

# Brazil Country Packet

Updated January 2017



## Maranatha in Brazil

As the fifth largest country in the world with an incredibly diverse population, it's no easy task to share the Gospel in Brazil. In the early days of Seventh-day Adventist missions in the country, the missionaries did not speak Portuguese, nor did they have materials in the local languages. So the only people they initially reached were German immigrants!

Over time, the Adventist Church developed a number of resources in Portuguese, and now Brazil has one of the largest memberships in the world with approximately 1.5 million members. One out of every 156 people in Brazil is Adventist.

Maranatha's first involvement in Brazil came in 2011, when the Adventist leadership requested help with the construction of One-Day Churches for church plants and existing congregations. Since then, Maranatha has been steadily building One-Day Churches in the country with 750 One-Day Church structures to date. Maranatha also constructed an Education and Evangelism Center in northern Brazil.

In April 2015, Maranatha launched the Portuguese-language version of Maranatha Mission Stories on Novo Tempo, the Adventist radio and television station in Brazil. Then in August 2015, Maranatha started mobilizing Brazilian volunteer teams on mission trips, even establishing a small office in Brazil to coordinate volunteers, donations, and projects.

## Volunteer Opportunities

In Brazil, Maranatha is focusing on One-Day Church construction. All of these projects include the frame, and some sites will include block work. Volunteer projects typically combine construction with community outreach in the form of medical clinics and children's programs. However, the details of each project vary, depending on the volunteers, availability of opportunities, and needs of the local church.

## Project Funding

The local church is responsible for providing the land and labor to excavate the site. Maranatha has agreed to raise funds to subsidize building costs in Brazil. These funds are provided by donations from individuals, churches, school groups, and businesses as well as the donors of the \$10 Church program. If you or your team is interested in helping to sponsor a church or school in Brazil, please speak with Maranatha for more information.



## Brazil Overview

From the wildlife-rich Amazon basin to the bustling city of Sao Paulo, Brazil is a land of diversity. The culture of its people burst from the drums of the Samba and the colorful costumes that adorn the Carnival dancers. However, it also has a dark history that involves slavery, and human and environmental exploitation.

Three primary indigenous tribes originally inhabited Brazil. However, when the Portuguese settlers sailed to its shores in 1531, the simple life of the nomadic Indians changed. The sailors had come looking for spices,

ivory, and diamonds, and they brought with them diseases, war, and slavery as they forced the Indians to work alongside African slaves on sugar plantations. The Portuguese settlers also brought something else with them: Catholicism. Jesuit missions sprang up in small villages as the priests tried to convert the local Indians, many times through force. This effort ended with a mixture of Catholicism, animism, and African cults, as well as many lives lost on both sides.

In the early 1800's, as Portugal was under invasion from Napoleon, Portuguese prince and regent Dom Joao VI, fled with his family for the Brazilian colonies. This New World colony became the first and only colony to have a European monarch ruling on its soil. When Dom Joao returned to Europe, his son Dom Pedro I took over rule and declared independence from Portugal, naming himself Emperor of Brazil. Government leadership passed to powerful, feuding landowners and eventually to dictators until 1989, when Brazil held its first democratic election.

Brazil's is a leading exporter of sugar, coffee beans, and rubber. Unfortunately, the heavy demand for rubber during the late 1800's caused expansive deforestation in the Amazon basin. While the Amazonia region is still home to more than 300 species of mammals and 2,000 species of fish, hundreds of Brazil's animal species are endangered, and major ecosystems are threatened due to the destruction of natural environments.

## Culture

Brazil is a large and diverse country. Brazil's indigenous roots are mixed with European culture and African influences, leaving a unique mark on Brazilian lifestyle.

As far as socioeconomics, the deep chasm between the rich and poor has become even more prominent, and the proximity between the two has grown closer and closer. In the cities, the rich live comfortably in modern apartments while the poor live in favelas, makeshift slum communities lorded over by gangs and drug runners.

However, no matter the social status, all Brazilians share two common loves: football (soccer) and music. One visit to Rio de Janeiro will quickly show their enthusiasm for their teams and enjoyment of music and dance of the tribal drums.

## Geography and Climate

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world (it is slightly larger than the contiguous United States) and occupies roughly half of South America. A large portion of the country is covered in the rainforests of the Amazon Basin; the Amazon region constitutes almost half of the rainforests on earth. The cities throughout the area are connected through a network of rivers including the second longest river in the world, the Amazon River.

In the southeastern part of Brazil, the jungles give way to mountain ranges and plateaus. The country also has more than 4,600 miles of coastline, which borders the Atlantic Ocean. While tropical beaches characterize much of the coastline, the sand is also interspersed with mangroves, lagoons, coral reefs, and dunes.

Because Brazil is so large, weather patterns vary greatly throughout the country. Much of the climate is tropical and warm to hot most of the year. Near the Amazon it is very humid with lots of rain. In the northern parts of Brazil, December to March is considered winter because of the extensive rain. In southern Brazil, the climate is more temperate, and enjoys cooler months from June to August.

## Facts & Figures

<b>Capital:</b>	<b>Brasília</b>
<b>Nationality:</b>	<b>Brazilian</b>
<b>Population:</b>	<b>205.8 million</b>
<b>Poverty:</b>	<b>21.4%</b>
<b>Unemployment:</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Languages:</b>	<b>Portuguese</b>
<b>Literacy:</b>	<b>92.6%</b>
<b>Life Expectancy:</b>	<b>73.8 years</b>
<b>HIV/AIDS:</b>	<b>0.58%</b>
<b>Climate:</b>	<b>Tropical. March is the warmest month and July is the coolest.</b>
<b>Religion:</b>	<b>Catholic 65%, Protestant 23%, nonreligious 8%</b>
<b>Economy:</b>	<b>Industries: Textiles, shoes, iron ore, lumber, motor vehicles and parts</b>
<b>Exports:</b>	<b>Iron ore, soybeans, footwear, coffee</b>
<b>Currency:</b>	<b>Brazilian Real</b>

## Cultural Sensitivity

Maranatha's volunteer experience includes meeting new people and learning how to serve them. It is important to enter another culture with humility, respect, and understanding of their traditions. Sometimes you may observe something in Brazil that will be very different from what you're accustomed to. It does not make it wrong—just different. Be respectful and consider their perspective.

Being sensitive to a culture also means being respectful to micro cultures, such as Adventism, within a larger culture. Adventists in Brazil tend to be more conservative than Adventists in the United States or Canada. We try to be sensitive to this by asking volunteers to dress as modestly as possible. Pants and cap sleeves are preferred to shorts and tank tops. For church activities, women need to have skirts or dresses reaching past the knees, and men need to wear ties and closed-toe shoes, especially if they are involved in platform activities.

## Planning a Project

### Partnering with Maranatha

There are many reasons to plan a project with Maranatha. After nearly 50 years of laser-focus on construction-oriented mission projects, the organization has this process mastered.

- **Maranatha has a great track record.** In the mission field and at home, Maranatha has a strong reputation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church for reliability, organization, and quality. We have done this by building a team of people who understand that every detail is important when planning a mission trip. Maranatha will always have your worksite prepared and support you in creating a successful project for your team.
- **Maranatha provides local support.** It is a huge help to have someone at your location, before your arrival, to scout out details and make arrangements for your group. Once your group arrives, our volunteer support person will be around to help as a translator and navigate the inevitable bumps in the road.
- **Maranatha provides quality construction support.** You don't have to be a construction expert to build a project with Maranatha. Our in-country crew will prep the project site before you arrive, and they will stay to teach and assist the volunteers throughout the project. This approach provides each building and project consistency and quality control.
- **Maranatha office support is available as you plan.** Kim Haas is the group project specialist at Maranatha. She is available for questions and resources as you plan your project and work with group members.
- **Maranatha is an independent organization, but we work hand-in-hand with Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership around the world.** Every Maranatha project in the Brazil has been selected by the local Adventist leadership and approved by the regional leadership as a priority for growth. This means that your project will have the full support of the larger church and sustainability for the future.

### Accommodations

In Brazil, most Maranatha project leaders choose to have the group stay in a hotel or camp. While there are many places with varying comfort and price levels, you should expect a rather simple hotel.

Check with the project packet or your group leader for specific information regarding bed linens, towels and washcloths, hot water, air-conditioning, Wi-Fi availability, and eating facilities.

### Excursion Options

Brazil is an immense country and traveling from city to city could take hours, or even days. It is best to look for excursions near your project location or be prepared for the travel times. Brazil is full of great options for relaxation and fun. From waterfalls and Amazon eco-tours to historical cities and iconic locations, Brazil has a variety of places to explore.

To find the best excursion for your trip, try searching online. Look for peer ratings on various activities through sites like Trip Advisor. Guidebooks published by *Lonely Planet* or *Frommer's* are also good places to start. Maranatha has a few recommended excursions or activities that other groups have done in the past. Be sure to ask what is the best option for your group in the area where you will be working.

## Attractions

**Rio de Janeiro (south eastern)** | Rio is a bustling beach city that is one of the most iconic locations in Brazil. From the Christ the Redeemer Statue and Sugarloaf Mountain to Copacabana and Ipanema beaches, there is always something more to see!

**Iguaçu Falls National Park (south western)** | This World Heritage Site is at the border of Argentina and Brazil. Paraguay is just a few miles away. Visitors can experience the falls from both the Brazilian and Argentinian sides as well as explore the river on boat and explore the surrounding jungle.

**Cranes' Mangrove (northern)** | This 40,000 square meter park has an aviary, butterfly enclosure, and lakes. It allows visitors to experience some of the native Amazon environment closer to the city of Belem.

**Rodriquez Alves Woodland Botanical Garden (northern)** | This is one of the oldest botanical gardens in Brazil and has a big variety of flora amongst lakes, waterfalls, caves, and even a small zoo.

## Foreign Cash and Money Exchange

Brazil uses the Brazilian Real and it has an exchange rate of approximately 3.25 Reales to \$1 USD (January 2017), depending on where you make the exchange. Any cash you bring should be in new, unmarked U.S. dollar bills.

You can exchange money in or outside the airport at a bank or an exchange booth. Oftentimes your project coordinator will exchange money at a simple, rounded rate.

ATMs will allow you to withdraw Reales directly and will probably give you the best exchange rate. There are ATMs in the airport, but they can be hard to find and unreliable outside large cities.

## Credit/Debit Cards

While some establishments accept credit and debit cards, it might be easier to use cash while traveling through the country. If you do use a credit or debit card, expect a 5% - 12% surcharge for international use. Be careful when using your credit card in public; never let it out of your sight. It is wise to let your credit card company know in advance the dates you will be in Brazil so they don't block your card when you use it in a foreign country.

## Traveler's Checks

Traveler checks are not widely accepted, and commissions can be high.

## Electricity

The standard current in Brazil is 220-240 volt AC. For any small appliances (hair dryers, electric shavers, camera chargers) you will need a plug adapter and a voltage converter. Voltage converters can be found at most stores like Walmart or Target for about \$10. The standard outlets have three round prongs (Type N). Plug adapters can be found in sets or individually at many stores. Electrical surges and outages can be common. You should use a surge protector for expensive appliances and computers.



## Laundry

Most cities and large towns have full service laundromats. Many hotels also provide laundry service but often charge per item of clothing, which adds up pretty fast. You can also choose to do your laundry by hand at no additional cost.

## Communication

Technology has increased so much that we can stay connected around the world.

Cell phone service is available in most cities throughout the country, but rural areas still experience limited service. You can use your own phone and service plan, but check international rates and service areas since international roaming and data charges can be very expensive. You can avoid unexpected charges by putting your phone on airplane mode and limiting all data usage to WiFi areas. You can also look into the T-mobile Simple Choice Plan, which offers free international data and texting and discounted calling in more than 120 countries around the world.

Local cell phones are relatively inexpensive; you can purchase one in Brazil and reload minutes to call locally and internationally for reasonable rates. You can also buy a SIM card for your unlocked device.

To call Brazil from the U.S., enter the international access code (011) + the Brazilian country code (55) + the local number.

To call the U.S. from Brazil, enter the U.S. country code (001) + the local area code and phone number. For example, to call the Maranhão office you would dial 001 (916) 774-7700.

You can also communicate with loved ones at home through free smart phone and computer apps such as WhatsApp, Viber, FaceTime, and Skype. Wi-Fi is available at hotels and restaurants throughout the country, and Internet cafes are also popular.

## Time Zone

Brazil extends across three time zones: Amazon Time Zone UTC -04:00, Brasília Time Zone UTC-03:00, and Fernando de Noronha Time Zone UTC-02:00.

Maranhão is primarily working in locations in the Brasília Time Zone (the states of Pará and Bahia). When the U.S. is on Daylight Savings Time, Pará and Bahia are four hours ahead of Pacific Daylight Savings Time and one hour ahead of Eastern Daylight Savings Time.

## Restrooms

Public restrooms are few and far between in Brazil, so you should take breaks at your hotel or restaurants. Western-style flush toilets are the norm in most places. But toilet paper usually goes in the wastebasket, not down the toilet.

## Weights & Measures

Brazil officially uses the metric system.

# Travel

## Airports

Brazil has several international airports. Most Maranhão projects will require volunteers to transfer from an international flight to a domestic flight within Brazil. The three main airports that you will probably fly through are Rio de Janeiro (GIG), São Paulo (GRU), and Brasília (BSB). A variety of flights connect North America to these airports.

Domestic carriers from these main hubs to smaller airports include Gol Airlines, TAM Airlines, Avianca, and Azul. Some of these partner with international carriers. If possible, when booking your flights, we recommend that you try to book on one itinerary all the way to the final destination to take advantage of the international baggage allowances. Individual domestic flights tend to have stricter limits for baggage weight and size. However, most often, you will need to gather your bags and check-in, again, to your domestic flight.

## Entry and Exit Requirements

**Passport** | All U.S. and Canadian citizens must present a passport valid for at least six months beyond your scheduled return date. If you do not have a passport, U.S. citizens can apply at any U.S. post office or online at <http://travel.state.gov>. Canadian citizens can apply online at [www.passport.gc.ca](http://www.passport.gc.ca). It can take up to two months to complete the entire process; plan accordingly to give yourself enough time to receive your passport. You can expedite the process for an additional fee. Passport photos can be taken at the post office, FedEx office, Costco, or Walgreens.

### Entrance Requirements

- Valid Passport
- Tourist Visa

**Tourist Visa** | In addition to a passport, travelers must have a valid tourist visa for the country of Brazil before traveling. You can apply in person at the Brazilian embassy or by using an online visa service (Travisa or Travel Documents Services). Maranatha has a visa procedure packet that will help guide you through the application process. However, the Brazilian government requires that you apply with the embassy in your regional jurisdiction, so we recommend that you follow their guidelines for your jurisdiction on the Travisa or Embassy websites. It is very important that you state that you are coming as a tourist, and you do not mention that you are there to work or conduct missionary activities. Ideally you should apply for your visa two to three months in advance of travel.

Citizens of other countries should consult the Brazilian embassy or consulate in your home country for entrance requirements.

For additional information regarding U.S. entrance procedures in Brazil visit: <http://travel.state.gov/>

## Immigration and Customs Process

On the airplane, before you arrive in Brazil, you will receive Immigration and Customs forms that need to be filled out for processing at the airport. They will ask for information such as your name (use the name on your passport), passport number, flight number, and address where you will be staying in Brazil. Be sure to consult your project packet or your group leader for this address, prior to departure.

After you exit the plane, you will follow the signs to Immigration. You will need to present your entrance forms, passport, and visa. They may ask you a couple questions regarding your trip to Brazil. Make sure you say that you are a tourist. If you say you are coming to “work” on a Maranatha trip, it can cause confusion; they may believe you need a work or business visa for your travel in the country. At immigration, they may stamp your passport or give you a slip of paper. Make sure you keep whatever they give to you with your passport for the duration of your time in Brazil.

After passing through immigration, head to the baggage claim, gather your bags, and go through customs, where they will take your customs form. They may put your bags through an x-ray, do a randomly selected bag check, or manually search your bag. Don't worry about this process as they are primarily looking for fruits, vegetables, animals, weapons, and drugs. After passing through customs, proceed to the arrivals area of the airport where you can meet up with the rest of the group or continue on to your domestic flight.

## In-Country Transportation in Brazil

Many international rental companies have a presence in Brazil. You can reserve and pick up rental cars, trucks, and vans at most large airport through rental agencies such as Avis, Budget, Hertz, and Alamo.

The roads around major cities are usually good, but take care with merging traffic and watch for potholes. Before driving, familiarize yourself with local laws and traffic norms. Roads between smaller towns are not usually paved. It is not recommended to drive at night.

Taxis in Brazil are relatively cheap, but some can be unreliable and unsafe. We recommend that when traveling by taxi in large cities, you look for “tourist taxis” outside hotels and the airport. They can be a little more expensive, but they will respect international driving standards better. Taxis do not have meters; instead they usually have a preset fare to your destination. Make sure you agree on the fare before entering the taxi and request that the driver does not pick up additional passengers during the trip.

Maranatha coordinates transportation for Open Team projects in privately rented vehicles with drivers. If you are leading a group project with Maranatha, we can help your group reserve a private school bus, coaster bus, or tourist coach for your transportation needs.

## Traveling with Minors

Minors under the age of 18 are welcome to join projects to Brazil. Maranatha requires that at least one adult travel with every four minors, ages 14-17, and that an adult travel with every minor, age 13 and under. Minors

traveling without both parents or legal guardians must carry a notarized consent form. You can find this form and complete instructions on the Maranatha website, under Resources. While Brazil does not have any additional entrance requirements for minors, you should travel with the notarized consent form just in case.

## Health, Safety, and Security

For more detailed health guidelines for international travel, see our first time traveler's guide.

### Vaccines and Medications

The only vaccine required by Maranatha is a current tetanus vaccine. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend many other vaccines such as Hepatitis A and typhoid. Yellow Fever and malaria are present in the country. In some areas of Brazil the CDC recommends getting the Yellow fever vaccine as well as taking a malaria preventative medication other than Chloroquine. In other areas, the CDC has determined that preventative measures are unnecessary. More information is available at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/>. Maranatha recommends that you schedule a consultation with a travel clinic doctor, prior to travel, to talk about medical precautions for your trip to Brazil.

### Malaria, Yellow Fever, and Mosquitos

Malaria is a life-threatening parasitic disease transmitted primarily by mosquitos. Maranatha suggests you speak with a medical professional regarding malaria prevention options. There are different oral medications that can lower your risk of contracting malaria. Each has different side effects and dosages, so speak with a travel clinic doctor before making a decision on whether to take a certain medication. When considering preventative medications for malaria, keep in mind that Chloroquine is NOT effective in Brazil. The malaria strain present in the country is considered to be Chloroquine-resistant. Malaria can be treated effectively early in the course of the disease, but we recommend that you avoid it altogether.

Mosquitos and other flying insects can also carry a variety of others diseases such as Yellow fever, Zika, and dengue. Personal precautions are strongly recommended to lower the risk of being bitten. Bring a bug repellent with a 30%-50% concentration of DEET. Wear long sleeves, long pants, and closed-toe footwear when possible. Avoid areas of standing water and do not spend a lot of time outside during dusk and dawn.



Yellow Fever Transmission Area



Malaria Transmission Area

### Zika

Recently the Zika virus has been spreading around Central and South America. Brazil was one of the countries with the most widespread transmission. This mosquito-borne disease acts very similar to a hard-hitting flu with symptoms lasting about two weeks. There is currently no vaccine or treatment for the disease, and the CDC has issued a **Level 2 warning**. This warning does not suggest that you postpone all travel, but it does urge travelers to take **heightened precautions** to avoid being bitten (see recommendations above). This virus is still being

studied, and information is continuing to be released. There are currently no known long-term effects; however, there does seem to be a link between the virus and possible birth defects in babies born from women who were infected during their pregnancy. The virus can remain in a woman's body for approximately eight weeks and in a man's body for approximately six months, and it can be spread through physical contact. If you or your partner is pregnant, think you might be pregnant, or trying to get pregnant in the next six months, Maranatha recommends speaking with your doctor to determine if you should travel.

## Preventative Health

In general, preventative measures are the best way to avoid becoming ill during your time in Brazil. Food should be properly washed and cooked. Use only purified water for drinking and brushing your teeth and avoid ice cubes at restaurants. Wash your hands regularly. Wear sunscreen and mosquito repellent while outdoors.

## Medical Care in Country

Most large cities in Brazil have fairly modern clinics and hospitals. In general, private clinics are safer and cleaner than public hospitals. There are several Adventist-run pharmacies, clinics, and hospitals located throughout the country. Maranatha will have identified several medical care locations near the project locations that we believe are safe for our volunteers. If you are leading a group to Brazil, be sure to ask Maranatha project support to show you the clinic location closest to your housing and work sites.

## Travel Safety

Maranatha will not knowingly send volunteers to an area that is of elevated risk. We consistently monitor security alerts from the areas where we are working, and we consciously avoid high-risk regions. However, it is important for you to take responsibility for your own personal safety while traveling. Here are some ways you can start. For a more detailed list of tips and Maranatha insurance information, be sure to read our [International Traveler's Guide](#). While we do take precautions, there is nothing we can do to guarantee safety. We can only place our trust in God's hands.

- Avoid traveling at night or alone.
- Dress conservatively and keep a low profile.
- Avoid marginal areas of cities, alleyways, and crowds of people.
- Use caution if you are approached on the street by strangers, including vendors.
- Leave valuables, both expensive and sentimental, at home.
- Don't leave your personal belongings unattended, especially in open sight. Consider using a money belt or concealed pouch for passports, credit cards, and cash. Keep your purse or bag in front of you, held with a tight grip.
- US Department of State: Register your travel with the U.S. Department of State by enrolling with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. The U.S. government will then contact you in case of an emergency, natural disaster, or civil unrest. They can also be a point of contact for family emergencies. You can also check for security updates prior to your departure.
- Travel Guard: The AIG accident insurance provided to Maranatha volunteers provides access to security updates and other resources. You can access this resource by using the policy number provided to you in your information packet or by a Maranatha representative once your volunteer group is confirmed.

## Maranatha Insurance

Maranatha mission projects are construction projects where people can get hurt. Accident insurance is essential. It is not possible for Maranatha to analyze everyone's insurance policy to see whether it is current and the coverage is in effect at the location of the mission project. For that reason, all volunteers will be covered by accident insurance, coordinated by Maranatha, from the time they arrive at the project until their departure. This is a secondary policy, which means all claims will first be processed through your primary policy. This policy covers accidents only and does not include illnesses or other medical coverage. For more information about project insurance, contact Maranatha.



# Communication

## Promoting Your Maranatha Trip

You may contact Maranatha's marketing department for materials to help you promote your trip to Brazil. There are DVDs and printed materials available for your convenience. Contact Maranatha for more details.

Also, when discussing this mission trip with your team and while promoting it to your church or school, please be sure to mention that you are partnering with Maranatha! We hope that you will help to spread the word about our mission to spread the Gospel through construction.

## Contact Information

### **United States Embassy:**

SES – Av. Das Nações, Quadra  
801, Lote 03  
70403-900 – Brasília, DF  
Brasil  
(55-61) 3312-7000

### **Canadian Consulate:**

SES – Av. Das Nações, Quadra  
803, Lote 16  
70410-900 – Brasília, DF  
Brasil  
(55-61) 3424-5400

### **Maranatha Volunteers**

#### **International:**

990 Reserve Drive, Suite 100  
Roseville, CA 95678  
Telephone: (916) 774-7700  
Fax: (916) 774-7701