not aware of the vast resources to be found in the interior. Ultimately, Portugal became wealthy from the timber, sugar, tobacco, gold, diamonds, cotton, and coffee produced in Brazil. When too many local people died of disease or from the hardships of slavery, Africans were brought in as slaves to help with the work. Although the French and the Dutch established temporary colonies, only the Portuguese were able to maintain permanent colonies, which soon became the chief exporters of Brazil's numerous natural resources.



## A New Republic

When Napoleon captured Lisbon, Portugal, in 1808, the Portuguese royal family escaped to Brazil, where they ruled for nearly 14 years. Most of the royals went back to Portugal in 1821, but Dom Pedro I stayed to govern Brazil, taking the title of emperor two years later and declaring Brazil an independent kingdom in 1822. Many groups competed for power, and decades of rebellion and chaos followed. Dom Pedro II became the new emperor in 1831, when he was just five years old. Although Dom Pedro II was a popular leader, by the 1880s, Brazil was ready for change. Slavery was outlawed in 1888, and the military overthrew Dom Pedro II in 1889 to start a new *republic* (government in which leaders are elected).



## Order and Progress

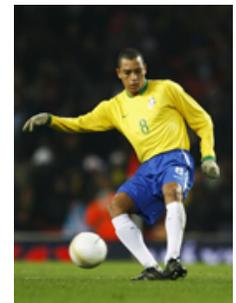
The motto of the new *republic* (government in which leaders are elected) was “Order and Progress,” but Brazil did not get much of either for another century. Wealthy landowners and merchants had a lot of power, and the country was ruled by military *dictators* (absolute rulers) more often than by elected leaders. One president, Getúlio Vargas, tried to bring changes that allowed more political freedom, but he was eventually thrown out of office because he behaved like a *dictator*. In 1964, a group of military generals took power and put in place strict controls on freedom and punished those who disagreed with them.

Finally, in 1988, a new constitution was introduced, and elections in 1989 brought Brazil a more democratic government. So when Fernando Collor de Mello, the elected president, later resigned, the new *legislature* (lawmaking body) was able to replace him without the military interfering. While the government continues to fight crime and drug gangs, Brazil has made much progress in recent years.

## Lifestyle

### Games and Sports

Few countries love *futebol* (soccer) like Brazil does. Gigantic stadiums fill up for games. Nearly every boy plays soccer, and schools and businesses close for important national or World Cup matches. Basketball and volleyball are also popular. Kids play card or board games, go to each other's houses, swim at the beach, or play video or computer games if their parents can afford them. Those who live near the coast enjoy sunbathing and swimming at the beautiful beaches. Fishing, skin diving, and boating are popular along the coast and on parts of the Amazon River. *Capoeira* is a popular sport in which participants improvise dance and martial arts moves to rhythmical music and requires speed, flexibility, and accuracy.



## Holidays

Kids in Brazil usually have three favorite holidays: Easter, Children's Day (12 Oct.), and Christmas. On Easter, kids hunt for hidden eggs and eat a lot of chocolate; they make special crafts in school and eat a special Easter meal at home. Every year prior to Easter, *Carnaval* is widely celebrated throughout Brazil but is especially popular in Rio de Janeiro. For Children's Day, parents buy their kids presents.

*Amigo secreto* (secret friend) is a common tradition among friends and family at Christmastime. At the beginning of December, people write their name on a piece of paper, and each participant then takes a piece of paper but does not reveal the name of the person on it. Throughout the month, participants use *apelidos* (fake names) to send and exchange notes. They then gather on Christmas to reveal their *amigo secreto* and exchange special gifts with them. On Christmas Eve, all the relatives come together, even from far away, for a big meal after 10 p.m. At midnight, they open presents and then stay up really late. They sleep in on the 25th and get together again for lunch. Old Brazilian legends state that even the animals talk to each other about the birth of Christ. The rooster says, "*Christo nasceu*" (Christ is born), and the bull asks, "*Onde?*" (Where?). A chorus of sheep answers, "*Em Belem de Juda*" (In Bethlehem of Judea).



## Food

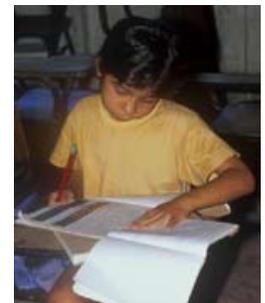
What Brazilians eat depends a lot on where they live and how much money they make. However, many kids eat bread, milk, and cheese for breakfast. Lunch and dinner foods include rice, beans, meat (often beef), and vegetables. *Feijoada*, black beans cooked with pork or sausage, is a favorite meal that dates back to the earliest periods of slavery. Pasta, soup, and fruit are common foods, too. Kids like sandwiches or even just French bread with butter and cheese or honey. For snacks, they like Brazil's tasty pastries as well as potato chips, candy, and ice cream.



## Schools

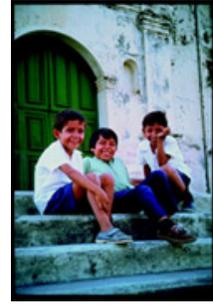
*Adult Literacy: 91%*

Brazilian kids between the ages of seven and fourteen are required to go to school Monday through Friday; however, they go either in the morning or in the afternoon (not both) and usually eat lunch at home. Most students wear uniforms until high school. They study history, geography, Portuguese, English, art, math, and science. Many Brazilians excel in math and science because these subjects are emphasized in many schools. Vacation is spread out: July, December, and January are vacation months. Unfortunately, a wide gap still exists in Brazil between rich and poor people. Many millions of Brazilian children are not able to attend school. Only 2 percent of Brazilians with college degrees are black.



## Life as a Kid

Kids in middle-class and wealthy families usually have a housekeeper, so they have few, if any, household chores. In other families, girls older than age eight help clean the house, wash dishes, cook dinner, and watch younger siblings. Many children live in small *rural* (countryside) villages. They might not go to school for more than a few years because they are needed to work at home. Many city children live in very poor areas, called *favelas* (slums), where they don't have good schools, safe streets, or healthy food. These children often must work to help support their families.



## Society

### Government

*Capital: Brasília*

*Head of State: Pres. Dilma Rousseff*

*Head of Government: Pres. Dilma Rousseff*

Brazil is a *federative republic*. This means that each of its 26 states governs itself. Each state has an elected governor and *legislature* (lawmaking body). However, the federal government holds all of the powers that are not held by the states. An elected president leads the country. The National Congress has an 81-member Federal Senate and a 513-member Chamber of Deputies. Senators serve for eight years, and deputies serve for four years. There are many political parties in Brazil, but they change frequently. Politicians often switch parties, even after elections. Everyone is required by law to vote in elections if they are between ages 19 and 70. For 16- to 18-year-olds and those older than 70, voting is optional. Brazil is divided up into 26 states and one federal district. Because of the large Catholic population in the country, the Catholic Church has a large influence in politics.

### Money and Economy

*Currency: Real*

Brazil's economy is one of the largest in the world and the wealthiest in South America. The country has a vast supply of natural resources. Brazil produces its own food and also *exports* (sells to other countries) oranges, bananas, wheat, soybeans, coffee, corn, cocoa, beef, pork, and rice. Sugarcane is also produced, but most of it is used to make *ethyl alcohol* (a fuel) for cars. Brazil's factories make everything from clothing to auto parts, steel, chemicals, and building materials. Minerals like gold, nickel, tin, and iron ore are *exported*. Recent discoveries of oil deposits off Brazil's coast have also made it an important *exporter* of oil to other parts of the world. Approximately one-third of Brazil's workforce is made up of women.



### Getting Around

Public transportation is available in all of Brazil's major cities, but it has not developed to meet the demands of the population. However, the government has made it a priority to bring the public transportation system up to date. People ride buses between cities and within cities, although the buses are often crowded. Bus travel between cities is handled mostly by private companies and offers comfortable buses and large terminals with shopping, leisure activities, and restaurants. It is also common, especially for business travelers, to take air taxis, or *teco-teco* flights, between major cities. Big cities have subways. The metro system in São Paulo carries millions of passengers a day and is known as one of the cleanest subway systems in the world. Cars are common, which means that traffic jams are a regular feature in huge cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Motorcycles are a common but dangerous way to travel in cities. Bicycles are used in *rural* (countryside) areas. Crime on the streets continues to be a problem for the majority who cannot afford to travel by helicopter or private armored car.



## Culture Facts & Contacts

### The World's Biggest Party

*Carnaval* is a holiday that happens about 40 days before Easter, although the preparation of floats, costumes, and dance routines begins months before that. The actual celebration lasts five days, and the entire country shuts down as everyone takes to the streets. Chosen from various areas around the country, groups of dancers called *blocos* dress in beautiful or outrageous costumes and dance to an African and Latin rhythm called the *samba*. Each group designs its float and music around an important historical or cultural theme. They parade down the street and hope to win a prize and to improve their standing among the many *samba* schools that compete during the celebration. The dancing and partying goes on day and night. People come from around the world to see *Carnaval*.



### Learn More

Visit the official embassy web site at <http://washington.itamaraty.gov.br>. Or write to the Embassy of Brazil, 3006 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008; phone (202) 238-2700. Brazilian Tourist Board, web site [www.visitbrasil.com](http://www.visitbrasil.com).

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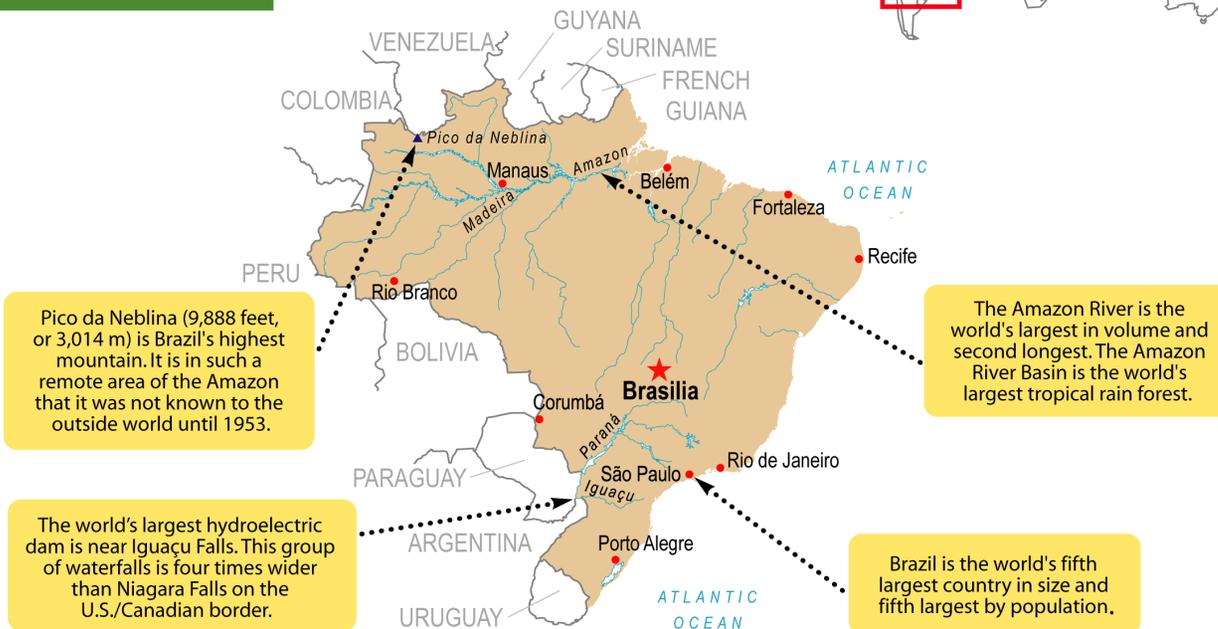
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# Brazil



The majority of people in Brazil live within 200 miles (322 km) of the east coast.



Pico da Neblina (9,888 feet, or 3,014 m) is Brazil's highest mountain. It is in such a remote area of the Amazon that it was not known to the outside world until 1953.

The Amazon River is the world's largest in volume and second longest. The Amazon River Basin is the world's largest tropical rain forest.

The world's largest hydroelectric dam is near Iguazu Falls. This group of waterfalls is four times wider than Niagara Falls on the U.S./Canadian border.

Brazil is the world's fifth largest country in size and fifth largest by population.