

Brazil

Country name	Brazil
State title	Federative Republic of Brazil
Name of citizen	Brazilian
Official language(s)	Portuguese (por) ¹
Country name in official language(s)	Brasil
State title in official language(s)	República Federativa do Brasil
Script	Roman
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	BR/BRA
Capital	Brasília ²
Population/Area	218,689,757 (2023 est./8,515,770 sq km ³)

Introduction

Brazil is the largest and most populous country in South America. It borders nearly every country in South America, with the exception only of Ecuador and Chile, and has a coastline on the Atlantic Ocean. It has many Atlantic islands and some in the Amazon Delta. Geographically diverse, Brazil includes the Pampas grasslands, Pantanal wetlands, mountainous highlands, and the world's largest rainforest in the Amazon Basin. The name of the country comes from the brazilwood tree (por: pau-brasil).

Brazil has a highly diverse population, including indigenous Americans and the descendants of African slaves and European settlers. Following more than three centuries of Portuguese rule, Brazil gained its independence in 1822, when the son of the Portuguese king crowned himself Pedro I, emperor of Brazil. In 1889, Brazil's monarchy was overthrown and a federal republic established. Brazil underwent more than a half century of populist and military government until 1985, when the military regime peacefully ceded power to civilian rulers.

Brasília is the federal capital of Brazil and the seat of government. It was founded in 1960, to replace Rio de Janeiro as the capital. It is Brazil's third largest city, after Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

Geographical names policy

Geographical names should be taken from official Brazilian sources, which will be written in Portuguese and according to Portuguese orthography. Brazilian toponyms may have their origins in

¹ ISO 639 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

² Brasília is a planned city, founded in 1960, to serve as a new national capital (replacing Rio de Janeiro).

³ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/brazil/>

Portuguese, African languages or one of Brazil's many Indigenous Amerindian languages. All hyphens and diacritical marks should be retained.

The [Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística](https://www.ibge.gov.br) (IBGE – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) is the national agency responsible for cartography and geographical names, and the primary source for geographical names information. IBGE contains a Geographical Names Department, however IBGE doesn't have the authority to resolve disputes over names or to enforce the use of a certain name. Names that have been analysed by the Geographical Names Department are therefore described as “validated”, rather than official.

IBGE resources for geographical names include:

- The IBGE maintains a geoportal available at:
<https://portaldemapas.ibge.gov.br/portal.php#homepage>
- In December 2024, the IBGE launched El Banco de Nombres Geográficos de Brasil (BNGB – the Brazilian Geographical Names Database):
<https://www.ibge.gov.br/geociencias/metodos-e-outros-documentos-de-referencia/vocabulario-e-glossarios/42080-banco-de-nomes-geograficos-do-brasil.html>
- In 2023 IBGE published a Manual for the Collection of Geographical Names (*Manual de Coleta de Nomes Geográficos*):
<https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv102007.pdf>

Some Brazilian populated places have short and long forms of their name, e.g. São Gabriel da Cachoeira (short form: São Gabriel). PCGN recommends the long name be used when specificity is required and the short name can be used when space is limited.

Language

Portuguese (por: português) is the official language of Brazil. Almost all the population speak Portuguese, and it is used for most purposes. It is written in Roman script, and the alphabet includes the 26 letters of the standard Roman alphabet. In addition, Portuguese employs 12 vowel-diacritic combinations (see below) and seven digraphs (*ch, lh, nh, rr, ss, qu* and *gu*).

Brazilian Portuguese differs in some ways (e.g. vocabulary and pronunciation) from the Portuguese spoken in Portugal. The difference is comparable to that between British and American English.

The definite article (English: the) commonly occurs in Brazilian place names. It has four forms in Portuguese: *o* (masculine singular), *a* (feminine singular), *os* (masculine plural), and *as* (feminine plural). The preposition *de* (English: of) also occurs in many place names, often in combination with the definite article, as follows:

de + o = do
de + a = da
de + os = dos
de + as = das

Over 180 Indigenous Amerindian languages are spoken, as are some immigrant languages, e.g. German. In some municipalities, minority languages are granted co-official status with Portuguese.

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings⁴):

Portuguese contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
À	00C0	à	00E0
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Ã	00C3	ã	00E3
Ç	00C7	ç	00E7
É	00C9	é	00E9
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA
Í	00CD	í	00ED
Ó	00D3	ó	00F3
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Õ	00D5	õ	00F5
Ú	00DA	ú	00FA

⁴ See www.unicode.org

Map of Brazil



Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

Administrative structure

At first-order administrative level (ADM1) Brazil is divided into 26 states (por: estado) and one federal district (por: distrito federal). These are further subdivided into municipalities (por: município). The states and federal district are grouped into five geographical regions (por: região).

Map showing the Regions and States of Brazil:

https://geoftp.ibge.gov.br/produtos_educacionais/mapas_tematicos/mapas_do_brasil/mapas_nacionais/politico/brasil_grandes_regioes.pdf

Administrative Structure of Brazil

ADM1	ISO 3166-2 Code	Administrative Centre	Location of Centre	Parent Region
Acre	BR-AC	Rio Branco	09°58'00" S 67°48'00" W	Norte (North)
Alagoas	BR-AL	Maceió	09°39'09" S 35°43'21" W	Nordeste (North-East)
Amapá	BR-AP	Macapá	00°02'07" N 51°03'42" W	Norte (North)
Amazonas	BR-AM	Manaus	03°06'48" S 60°01'31" W	Norte (North)
Bahia	BR-BA	Salvador	12°59'18" S 38°29'19" W	Nordeste (North-East)
Ceará	BR-CE	Fortaleza	03°44'15" S 38°32'46" W	Nordeste (North-East)
Distrito Federal	BR-DF	Brasília	15°47'47" S 47°53'36" W	Centro-Oeste (Central-West)
Espírito Santo	BR-ES	Vitória	20°19'56" S 40°20'42" W	Sudeste (South-East)
Goiás	BR-GO	Goiânia	16°42'04" S 49°16'00" W	Centro-Oeste (Central-West)
Maranhão	BR-MA	São Luís	02°31'57" S 44°17'47" W	Nordeste (North-East)
Mato Grosso	BR-MT	Cuiabá	15°35'46" S 56°05'49" W	Centro-Oeste (Central-West)
Mato Grosso do Sul	BR-MS	Campo Grande	20°27'00" S 54°37'00" W	Centro-Oeste (Central-West)
Minas Gerais	BR-MG	Belo Horizonte	19°54'06" S 43°57'51" W	Sudeste (South-East)
Pará	BR-PA	Belém	01°26'14" S 48°28'14" W	Norte (North)
Paraíba	BR-PB	João Pessoa	07°07'25" S 34°51'56" W	Nordeste (North-East)
Paraná	BR-PR	Curitiba	25°25'00" S 49°15'00" W	Sul (South)

ADM1	ISO 3166-2 Code	Administrative Centre	Location of Centre	Parent Region
Pernambuco	BR-PE	Recife	08°03'00" S 34°54'00" W	Nordeste (North-East)
Piauí	BR-PI	Teresina	05°06'10" S 42°48'06" W	Nordeste (North-East)
Rio de Janeiro	BR-RJ	Rio de Janeiro	22°52'30" S 43°16'39" W	Sudeste (South-East)
Rio Grande do Norte	BR-RN	Natal	05°47'42" S 35°12'40" W	Nordeste (North-East)
Rio Grande do Sul	BR-RS	Porto Alegre	30°02'00" S 51°12'00" W	Sul (South)
Rondônia	BR-RO	Porto Velho	08°46'00" S 63°54'00" W	Norte (North)
Roraima	BR-RR	Boa Vista	02°49'15" N 60°40'17" W	Norte (North)
Santa Catarina	BR-SC	Florianópolis	27°35'26" S 48°34'33" W	Sul (South)
São Paulo	BR-SP	São Paulo	23°34'24" S 46°38'30" W	Sudeste (South-East)
Sergipe	BR-SE	Aracajú	10°55'00" S 37°04'00" W	Nordeste (North-East)
Tocantins	BR-TO	Palmas	10°10'01" S 48°19'58" W	Norte (North)

Territorial disputes

Within Brazil there is a territorial dispute between the states of Piauí and Ceará over the Serra de Ibiapaba area.

Brazil has two boundary disputes with Uruguay. One is at a site called Arroio Invernada (spa: Arroyo de la Invernada) over a small section of boundary centred on 31°00'29"S, 55°56'52"W. The other is over a small river island (por: Ilha Brasileira; spa: Isla Brasilera) centred at 30°11'00"S, 57°37'37"W. The island sits at the confluence of the Uruguay River and the Quarai (Spa: Cuareim) River between the borders of Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina.

There is a dispute between Brazil and Bolivia over river islands within the Rio Mamoré, centred on 10°47'42"S, 65°21'35"W. The principal island in the dispute is Isla Suarez (Bolivia) or Ilha de Guajará-Mirim (Brazil).

Other Significant Locations

Portuguese Name	Conventional Name ⁵	Alternative Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Rio Amazonas ⁶	River Amazon	Spa: Río Amazonas	00°10'00"S 49°00'00"W	River
Mar do Caribe	Caribbean Sea	Spa: Mar Caribe	15°N 75°W	Sea
Oceano Atlântico	Atlantic Ocean	Spa: Océano Atlántico	10°N 25°W	Sea
O Pampa / Os Pampas	Pampas	Spa: La Pampa/Las Pampas	35°S 62°W	Grassland plain
O Pantanal	Pantanal		17°24'00"S 57°30'00"W	Tropical wetland
Planalto das Guianas / Escudo das Guianas	Guiana Shield	Fra: Plateau des Guyanes/ Bouclier guyanais; Ned: Hoogland van Guyana, Guianaschild; Spa: Escudo guayanés	05°08'36"S 60°45'45"W	Geological formation ⁷
Planalto Brasileiro / Planalto Central	Brazilian Highlands / Brazilian Plateau		18°S 47°W	Mountainous plateau
Pico da Neblina	Mist Peak	Spa: El Pico de la Neblina	00°48'01"N 60°00'33"W	Mountain ⁸
Rio Paraguai	Paraguay River	Spa: Río Paraguay Guarani ⁹ : Ysyry Paraguái	27°18'00"S 58°38'00"W	River
Rio Paraná		Spanish: Río Paraná Guarani: Ysyry Parana	34°00'05"S 58°23'37"W	River
Rio Uruguai	Uruguay River	Spa: Río Uruguay	34°12'00"S 58°18'00"W	River
Rio Tocantins			01°45'00"S 49°10'00"W	River

⁵ The conventional name is recommended for international features and features of shared or disputed sovereignty. It can also be included in brackets after the local name of a feature and used in English language texts.

⁶ The Amazon was initially known by Europeans as the Marañón, and the Peruvian part of the river is still known by that name.

⁷ The higher elevations of the shield are known as the Guiana Highlands.

⁸ Highest point in Brazil.

⁹ Guarani (grn/gug) is an Indigenous language. It is an official language of Paraguay and Bolivia.

Useful references

- Academia Brasileira de Letras: <https://www.academia.org.br/>
- BGN Geographic Names Standardization Policy: https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GNSSearch/GNSDocs/policies/Brazil_Country_Policy_webversion_Latest.pdf
- Banco de Nombres Geográficos de Brasil (BNGB): <https://www.ibge.gov.br/geociencias/metodos-e-outros-documentos-de-referencia/vocabulario-e-glossarios/42080-banco-de-nomes-geograficos-do-brasil.html>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/brazil/>
- Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa: <https://www.cplp.org/>
- Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com (for information on languages)
- Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE): <https://www.ibge.gov.br/>
- IBGE Map Portal: <https://portaldemapas.ibge.gov.br/portal.php#homepage>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui#home>
- Manual de Coleta de Nomes Geográficos: <https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv102007.pdf>
- Omniglot: www.omniglot.com (for information on languages and scripts)
- PCGN Country Names list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names>
- Unicode Consortium: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names Geographic Names Server: <https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GNSHome/index.html>

Compiled by PCGN
www.gov.uk/pcgn
March 2025