

BBE · THE BLACK BRAZIL EXCHANGE

# Por Dentro

*From the Inside*

The real Rio guide. Six years on the ground, written for the people I would actually invite.

— Bryant Huff, Founder · BBE

★ FREE PREVIEW · 16 SECTIONS INSIDE ★

FULL GUIDE: \$29 · THEBLACKBRAZILEXCHANGE.COM  
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# Welcome

My name is Bryant. I went to Rio for Carnival 2020. A week later the world caught COVID, the borders closed, and I was stuck. What was supposed to be a quick trip turned into six months. Six months turned into six years.

Six years across Rio, São Paulo, and Salvador. I've lost 130 pounds, had two surgeries, survived a 15-day coma, negotiated my way out of a 360,000 reais hospital bill, came out at 29, and built a network in this country that took every one of those years to earn.

This guide is everything I would tell a friend who was about to land in Rio for the first time. **This is not the version most tourists get. This is the version I give to people I actually want to send to Brazil.**

What's in the full guide:

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— Bryant Huff

*Founder · BBE*

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## What's Inside the Full Guide

16 sections. ~32 pages. Everything I would tell a friend.

### 1. The Basics

Money, phones, what not to bring, the payday tip that changes everything

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### 2. Getting Around

Airport, drivers, Uber/99, the real cost of transportation tiers

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### 3. Where to Stay

Every neighborhood ranked — Copacabana, Ipanema, Lapa, Santa Theresa, the North Zone

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### 4. The Beach

Postos, Rasta Beach, 6 hidden spots tourists never find

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### 5. A Real Rio Nightlife Week

Day-by-day breakdown — what to do Monday through Sunday

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### 6. Gay Rio

The beach, the clubs, the saunas, the apps, the safer moves

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### 7. Adult Nightlife

Termas, Vila Mimosa, the Copacabana strip — how to walk in informed

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### 8. Favela Access

How BBE does it, what to know, what never to do

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### 9. Afro-Brazilian Spirituality

Candomblé, Umbanda, the orixás, the respectful traveler rules

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25 restaurants with my notes — by price tier, by occasion

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The cultural capital of Black Brazil

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Why most travelers wrongly skip it

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### **13. Annual Calendar**

Time your trip right — month-by-month breakdown

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Land, eat, get home — only what you need

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### **16. Working With BBE**

Packages, points, how to book

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# 1. The Basics

Read this section twice. Most of what goes wrong on a Rio trip is solved before you land.

## Time your trip TO payday — the 1st or the 15th

This is the single biggest tip in this guide. Most Brazilians get paid on the 1st and the 15th. After payday they want to party. The week of the 1st and the 15th is when Casa Black is full, the funk parties are sweaty, and the city is at 100. Come during a non-payday week and half the venues you wanted to see will be running at half capacity, because the locals don't have money to go out. **This one tip alone has changed half my friends' Rio trips.**

## Phones

Get a Brazilian SIM the day you land. Vivo, Claro, and TIM all have prepaid plans you can buy at the airport. WhatsApp is the entire country's default messaging app. Your guide, your driver, your masseuse, your barber will all message you on WhatsApp.

Phone safety is its own thing in Rio. Most phone snatches happen because someone is walking down the street holding their phone out, or sitting at a sidewalk café with the phone face-up on the table...

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# 2. Getting Around

From the airport, to nightlife, to São João — the real cost of moving through Rio.

## Airport pickup

Galeão (GIG) is the international airport. Santos Dumont (SDU) is domestic. From Galeão to Zona Sul: 45–90 minutes depending on traffic. Do not take a random street taxi from outside the terminal. Either book Uber from inside the terminal once you have a SIM, or have BBE pick you up so a driver is holding a sign with your name when you walk out.

## The three transportation tiers with BBE

BBE offers three transportation models. Pick what fits the trip:

- **Pay-as-you-go (Uber/99)** — included on most package days...
- **Jonas's taxi** — Jonas drives his own legal taxi...
- **Private chauffeur** — for premium days, late-night returns...

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## 3. Where to Stay and Where to Go

Rio is a long, thin city wrapped around mountains and ocean. The neighborhoods feel like different cities. Stay in the wrong one and your trip is built around 40-minute Ubers.

### Copacabana

The classic. Touristy, loud, the beach is the main attraction, the bars never close. **If it's your first trip to Rio, Copacabana is the obvious answer** because everything is walkable from here. Stay near posto 4 to posto 6 — the far end at posto 1 (Leme) is quieter, the Ipanema end is closer to the better restaurants.

### Madureira and the North Zone

This is Black Rio. Casa Black Rio is here. Viaduto Madureira is here. Most tourists never go to the North Zone, which is exactly the reason BBE is built around it...

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## 4. The Beach

Rio's beaches are urban beaches. The water is cold. The sand is the social space.

### Rasta Beach (Leme, Posto 1) — my pick

Rasta Beach is what I call the stretch of Leme right in front of Posto 1. **Less thieves than Copacabana proper.** The drinks are cheaper. There's almost always music. It's a real party environment with great vibes, and most of the day you can swim and lay out without thinking about your stuff.

### The posto system

Each beach is divided into postos (lifeguard stations). They number from north to south. Copacabana: postos 1 (Leme) through 6. Ipanema: postos 7 through 10 — the gay scene is at posto 8/9. Leblon: posto 11–12...

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## 5. A Real Rio Nightlife Week

Rio nightlife is on a schedule. Each night of the week has its own move. Most clubs don't fill up until 1am and run until 6am or later.

**Boate Save and Casa Black Rio are the two venues we recommend to almost everyone.** Not on the typical tourist circuit and that's exactly why they're good.

## Monday — Pedra do Sal

The Monday samba on the historic square in Saúde. Outdoor, no cover, real samba musicians. **If you only do one Monday in Rio, do this.**

## Saturday — peak night

Casa Black Rio in Madureira is the Black Rio club. Boate Save in Lapa is 5 rooms running like separate clubs. The Home is the Saturday gay circuit night...

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# 6. Gay Rio

Rio is one of the most openly gay cities in the world. Posto 9 of Ipanema is a daily gay scene that's run for 40 years.

## The beach

Posto 8 and 9 of Ipanema is the gay beach. Look for the rainbow flags. Saturday and Sunday mid-day is the social peak. **Farme de Amoedo** — the street between posto 8 and 9 — is where the bars and the cruising scene live...

## Saunas (gay bath houses)

Brazilian gay culture has a long sauna tradition. These are legal, established, professionally run. Steam, dry heat, dark rooms, private cabins...

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# 7. Adult Nightlife

Sex work between adults is legal in Brazil. Brothels, strip clubs, and termas are part of Rio's adult scene and have been for generations.

This section is for adult travelers who want to understand the scene before they walk into it. **Most of the trouble that happens at these venues isn't violence. It's financial.** Walk in informed and almost all of it disappears.

## Termas

A termas is what most of the world would call a high-end brothel. You walk in, pay an entry fee, and the ladies help you take off your clothes and put on a robe. Everything is negotiated inside at the pace and price you set...

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## 8. Favela Access

A favela is a community. A real one — with grocery stores, dance studios, churches, schools, kids playing, families eating dinner.

Tourists go to favelas. **The question is how you go and who you go with.**

### How BBE does it

Every favela experience we run is with someone who lives in or has deep ties to that community. The income from the visit goes to people in the community. **We are not a tour company that drops a bus on the corner.**

Favela Barbershop. Favela party access. High Access experiences. São João (June only, Dia dos Crias). Brazilian Christmas (2 people only)...

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## 9. Afro-Brazilian Spirituality

Candomblé and Umbanda are living spiritual traditions practiced openly across Brazil today.

For travelers from the diaspora, especially Black Americans, visiting a terreiro or an Umbanda center is one of the most powerful experiences this country offers. **You're standing inside a living continuation of religions your ancestors carried across an ocean and protected for 400 years. That is not nothing.**

### The orixás

Iemanjá — goddess of the sea. Oxum — goddess of fresh water and love. Xangô — god of justice. Ogum — god of iron, war, roads. Each has colors, foods, songs, dances. Each follower is a child of one or two orixás that protect them...

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## 10. Food & Drink

My actual rotation. 25 restaurants with my actual notes. Sorted by price tier and occasion.

### Nice dinner (\$\$\$)

Churrascaria Palace — best churrascaria in Rio. Period. Aprazível in Santa Teresa — the view of Rio from your table. Escama in Ipanema — fresh oysters and seafood. Plus 7 more, each with my notes on what to order and what to skip...

## The Brazilian standards

Feijoada, picanha, moqueca, açai, pão de queijo, coxinha. What each one is. When to eat it. Where to get the best version. How to order...

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## 11. Salvador, Bahia

Salvador is where Black Brazil begins. The first capital, the largest port for the Atlantic slave trade, the cultural heart of Afro-Brazilian everything.

Capoeira was born here. Candomblé is practiced openly. The food, the music, the language all carry the rhythm of the Yoruba and the Bantu. **If your trip is about cultural roots, Salvador is the trip.**

Pelourinho. Itapuã and Rio Vermelho. The Iemanjá Festival on February 2nd. Sivaldo, our Salvador lead...

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## 12. São Paulo

São Paulo is not Rio. Most travelers skip it. **They're wrong.**

São Paulo has the best food in South America, a serious gay scene, and a music culture that runs every night of the week. Where to stay. Where to eat. The Gay SP scene around Frei Caneca and Augusta...

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## 13. Annual Calendar

Time your trip and you'll see things you didn't plan for. Time it badly and you'll pay double for half the city.

**February (Carnival)** — five-day national pause. Sambadrome parades, street blocos, prices double. Book six months out.

**April–May / August–October** — shoulder season. Best weather, smaller crowds, better prices. My favorite time to bring first-time visitors.

June — Dia dos Crias. December — Brazilian Christmas, BBE-only access.

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## 14. Medical Tourism

Brazil is one of the most respected countries in the world for plastic surgery, dental work, and elective procedures. Costs run 50–80% less than the US for comparable work.

I'm alive partly because of how the Brazilian medical system handled my coma and sepsis. I also paid 15% of a 360,000 reais hospital bill because of how the Brazilian system handles negotiation when you're honest about what you can pay. **Both stories matter.**

Why BBE is different in this space. Why we don't take commissions from clinics...

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## 15. Portuguese Survival Phrases

Most younger Brazilians in Zona Sul speak some English. Most others don't. Even a little Portuguese opens enormous doors.

**Tudo bem?** — How's it going? (default greeting). **Quanto custa?** — How much. **A conta, por favor** — The bill. **Tem fila?** — Is there a line?

Plus pronunciation cheats, safety phrases, and the food/drink/nightlife vocabulary that opens doors...

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## 16. Working With BBE

This guide is step one. Showing up with a person on the ground is step two.

**Taste (\$300–500)** — 5 points, guide for up to 3 days. **Por Dentro (\$1,200–1,800)** — 15 points, guide for up to 7 days. **Full Access (\$2,500+)** — 30 points, guide for 14+ days, premium and high-access tier.

How points work. Group size sweet spots. Booking, payment, FX policy in detail...

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