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Rio de Janeiro
Brazil

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Preface
Brasília may be the official capital of Brazil but in the hearts and minds of most onlookers it is Rio de Janeiro that is the rightful wearer of the crown. Its sunny skies cannot blot out some pressing social problems, but the hosting of two major sporting events has given inspiration for its continuing improvement. This is an established city on the move – and the potential is huge.

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It is said that Paris is the most beautiful city made by man but Rio de Janeiro is the most beautiful city made by God. As any *Carioca* will tell you, after creating the Earth He spent the seventh day resting on Ipanema Beach.

Many may still have niggling doubts about the so-called Marvellous City. But any misgivings tend to fade the moment you lurch through the Rebouças tunnel from Galeão airport en route to Zona Sul: the Rio we all know from postcards and songs. With the shimmer of Lagoa in front, Christ the Redeemer watching behind and the Dois Irmãos mountains rising in the distance, for first-time visitors it is apparent that what lies ahead will be breathtaking.

Rio de Janeiro may not be the constitutional capital but to outsiders it is the country's most iconic city. Enduring images of the landscape and the *Cariocas'* infectious joie de vivre afford the city a magical, otherworldly aura.

The metropolis has retained a golden-aged glow of days gone by: the sound of samba, the taste of the tropics, the touch of tanned skin, the smell of sea spray on hot sand and the sight of a healthy population enjoying its environs. You almost expect to hear the chug of propeller planes that once heralded the arrival of pioneering European voyagers on the apron at Galeão.

Rio may be a city of stereotypes, albeit wonderful ones, but there is much more to this place than picture-postcard panoramas and breathless vitality. Of course, Rio poses its challenges – chiefly crime and inequality – but City Hall has been tackling each one and turning them into opportunities. Using the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics as catalysts for social development, Rio is forging a new and positive era that integrates business, culture, design, sport and travel. This is Rio's second coming. — (M)

Why it works:

- 01 An ideal landscape for running, cycling, surfing, stand-up paddling, *futevolei*, slacklining, rowing and more.
- 02 With the largest investment of any region in the world, Rio is taking full advantage of the longed-for boom.
- 03 *Cariocas* may be the most welcoming people in the world; taking a stroll in Leblon is better for the soul than any therapy session.
- 04 Some of the world's most magnificent and lesser-known coastal retreats are less than a four-hour drive up or down the coast from the city.
- 05 With over 2,000 hours of sunshine and the world's largest urban rainforest, Rio does wonders for endorphin levels.



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