

Rio de Janeiro Marathon and Touring Trip Notes
July 14-22, 2010

I'm home from Rio and realizing that **home is where the vacation really is** now. Have I had "Enuf?" It's a tough call: While we might like to seek moderation it can be a fine line from too much to not enough. Already this year I've had 24 trips averaging out at being gone 17 days a month and likely that many more planned for the rest of 2010. Yet this trip was particularly special: it was not only for a marathon with the 50-staters but for a week's worth of touring, in honor of my 65th, and all with the hope that my legs continue to hold up.

Rio de Janeiro needs more than a panorama!



It's hard to imagine but from the top of Corcovado (Christ) Mountain, one pretty much needs a 360 degree picture in order to get the idea of Rio and the size. There is water everywhere. Bays and gorgeous deep white sandy beaches abound and are virtually everywhere. This picture from the web only represents part of Rio. I'll try to show you some of her beauty in some following pictures.

Big Shout-Outs to:

Steve and Paula Boone, the head-shed of the 50-states marathon club, for organizing this trip and staying calm in the face of some challenging times. It must have been like herding cats. Paula always is calm, always has a smile, and the two of them always act like newlyweds. I love it! I love them!

Maria Bartoletti who offered to pace me but didn't know it would take all day but she never wavered in her determination to get me to the finish line by 5:45. She would have too, had we not gotten lost and effectively did an ultra. We passed the half way mark at 2:45 as planned (its cooler in the first half). Only at the very last did she allow me to insist that she run forward to try to use her friendship with the race director to keep the finish line open past the 6-hour cut off. (Marie left Rio to Lake Placid for an Ironman followed by a 100-miler the next week!)



Here are the 50-staters on their World Tour and just before heading into a folklore show called Platforma. I'll tell you more about that later. I was honored to be with this select group of marathoners whose credentials include running hundreds of marathons and ultras – each!

Rio marathon

Gorgeous! Surely this marathon, that runs along the cliffs and in full view of the ocean for pretty much all of the course can't be any less than the famous Big Sur Marathon in California. It's truly an amazing view, full of surprises (and who ever thought there would be hills and long ones at that), and just everywhere were delicious, awesome and varied scenes. The headlines would include running besides the famous Ipanema Beach as well as Copacabana Beach, by the side of Sugar Loaf Mountain jutting straight out of the sea, and finishing in sight of Corcovado (Christ) Mountain.



It wasn't perfect and it sure gave me some extra challenges but it was all it was billed to be. Would I go again? Sorry – no. Am I glad I went? Yes – with the caveat that one could have quite a few trips in the U.S. that would be closer, easier, safer and hugely cheaper. The marathon website headlines “Run in the City the World has Chosen” presumably meaning the World Cup and Olympics. Good headline. The city surely will be safer by the time these events arrive.

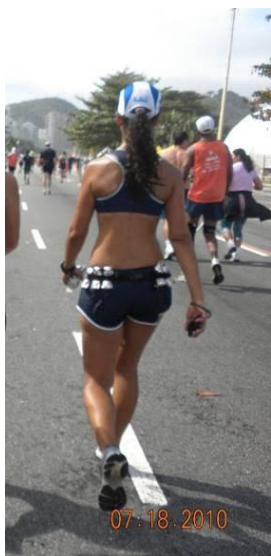
Ups and downs of the marathon include the gorgeous course, receiving a technical tank top in ING orange plus an orange cinch pack, cute little cups prefilled with water on the course and only needing to tear off the foil top, full bottles of Propel at two locations, but needing to go forever away via taxi or metro to the Expo where there is nothing else of interest, no official merchandise to purchase, a 6-hour cut off, no food on the course except weird gels which they ran out of even for 5-hour runners, and not restricting pedestrians, skate boarders, etc. from the course by Copacabana Beach resulting in some confusion about turn off and thus adding a mile or two extra for a few of us who failed to see the turn.

Me? As the medical director asked me, “Why don't you switch to the half marathon? Being out there for 6-hours is not healthy!” I'd probably dehydrated in part due to the heat and strong head winds and I'd failed to eat any of my usual foods due to nausea all which contributed to passing out at the finish line. Poor Marie, and then Steve and Paula, insisted on staying with me at the medical tent and we didn't get back to the hotel until after 4:30pm. My finish time was 6:11 and fortunately it was counted. I'd insisted to ultra-marathoner Marie that she go on ahead and try to get her race director friend (she'd been with him at the VIP dinner the night before) to hold the finish line open a bit longer and also to collect up the souvenirs he's promised for her little gal with cancer that she's been fund raising on behalf. She hadn't known I was feeling limp but she did get the finish line left open, collected an extra medal for me, and came back to get me. Here's Marie with Liberty Lady Diana.



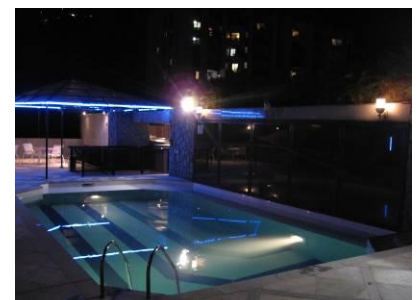
Stats: This was my 13th marathon of the year, my 62nd completed marathon (I'd thought it was my 70th start but with copping out of Casper, it was only 69th.) I was in a new age group but just barely. Not many 65 year olds running but 3 were ahead of me.

Thanks to Kevin Brosi for the running photos. Fortunately he recorded that I wasn't the only one running in costume.



Our hotel

The Merlin Copacabana Hotel on Avenue Princess Isabella about 3 blocks off Copacabana Beach and listed as a 4-star but it took me a while to appreciate it. The other group with Marathon Tours chose Ipanema Plaza but it was hugely more money and was not convenient to a metro station so I suppose our rougher/lesser hotel and area had some upsides. Merlin Hotel did have a lovely lobby, a reasonably big breakfast, all marble, dark woods, a walk in glass shower, a bidet, a refrigerator and the price was right. Oddly coffee pots are never available but I'd brought a submersion heater and mug so I survived the morning pre-breakfast. The rooftop pool had a great view especially at night.





My room, out my 6th floor room window at what I thought was slums but turned out to be okay other than the gunfire a couple of evenings, the hotel lobby, and statuary guarding the hotel's entry door

Are all the locals a bit cocky and aloof?

We had a different hotel booked earlier in the game and I had been sorry to read about the poor reception and service. Then the Merlin had the same type of negative reviews about the lack of customer service and attention. I finally decided that it is just the way of the locals and recognized that those I came across were fine once they warmed up. Of four tour guides I felt the same type of aloofness.

Rio has 6 to 10 million people -- depending on the source

With this many people one can start to feel rather claustrophobic quickly. I really like walking the streets and at night but this wasn't an option (see notes about safety below) so I decided to take a tour outside the city. I expected to see a calmer side of Brazil. I expected to see fewer slums. It wasn't quite what I expected but it was interesting. Buzios is on the Costa del Sol, about three hours drive from Rio, and probably made world-famous by Brigitte Bardot in the 60s when it was said to be the new St Tropez. It's somewhat like a small Bellagio and less developed. The day included a 2 ½ hour boat ride to see the beaches, samba lessons on the boat, a Brazilian BBQ (remember – that's huge amounts of grilled meats and not our typical southern BBQ), views of the mountains and cattle ranches on the way, and a walk through the quaint town.



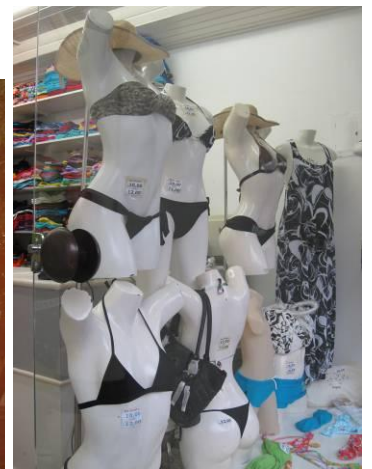
We saw cattle ranches along the way, among rolling hills, with free range white cattle. This is why their beef tastes different, plus that their cuts are different. There were many simple villages along the way as well as slums and only once into Buzios did we see some of the 150-200 nicer resorts and hotels. It rained the entire day excepting for the time on the boat which was super lucky.



Arts and craft offerings were colorful, oftentimes carved wood, and remindful that Carnival and the good life are important to Brazilians.



Simple restaurants, street cafes and elegant restaurants were intermixed as they were with tourists and locals together.



There were plenty of elegant shops too, and plenty of options for bikinis. See how they oftentimes displayed bikinis onto plastic hanging forms?



The towns, the lovely resorts built up the hillsides and the boats should have been the main attraction but after a few of their famous local lime/sugarcane/liquor drinks called caipirinha (see recipe below) then the entertainment became the drinking, samba dancing and partying, all in that order, by a bunch of Brazilians who are naturally uninhibited to begin with and really become so with a few caipirinha in them. I had been warned by Kathrine Switzer who spent time in Rio years back developing the women's running program and apparently never forgot caipirinhas, that they were powerful, so I stopped at two. I could have happily continued.



The captain and his assistant were real hunks and they freely passed the complimentary caipirinhas. I don't think this would work in the litigious U.S. – serving alcohol and diving off the boat. The gals were colorful and the boys like their Speedos. Later I found that they care-not how they look in them but fortunately my boat full of Brazilians (I was the only English speaker) were young and good looking and mostly fit. The tour guide gave samba lessons, videos were made and DVDs sold later.



An enjoyable time was had by all, the weather miraculously held, and a little dirty-dancing probably paid off for the boys a bit later in the tour.

Lovely and happy people!

They never failed to show that side of them and we were later told how important being happy is to a Brazilian. They seem very successful.



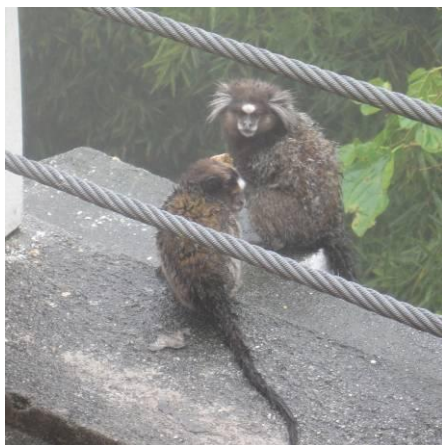


Here is our boat leaving dockside after the tour and when the rains returned, some of the rocky cliffs we saw from the water, and a unique restaurant called “The Aquarium” sitting exactly seaside. At the end of the day I had a bit of worry – we were let to walk and shop for a half hour with a time to be picked up on a street corner at the big town square. Twenty minutes later I was wondering what I’d do 3-hours away from Rio and all alone, when finally the tour guide showed up and very nonchalant about being late. This seemed so very Brazilian. They are comfortable and happy and with no hurry and no worry.

Onto the next day and another tour: Reluctantly, I felt it prudent to join a group and take another tour instead of doing my usual mileage of walking the city.



The Maracana Stadium, the largest in the world with a capacity for 200,000 spectators, was a sight many seemed to revere. It was the home of the first World Cup and home of soccer star Pele and I thought that some of our tour members were going to kiss the ground despite the heavy rainfall. From here we went to the San Sebastian Cathedral which I wondered had any significance being lumped together. I’ll save those pictures for my second tour there.



I had two very different and separate trips up Sugar Loaf Mountain. It takes 2 cable cars to get there, and it's a rock that juts out like a giant thumb between sea and beach giving an awesome view. My first trip was fogged in but I saw the little Sagui monkeys (a type of capuchin I think) in large numbers then. They are no larger than a hand, with the tail being about the same size as the monkey. They are the second smallest monkey in Brazil. Tourists were feeding them and they would hang from the arm like it was a tree branch and readily ate granola bars. Of course feeding was prohibited but people did it and the monkeys knew they would.



Facts about Sugarloaf Mountain: It consists of granite and quartz, it's known for memorable scene in 1979 James Bond movie, Moonraker, it's probably the most famous postcard of Rio de Janeiro, and it reaches nearly 400 meters tall. It is deceptive in that up on the top there are conference facilities, restaurants, gift shops and a forested area where I hiked about five levels of jungle. First there is a web aerial picture of Sugar Loaf and then some of my views from the top and mostly from my second trip up.



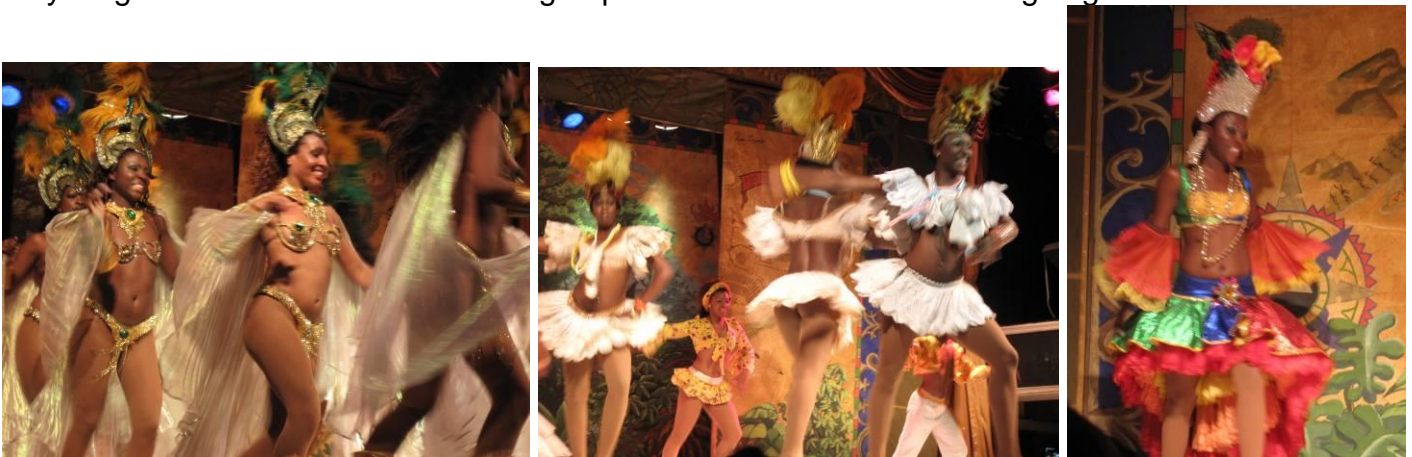
There are helicopter rides from three locations in Rio and Sugar Loaf Mountain is one of them. Little seen by hurried tourists, there are walkways with old stone steps and even cables (like Half Dome – smile!), and wow are there views if one walks around their pathways. We were fortunate to be there in the clear bright daylight and also at sunset. We could see across to Corcovado (Christ) Mountain.



Now we're off to Sunday night's folklore show called Platforma: The rhythm, the magic and the sensuality of a truly Brazilian show, or so the brochure says. It was a parade of luxurious costumes demonstrating the most important personalities of the history of Brazil. Brazil is a mixture of influences and much from the African culture – its dance, music, rhythm, religion and cuisine kept the African roots of the people during the time of slavery until today. It is this Samba d'Angola, along with percussion instruments, that turns into the samba of the Carnival that we know today.



The young soccer player kept us entertained and never dropped the ball for about 20 minutes while two nearly undressed Amazon women got their pictures made with everybody in the audience (and sold them later.) There were costumes, bare fannies but very few boobs (we later learned that Brazilian don't worship boobs but rather bums and despite street corner and frequent plastic surgery, they don't add to their tops), whip artists like the Cirque du Soleil might feature, and dancing for a very long time. Sometimes for too long. I presume this is where Las Vegas got their idea for follies.



Little did we know that the next day we would visit the scene of Carnival, the Carnival Museum, and be able to dress up in Carnival costume. Here are some of our stars at the main bandstands.



The beaches

Twice I walked all of Copacabana Beach of about 4 ½ km one way, and into Ipanema Beach once. I was trying to see a museum but instead found right at the end of Copacabana in a major tourist area a bunch of net menders, fishermen and a fish market. Just one of the surprises of walking the streets which I fortunately managed to do one evening in part before being warned but also during the day when it was said to be safe.



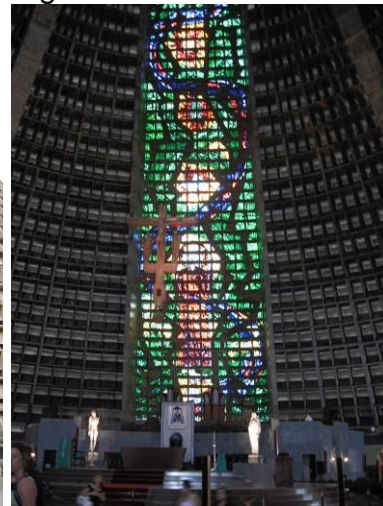
I suspect one can buy anything on the beach. Color abounds. Massage is available. Just as interesting is the comfort level of the Brazilians: it appears okay to wear bikinis and Speedos no matter what shape is the body. Sports is not only encouraged with all the walkways, work out stations, volleyball nets and 24-hour lit tennis courts, it seems to be working as there were rarely seen anyone with too much body weight. Tummies yes, but not fat. Apparently they like tummies.

I went into the famous Copacabana Plaza for coffee on my first day. It is truly magnificent and said to be copied after Nice's Negresso.



Churches in Rio are generally a surprise

The Brazilians have been creative with their churches and many were non-traditional. Cathedral San Sebastian was the more extreme. I had a trip there in the rain and then again in the clear sunshine. The old Cathedral is down in central town, and this one was opened in 1979, has a capacity of 20,000 people standing and 5,000 seated. It's 80 meters high and composed of window and door openings that keep it cooled which must be difficult since their summer temperatures reach 120 degrees with high humidity. Yes, their bell tower is separate! There are four panels of stain glass and they represent the diversity found in Brazil which really is worth commemorating.



The Cog Train to Corcovado



Monkey goes everywhere with Paula. Entertainment and dancing on the train. Our first views from the top down to Rio and the horse racing track. Church in the neighborhood. See Jason taking Diana's picture? Christ statue can be seen from most everywhere in Rio.



From Wikipedia: The peak and statue can be accessed via a narrow road or by the 3.8 kilometer (2.4 mi) Corcovado Rack Railway which was opened in 1884 and refurbished in 1980. The railway uses two-car electrically powered trains, with a passenger capacity of 360 passengers per hour. The rail trip takes approximately 20 minutes and departs every half hour. Due to its limited passenger capacity, the wait to board at the entry station can take several hours. From the train terminus and road, the observation deck at the foot of the statue is reached by 223 steps, or by elevators and escalators. Among the most popular year-round tourist attractions in Rio, the Corcovado railway, access roads, and statue platform are commonly crowded. The most popular attraction of Corcovado Mountain is the statue and viewing platform at its peak, drawing over 300,000 visitors per year. From the peak's platform the panoramic view includes downtown Rio, Sugarloaf Mountain, the Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas (lake), Copacabana and Ipanema beaches, Maracanã Stadium, and several of Rio's favelas (slums). Cloud cover is common in Rio and the view from the platform is often obscured. Notable past visitors to the mountain peak include Pope Pius XII, Pope John Paul II, Alberto Santos-Dumont, German Suevo Vasquez, Albert Einstein, and Diana, Princess of Wales. An additional attraction of the mountain is rock climbing. The south face had 54 climbing routes as of 1992.



Jeep Tour to and through Tijuca Forest



Under and around the Corcovado Mountain is the world's largest urban jungle and we spent a half day touring with a botanist and taking a short hike. A stop at a couple waterfalls, a few great overviews, and an old estate was probably worthwhile but a bit of a headline type of thing to do.

Downtown central and the old European buildings

Rio is a rather young city and has had all of Spanish, French and Portuguese influence. I was interested to see the remains of that European heritage even though I'd learned that a lot of the buildings had been torn down. I also wanted to learn the history and our tour guide didn't fail. This is a downtown that I'd like to have walked in extensively and investigated the back streets but many examples of safety problems reminded me that a guide was the best idea. For instance, the day before our tour there had been demonstrations on the city square that had turned violent and many injuries occurred. There are so many people crowding about that it would have been dangerous to be among them during any uprising. (Oh, by the way, there was a demonstration on the marathon course too.)



That these buildings are all within the same vicinity is the surprise. That they coexist is odd. There you find old European/Parisian style buildings, the Municipal Theatre copied after Paris's Opera House, the Monastery from the 1700s when nothing else was here but a mountain sitting near the harbor, then all these mixed up modern sky rises sitting around a major Grand Place. The last picture above is one of the oldest streets in Rio where fashion used to be tops with merchants living upstairs. It still has primarily retail shops. Note the new modern skyscraper as a backdrop to an old adobe style building. We toured the original palace now used as a museum.



Café Colombo

I love European and especially Parisian Brasseries. They are full of character, richness, food for the masses, and always a lot of history in elegant and classy buildings. This is Rio's oldest restaurant at almost 200 years old. The stained glass ceiling seems to be a copy of Boffinger in Paris.



I don't know that others in our small tour group (the remainder preferred shopping or laying on the beach!) appreciated Café Colombo as I did -- but they did like the food treats, pictured here.



This last picture of the Café is from the web.

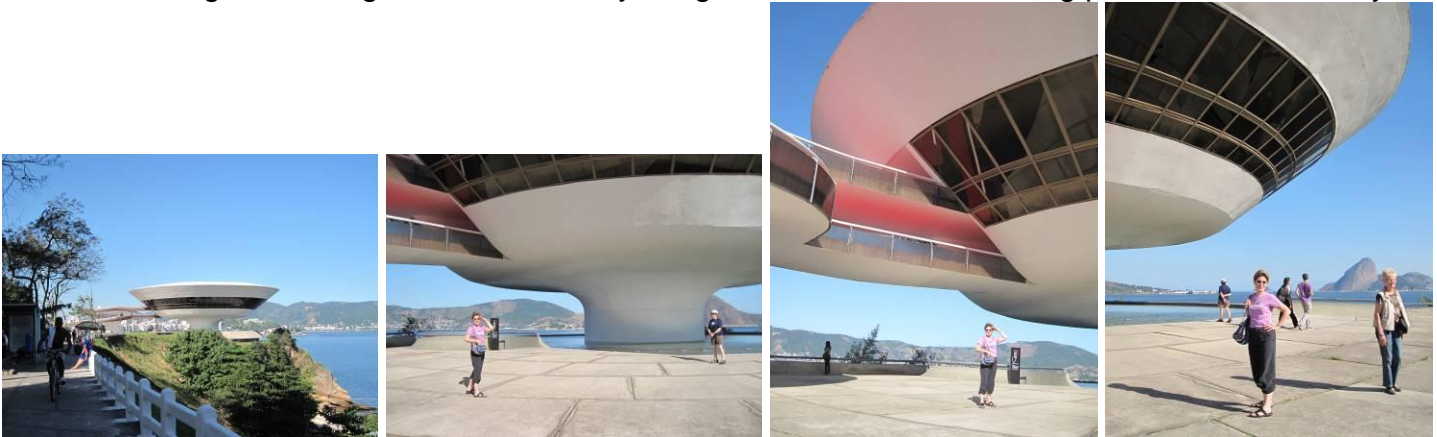
Food, health, extravagance

Remembering that the Brazilians were basically found to have full bodied figures, they weren't fat. And how they do that with Brazilian BBQs I can't imagine as the meat selections just keep coming and might have numbered ten different choices. Or how they have gotten used to all those weird foods that gave me a bit of Montezuma's Revenge from Day One I can't guess. I had a small concern about the mosquitoes that always find me first (since they carry Dengue Fever in Brazil) but it was the food that caught me as much as the bug bites in the forest.





From the historical central downtown tour we were taken to the old historic city called Niteroi located across the 14 kilometer bridge or a short ferry ride away. There real estate can be found for about half the cost of that in Rio and the locals claim they have the best view of Rio. Beaches are lovely, clean and faced with new terraced apartments. Particularly special was seeing the contemporary museum sitting on the water, designed by one of the early architects of modern design in the Americas. Sitting next door to an ancient monastery reachable only by bridge, it was worth the long and traffic congested bridge to see it. Funny thing – a submarine was being pulled across the bay!



The monastery looking towards the longest concrete bridge in the southern hemisphere and the 6th longest in the world, and some of Niteroi's famous beaches. Below is a picture of the amazing bridge from the web.



Economy?

The new democracy and years of Lula's rule (and maybe his protégé Rousseff coming up) seem to have been good for Brazil. They got the World Cup and the Olympics so they must have some bigger plans yet. They will need to clean up the favelas – self built slums – that sit on many hillsides. It sounds like they have made good progress towards arranging new housing and even promising those who build in the favelas with stone and concrete that the government will bring in electricity and water.



The infrastructure needs some help in that traffic can be a major parking lot and a 35-minute trip to the airport can readily turn into 1 ½ hours compounded by there being no public transportation from the airport and a taxi ride is \$50-\$60 to start with. All their recent landslides suggest that infrastructure needs addressed there too. The landslides were apparent in many areas and not just in the slums.

They offer everyone medical care, referred to as social security, but our tour guides told us that if you don't want to stand in lines and wait far too long, one needs to purchase private medical insurance. They are paying single mothers to put and keep children in school and this helps keep their rate of education reasonably good at an average 8 years of schooling now, up from 6 years in 1995. The number of people living in poverty has fallen to about 30% under Lula. I don't know how the rich see it, but the statistics on the standard of equality is closing somewhat in Brazil whereas it's going the other way in the U.S.

Amusingly, it's said that Brazil holds three negative world records: highest interest rates, heaviest tax burden of any emerging country, and one of the lowest rates of public investment, said to stem from an obese government. Airports are pretty much 3rd world and everyone agrees they are clogged, the shipyards create a queuing line, and the lack of decent roads and railways adds to the costs of business. Pensions are out of control and cost a disproportionate amount of GDP and growing fast. Is it fortunate that oil and gas companies are moving in? We saw oil rigs next to the 14-kilometer bridge to Niteroi.

And depending on your political views you might or might not like this but Brazil was said to be the first country to outlaw the wearing of a Burqa. I can't find confirmation but it was told by a tour guide and I never saw veiling or a Burqa. I did see many nationalities and many colors living together and apparently harmoniously.

Safety in Rio – NOT!

Not only did I NOT feel safe but my hotel continually spooked me and practically dared me to walk at night. The DK Eyewitness Series Top 10 Tour book has probably never featured a city with so many warnings about safety. Kind citizens in the metro warned us about being out alone. Volunteers at the Expo equally gave warning. I checked on statistics and this concern appears to be justified: *Crime in Brazil involves an elevated incidence of violent and non-violent crimes. According to most sources, Brazil possesses high rates of violent crimes, such as murders and robberies; the homicide rate has been steadily declining, but it is still above 20.0 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, placing the country in the top 20 countries by intentional homicide rate. The Swiss-based NGO Small Arms Survey says that, in light of recent improvements, Brazil is no longer one of the most violent places on Earth. Kidnappings occur, but increased police know-how has somewhat alleviated the problem.*

For those that don't know my history -- I've lived in foreign countries to include the Far East when there was not a single alphabet sign and lived in Vietnam during the last years of the war. I used to travel into and through Chile and Ecuador and at times my company would have a guard meet and stay with me in Guayaquil but I'd sneak out and go running anyway. All of which is to suggest that I don't think I'm generally or easily spooked but I chose to NOT go out alone after hearing a lot of stories. One person on our tour knew someone who witnessed an armed robbery of tourists exiting the airport where the robbers simply took everything. The hotel insisted on covering my costs of two tours (\$165 US) instead of letting me walk the 1 ½ blocks to the ATM. The local 5-story shopping center had blocks of taxi line-ups because people come and go in a taxi for safety instead of walking.

On our last day touring in central city we learned that the day prior had been demonstrations that ended in fighting and injury to many. There were demonstrations ongoing while we were there too, as well as on our marathon course.

Clearly this reputation, whether fair or not, causes surprise that the Olympic Committee chose Rio but they do have time to rectify the situation. With an unemployment rate currently at 35% it will be a bigger challenge to overcome.

I mentioned an ATM eating up a cash card? Here's a follow up from one of our group: As most of you know I had some difficulty using the ATM near the hotel in Copacabana. I was successful once at the HSBC bank ATM, however my debit card and pin were somehow compromised at that machine. Long story short, I cancelled my debit card this morning and will file paperwork disputing nine ATM withdrawals in excess of \$2,500.00 US from ATMs in Rio (TECBAN BRAZIL).

And now a goodnight to Rio and her lovely and extensive water!



Picture found on www.marathontours.com



Itinerary with miscellaneous daily notes

Wed Jul 14

3:05pm Depart Newark via CO#107
5:53pm Arrive Houston for plane change
8:00pm Depart Houston via CO#129

Email to Tom on board plane:

Big pillows covered in linen and large navy down comforters.

Marie is crazy. Fun crazy. Forgot her running shoes. No joke. Man hunting and wanted to take me back to bar to see a hottie. She will laugh to find that he is sitting in front of me. He does look good. I got four dinner choices on board and one is osso buco. Or sea bass with lobster. Then there is a full breakfast.

All will be needed in this 10-12 hour flight. Thx for encouraging me into first class.

Thu Jul 15

8:10am Arrive Rio de Janeiro

Met by private car. Had fellow 50-staters Art and Marie with me who hitched a ride. It took a very long time to get through passport control and customs and then even longer to arrange with the car, I don't know what, since the driver spoke no English. He just had to make calls and once he put me on and I thought it was all settled but more calls erupted. I believe he needed an absent voucher. The driving time was a surprisingly long 1 ¼ to 1 ½ hours I think because of all the traffic but Rio is very stretched out too.

Air travel was fine but I didn't sleep despite having first class accommodations and having practically subjected myself to alcohol poisoning in order to sleep. My legs wouldn't quit jumping. Why do they do that? I couldn't sleep. Somewhere between 2:30 and 6:30am I slept some but didn't even want breakfast when it was delivered at 6:30am. How often does that happen?

Marie and Art came to my hotel, closer by than their luxury Ipanema Plaza Hotel and close to a metro stop. They parked their luggage in my room which was surprisingly ready despite it being around 10:30am.

It is true: the itinerary gave us a number of someone local as a tour guide "in case you forget your sneakers" and guess who forgot their sneakers? Marie! But if she goes with me, she can wear her regular walking shoes just fine. As she says, if it keeps raining, she'll be running in wet shoes since that's all she has.

We took the easy, clean and cheap (2.80 real x2 or \$3.30 RT) metro about ten stations north to the Expo and looked around the nothing area and wondered where the heck it was. Fortunately some very nice metro rider had told us it was a blue glass building and all you need do is walk around to the backside to see that it's also a convention center.

The expo was nothing. They did give a nice soft cinch pack in ING orange and an ING orange tech tank top. There was nothing in official merchandise either so I ended up with an Asics marathon t-shirt. I mean nothing – something the marathon committee gave up this year. Marie contemplated an Asics marathon shirt and after about an hour she decided against it. That is, until we were out and pretty much gone and she had declared that she wouldn't shop at all but I lured her into it, but oh, wait, I think I need to go back to get that shirt after all. After chastising and berating her, she had Art flip a coin. Heads versus tails said she didn't get a shirt. True story. You can't make this up. She's as good a shopper as I am – only I recognize it and just don't try. She's cute.

After Art and Marie took off, Marie walking with her suitcase to the next beach and Art taking a taxi, I freshened up, thought better of taking the desired nap, and set off to walk the Copacabana beach up to Ipanema and then back through the very busy and bustling streets that oftentimes reminded me of Taipei and oftentimes reminded me that I might not be where I should be. There are more warnings against walking alone and at night than I can remember in any other tour book.

I took dinner in a small corner café that seemed to be left over from the European days. There is a big European influence from Spanish and French but much of it was torn down. The waiters at each place I walked into struck me as being trained like the European waiters. To add to it, they are oftentimes lovely to look at too if you like the dark eyes, tall, dark skin, etc. look. It is noteworthy that my glass of wine was more than the bottle of wine I purchased in the grocery store. I'll inquire if there's some added taxes because beers and some mixed drinks were much less money. My salmon was excellent, with a caper sauce, and the common side dish of rice mixed with apple rice. Pumpkin in rice is common too. It was at "Aronazem Carioca" that I ate, just off Avenida Princesa Isabel and a couple blocks in from Copacabana Beach where I'd walked until I thought I'd drop. There was not a word of English anywhere in this restaurant.

The hotel is just okay. They claim it's a 4-star but I think a 2-3-star is more believable. It's clean and neat but in a very busy location. I was jealous that www.marathontours.com were put up at the luxurious Ipanema Plaza Hotel, yet they don't have a metro either so that's a trade off. Later I learned that it was a whole lot more money.

So far residents have been uniquely friendly. Asking if they could help. Offering advice. Lovely to look at. Some of the girls are wearing these bold prints with shine spandex pants that are tighter and more revealing than anything we've ever seen. But nobody seemed to speak English in the supermarket where I swear there is no such thing as bottled or refrigerated milk so I ended up with the old European boxed milk. Or I hope that's what it is. I could have had coconut milk or any variety of chocolate milks, but no regular American type milk. And no tissues: There is toilet tissue and table napkins and sanitary napkins, yes, but zero Kleenex type tissues. Not in the grocery store or in the hotel. (Same with washcloths – they don't exist but that I can get. I can't understand the no tissues. Now before you laugh at this American, please remember that I've grocery shopped in many countries and lived in a couple too.)

I wanted to use my phone card to call home. A call from the hotel costs 5 real or about \$3. The phone booths are plastered with pictures of pursed-lip honeys who offer whatever you want and some show a lot. On some street corners the Las Vegas type sales pitch goes as far as handing out cards.

There is a full day Costa del Sol trip I want to take but with the weather prediction continuing with rain tomorrow, it is iffy. I'm on a list. Other tours I have include the Platforma Samba show, an open jeep tour to the Tijuca Rainforest, a city tour and a City and Corcovado (Christ) Mountain tour.

There's a very nice couple here at the same hotel – David Ingram and Debra Laugherty. They've offered and have sort of looked out for me. We shared info on how to get to the Expo.

Later: I'm really pleased that the tour is going tomorrow whereas earlier they didn't expect the rain would let up enough. It's an all day 10-12 hour tour to Costa del Sol leaving at 9:15am. It only runs on Monday and Friday.

Brochure reads: The huge salinas along the road to Sao Pedro de Aldeia, canals and beaches. Buzios and the beauty of Costa del Sol include a boat ride and lunch.

Hotel Merlin Copacabana - www.hotelmerlin.com.br/
Av Princesa Isabel 392, Rio de Janeiro Brazil Tel: 011 55 21 21321000

Fri Jul 16

Big lush breakfast in hotel is included.

Email #1: Off to breakfast then 9:15am tour. You asked who Art is. Met Art in line at customs and he's on 50-states tour so Marie and I friended him. He'd been to Rio before, has done marathons on 7 continents and was an okay traveling companion for the few hours. He's 68 and lives in DC area.

Those at Ipanema Plaza hotel suggested they might rather be at Merlin Hotel since we're at a metro line which hasn't gotten as far out as Ipanema yet. I was rough on the hotel. It's better than I said. More later.

10:30am Lobby rendezvous for first group going to Race Expo at Centre de Convencoes Sulamerica, Avenida Paulo de-Frontin (expo from 9am to 6pm). Expo is easily accessible by Rio's Metro system which is safe and inexpensive.

Met group, some for 2nd time, in lobby while I was waiting for a very late tour.

Email to Tom pre tour: More foreign you asked? Probably not more so than Taipei or China but certainly severely crowded, congested and in some places like we remember in the Far East. Like Vietnam in areas. I think it will be nice to get out of town today. I let my local runners (David Ingram and Debra) know that I'm leaving because I might not make it back in time for dinner. There is another 50-state couple that I told where I'm going too and we had breakfast together this morning.

Big nice breakfast.

Email to Tom from tour since iPhone picks up free WiFi: More time than expected. Driver and tour guide always late. It's the South American way? Or any of the Hispanic speaking countries maybe? Mañana.

Town might remind you of Bellagio but not so rich. Very decent weather until lunch which didn't happen until 3:45. Then heavy rain. We were lucky with the mostly open boat ride. Lunch? Brazilian meats over fire plus buffet with lots of new things to try. They swear one food item doesn't even have an English translation and is only here. Like a big potato.

Follow up email from same rest stop with internet -- on return trip (in the rain) to Rio: Nice day. Interesting coastal town but best was water tour with free booze and Brazilians are uninhibited as it is.

Only minute. Just checking emails. Not back to Rio until maybe 9-10pm. Please don't worry if I don't call. But I will if you aren't on my email.

Report on the tour: The day started rather late. The tour was due to leave at 9:15am but after many calls and worry by the hotel staff, the mini-van arrived at 10:10am and chit chatted until we left at 10:20am. So very South American. The rest of the day continued in the same vein and I should have expected it but no one meeting me at the 5pm scheduled time in a strange city 3 hours from Rio gave me pause. And wet as it was pouring rain by then.

With a reminder that I expected English touring and an agreement, I was put into one of two vans. Then moved to a different one. Who knows why. But this second van was in Portuguese only so out of town they pulled over and moved me back to the original van where I was the only English speaker which was one of 3 languages so needless to say I had to make do.

Such a huge city is Rio and with so many bays and waterways and maybe the longest bridge in the world. We took Highway 101 out of the city, past and through the ancient city of Niteroi where I was sorry to miss the modern architecture wonder that was designed by the famous architect who did the first in the Americas. We went through a number of smallish villages, pottery specialists, orange groves, and finally into the reason for the trip, Razos and Buzios of the Costa del Sol famous beaches.

Like a little Bellagio but not as wealthy, this is a lovely area made famous by Brigitte Bardot finding it probably in the 60s. It's full of pricey designer shops, flip flop specialists, restaurants and perfect little tree lined streets with large cobblestones. For me the special part was that the weather held and the boat trip came off and we spent two hours touring the little coves and seeing the 200 hotels from the water. Better yet came the free Brazilian drinks called Caiparina I think. I'd heard about them from Kathrine Switzer and I know they are a lot of lime, sugar and some kind of high alcohol content from sugar cane and 2 of them were nearly lethal but they sure tasted good. Even better yet was that all these Brazilians in a semi-state of undress (bikinis and Speedos) and apparently always uninhibited anyway had even more than two Caiparinas and they danced, dove off the boat for swims, made out and hooted the whole way – and even in the van on the way home.

Lunch didn't happen until 3:45pm (is this normal?) and would have soaked up some of the booze as it was huge amounts of grilled meats and all sorts of unidentified items of which I tried and liked all.

Our 5pm departure turned into 5:20 and we weren't back to Rio until very late. I wasn't to my hotel until after 9pm at which time I booked another tour for 8:10am tomorrow (Saturday) morning so off to bed I go as quickly as I can manage.

I backed out of going to the payphone to telephone when the hotel wouldn't even let me walk out the 1 ½ blocks on a well lit and main street to get to the ATM to pay them for today's and tomorrow's tour. It's not like I can't afford the hotel phone but it does seem to be an unreasonable fee when email is free and we've gone back and forth.

The drink

- **Caipirinha** (Portuguese pronunciation: [kajpi' rĩɲe]) is Brazil's national cocktail, made with cachaça (pronounced [ka'ʃasɐ]), sugar and lime^[1]. Cachaça is Brazil's most common distilled alcoholic beverage. While both rum and cachaça are made from sugarcane-derived products,

most rum is made from molasses. Specifically with cachaça, the alcohol results from the fermentation of sugarcane juice that is afterwards distilled.

Popularity

The caipirinha is a national cocktail of Brazil,^[3] and is enjoyed in restaurants, bars, and many households throughout the country. Once almost unknown outside Brazil, the drink has become more popular and more widely available in recent years, in large part due to the rising availability of first-rate brands of cachaça outside Brazil.^[4] The International Bartenders Association has designated it as one of their Official Cocktails^[5].

Name

The word "caipirinha" is the diminutive version of the word "caipira", which refers to someone from the countryside, being an almost exact equivalent of the American English hillbilly. The word may be used as either a masculine or a feminine noun, but when referring to this drink it is only feminine (usage of diminutives is common in Brazil). However, a Brazilian hardly ever thinks of a "country person" when ordering a "Caipirinha". In the mind of a Brazilian, the word "Caipirinha" is mostly associated with the drink itself.

Sat Jul 17 – Day 1 of tour

8:10am 50-staters arrive Rio de Janeiro - nestled between the mountains and the sea. The very sound of its name evokes images of sun, fun and rhythm of the sensuous samba. Few places on earth can match the hospitality, natural charm, beauty and excitement of this city. That's why many Brazilians call Rio the "Cidade Maravilhosa" - the marvelous city.

Today's tour was better organized and basically left on time, though the 8:10am pick up required picking up 20 more tourists from various hotels so we were on our way by 9:20am. The hotel pick up tour turned out to be interesting anyway and fortunately it didn't count for the tour time.

The soccer stadium is a bit lost on me but seems to be a big deal to the Brazilians having hosted the first World Cup. Pele, statuary and the stadium itself was a big hit despite the pouring rain. As was the cathedral which is absolutely indescribable and pictures will be required. Somebody was on drugs yet it brought about an interesting and dramatically huge building.

The city center is so very European but apparently rough when it's not business hours. Or the hilltop of St Teresa which is said to be like a Parisian Montmartre is off limits except on Sunday mornings when there is a market and many people. It's famous also for the tiled stairway. We saw the world's longest bridge or whatever again and it bears looking up but is believable. The bleachers and area where Carnival starts from is right next to the prostitution and really tough but quaint looking section, all in the north. Lots more but I'm tired and have to get up at 4am so it will have to wait but we ended at Sugar Loaf Mountain and the cable car which seemed a waste but as we entered the first level it started clearing and I eventually got cleared enough skies to take a video which surprisingly went out via email due to a free WiFi that just popped up. The little monkeys on Sugar Loaf are a subject of themselves so more there too.

Luckily the 50-state organizers had the right idea for dinner and our 5pm meeting location brought about most of the group and we walked (almost hand in hand) to the shopping center where there is a huge food court. A buffet was ideal and we were able to eat in the same area at adjoining tables. Better yet some smart runner figured out how to get us a little bus to take us direct to the start line at

6am whereas we were going to have to taxi to the finish line and board a bus to the start line at 5am. We are expecting rain and we are not expecting to have any coverage so I have a throw away hooded rain poncho in addition to my garbage bag and space blanket. While that seems like overkill, there's nothing worse than shivering for an hour or more at the start line.

Wine is in order since I'm probably too keyed up to sleep. I came back from the tour very tired and found a luxury hotel and had some quite pricey coffee and desert and then couldn't utilize my one hour back in the room for a nap but I did lay still and that's what I'm off to do at 8pm now.

Update on the crime rate: Somebody's ATM card got snatched but by a bank. I was unable to get cash at three ATMs despite one of them working on Thursday but at least I got my card back. Another person told of either they or a friend watching (I didn't catch it all) an armed robbery of tourists coming out of the terminal. Big guns and all. This is quite the place and between the wildly expensive visa and the crime rate, they are going to have to get this fixed before World Cup or Olympics I'd think. Oh, there are taxi cabs galore: Looks like everybody going to the local shopping center takes a cab in and out. Strange goings-on. You'd think they'd have the military on the streets it sounds so bad. Maybe it isn't so bad but they are trying to scare us so we do stay safe? Frankly I don't feel safe. To compound it, I can't remember Eyewitness Top 10 books having any warnings let alone so many reminders to NOT walk alone or never to go at night etc. as Rio has.

So far, my opinion is that I would not come again.

Sun Jul 18 – Day 2 - Race Day.

Breakfast had been sort of negotiated as being available. 5:45am for breakfast and 6am for the bus so one can assume those who are taking in breakfast will be late to the bus and we'll all sit there and wish we'd had that time to sleep.

Email to Tom later day Sunday after the marathon: Sorry if I worried you. I am JUST in and it's very late. You had reason to worry but I am totally fine now. Marie and I got lost, with some other folks, due to lack of signage. We laughed that we did an ultra by the time a skateboarder told us we'd missed a turn.

I wasn't ready for a marathon. I hadn't run for a long while and even the last marathon I walked 9/10 of it at least. I was feeling a bit nauseous (sp?) after about 30k but kept going -- and going. That's when we got lost. Got back on course and finished at 6:11 approximately but I went white at the finish line and knew I was going out so laid down. I got carried to the Medic tent. Medics kept me cool and dumping fluid and taking blood pressure and 3 friends insisted on staying with me. I was just overdone and probably under fed and not hydrated and rather uncomfortable but after maybe 40 minutes I was fine. Odd sensation that I couldn't get words out of my throat.

We all walked back to the hotel 4 km so that's proof I am fine. I'm now off to the shower, a nap and then 7:30pm to the big hoopla samba dinner.

Tour bus etiquette here might be worse than I can remember. The tour guide had to go get some shoppers. More than once.

5:00am Buses begin to leave

7:30am Marathon - need to take a cab to the finish line to get on the bus to the start line. One should not go alone because it is too early and there are very few people around - cabbies may take advantage.

Rio Marathon: Start at Recreio dos Bandeirantes - 42K run to finish at Aterro do Flamengo - 6 hour

limit but timed to 6:16 in '09.

The rest of the day is at your leisure. Those not participating in the races will have the entire day at their leisure.

7:30pm to 12:30am - optional evening outing: Platforma/Samba Show with dinner at \$128. Rio's most famous show with samba and mulata dancers in Carnival costumes. Hotel transport, Churrasco buffet dinner (drinks extra), show entrance, local guide.

Mon Jul 19 – Day 3

9:00am Open Jeep Tour to the Tijuca Rainforest with a 1 hour hike at \$58 includes hotel pick up and guide to 1pm – well, this tour didn't happen. Later in the day we learned that Monday's Jeep Tour had been booked for Tuesday morning – on top of another tour.

Email to Tom: The jeep tour didn't show up and calls to companies who do them revealed no booking. This is soooooooooo Rio. We are going to try to get it for tomorrow afternoon since it's too late to re-book now as we have a 2pm tour. So I'm probably off with the group to walk the beach and shopping area unless I think of something else. I'd like to go into Central but I'd need others to be with me and there didn't seem to be interest. If our tour guide this afternoon doesn't take us, I am going to see about a private walking tour for Wednesday morning.

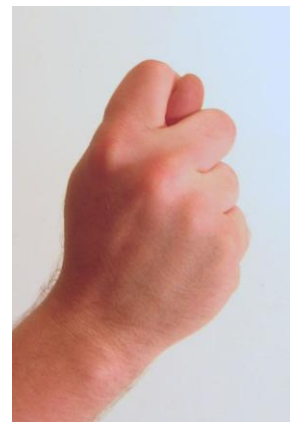
Later – I walked all of Copacabana shopping district, some indoor malls that were rather European, and then to the Brazilian museum that's stuck out into the ocean but was closed, then back via the boardwalk. Long walk and it felt good and while I'd gone off on my own since no one could decide, I guess they either didn't want to go with me or they liked my idea later because I ended up seeing most of them on the seaside anyway.

I ended up in the same very nice hotel restaurant that was calm, quiet and classy and ate their 52 r. buffet, then add 9 for coffee. Couldn't have been better and ended up costing 61 at 1.70 = \$36.

In the evening no one could quite decide where to dine and I decided that a big meal at lunch was sufficient and I'd eat my groceries stashed in the room which are more than sufficient. Maybe I can catch up on sleep which I'd sure have liked to do this morning. Or get over the coughing.

I have asked for a historical tour on Wednesday and will learn at tomorrow's tour if it's possible. I had intended to ask for a private tour but maybe Steve/Paula had the same idea, I don't know, but they are working on one and I can only hope it's a historical tour and not the soccer stadium or some such junk.

On my walk this morning I found a nice jewelry shop. Yes, there are lots of street vendors but do I need anything? Do I remember the trash from Rome? Like bargain leather gloves that the dye wears off on your hand? I found a clasping hand that's said to be Brazilian. Marie had gotten me a charm of Sugar Loaf Mountain in honor of my 65th. I am a wee bit embarrassed as it was me who should have been buying her a memento in thanks for pacing me and for watching out for me after my finish line crash. Two charms will be fine – one for touring and the other for friendship. Explanation of my charm of today: Fig sign is a gesture made with the hand and fingers curled and the thumb thrust between the middle and index fingers, or, rarely, the middle and ring fingers, forming the fist so that the thumb partly pokes out. In some areas of the world, the gesture is considered a good luck charm; in others (including France, Greece, and Turkey among others) it is considered an obscene gesture. The precise origin of the gesture is unknown, but many historians speculate that it refers to female genitalia. In ancient Greece, this gesture was a fertility and good luck charm designed to ward off evil. This usage has



survived in Portugal and Brazil, where carved images of hands in this gesture are used in good luck talismans.

I was back from my big lunch and luscious coffee in time for the tour that went from 2:00pm to 6:00pm. Billed as a half-day tour of the city, it featured the main points of interest and an excursion to the summit of Sugar Loaf Mountain for a panoramic view of the city, beaches and Guanabara Bay. The big fun was dressing in Carnival costumes at the Carnival center where I'd been before in the pouring rain.

Email to Tom: Oops, thought I'd sent a short message last night. It was a big deal meal Sunday evening. Served huge amounts and types of meats (not buffet). Refused to let us have regular water saying that was not how they do it in Rio so some ordered coconut water.

Then moved into huge room for carnival/folklore type show that was like a Cirque du Soleil with Brazilian culture twist. Some good performers. Many elaborate carnival type costumes too huge to imagine. Lots of bottoms wiggled and shown but apparently that's the sexy stuff -- not boobs which there are few. Also the belly dancers' type of slightly loose and round middle is the norm.

Wait until you see some of the pictures of Speedos on the beach. Forget those videos you saw of Brazilian (or was it Australian?) female volleyball or soccer players. Never saw anybody who looked so good and I walked the beaches all morning.

Just back from treating myself to an elegant first class buffet and good coffee and leave (hopefully) on tour at 2pm.



Later: The afternoon tour ended with us on Sugar Loaf Mountain at sunset which was gorgeous and so different from my first trip up there in the morning fog but which cleared on the way down. There were lines, like a mile long, of people waiting to take the cable car up in order to see the sunset presumably.

This time I walked down the mountain a few layers. There are cables that are nearly a 'Half Dome' experience but short and probably 30-35% grade. Lovely old stone steps. We didn't have time for me to see what was at the end but the guide told me it didn't go all the way down to the bottom. It was lush forested gardens and heavy of bamboo.

Later yet: Sunday night we experienced a few major sound effects and some hoped it was fireworks. The military men in our group knew exactly what it was. Three times and it was 36s (big guns?) One said you could see out our window where it came from. Ugh.

Tue Jul 20 – Day 4

My mini update to Tom: Our 8am tour became 9am which would have been good had I not already been up and at breakfast when I figured that out. Maybe it was said yesterday but the paper work said 8am so I got up. The current really unfortunate thing is that we have no afternoon jeep tour and a refund is in order. Of course not one of us wants a refund -- we want a jeep tour through the jungle. Largest urban jungle in the world.

I'm fearful we will end up doing nothing but hanging around again. It's also a historical tour I want, have asked for through our tour guide, but have no answer yet. I've got to figure out how to

maneuver this and not antagonize the group. Hindsight shows that I should have just booked my own tours.

All else is well other than living in the bathroom but what's new, this is South America after all. Remember my experiences eating any and everything in Chile?

Further email to Tom: When I first read this I'd thought that I sure needed your chicken recipe and a good meal but tonight we stopped at a local Brazilian BBQ (which isn't our BBQ but rather loads of meat) and it was absolutely amazing all the meats they brought to the table. I took a dozen pictures at least. Cost was 39 r. so less than my luncheon buffet. (They get you for the drinks and deserts which I didn't have.)

The jungle trip was like you'd imagine. Big open jeep for 10 (we had two of them) through the world's largest urban forest with loads of trees, plants, birds and animals that are only here. We saw many weird little monkey/sloth type animals that had possum body, pointed nose, long raccoon tail, climbing and hanging in the trees. Others got pictures but by the time I got there they were too far into the jungle for me to take a picture but I watched them scampering around for a good while. Lovely (for here) old estate and waterfalls. Plus about an hour's slow walk with a biologist. Interesting. Not fantastic but something that is rare to see elsewhere and I'm glad to have gone. Hummingbirds. Rare trees.

Our tour tomorrow isn't until noon and breakfast is until 10:30am so I can sleep in and catch tour at noon. I'm not going to write much more because we can talk on Thursday and I should get extra rest as much because I've been coughing a lot at night and my nights have been pretty shortened even before coughing.

8:00am to 12:00 noon - drive through the bustling city takes you to the base of Corcovado Mountain; a short and scenic train ride through the forest takes you to the summit. Here, 2,400 feet above the city, stands one of South America's most famous and inspiring landmarks -- the 125 foot statue of "Christ the Redeemer". The panorama of the city below is testament to why most visitors consider Rio one of the most spectacular cities in the world. The rest of the day is to be enjoyed at leisure.

7:00pm Optional dinner – meet in lobby

Wed Jul 21 – Day 5

12:00 noon Hotel check out with rest of day free

6:00pm Transfer to the airport for flight back to USA included.

9:55pm Depart Rio de Janeiro via CO#128 with other 50-staters

Thu Jul 22

6:15am Arrive Houston for plane change

7:50am Depart Houston via CO#408

12:30pm Arrive Newark

February 25, 2007 - 36 Hours in Rio de Janeiro By SETH KUGEL

So you missed Carnival in Rio de Janeiro last week. No worries. Many residents, known as Cariocas, missed it as well, fleeing the tourist onslaught for vacation homes and more intimate Carnivals around Brazil. But the party never stops. With the Pan-American Games coming in July, streets are being spruced up and the beaches swept. Clean public restrooms at Copacabana beach — who would have thought it? Good thing, too, since the city is glued to its sandy shoreline. When the sun fails to appear, Cariocas can become flustered and confused — sort of like ants whose hill was just destroyed by an 8-year-old.

Friday 3 p.m.

1) MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

Throw anti-cliché caution to the wind and take the cog railway to the top of Corcovado (Rua Cosme Velho 513; 55-21-2558-1329; 36 Brazilian reais or about \$17 at 2.16 reais to the dollar). That is where the iconic statue of Christ the Redeemer presides over Rio. You can see the famous Sugarloaf Mountain, the island-pocked Guanabara Bay and the beaches outlining the coast like links of white sausages. Even better, you can make fun of the inevitable sightseer aping the statue's outstretched arms for a photo. “Turistas chatos” means “annoying tourists” in Portuguese, should that phrase come to mind.

7 p.m.

2) CAIPIRINHA LESSONS

The caipirinha, a cocktail of muddled lime, sugar, ice and the sugar cane liquor known as cachaça, has become a global bar standard. Try it on its home turf, at the Academia da Cachaça (Rua Conde Bernadotte 26; 55-21-2529-2680; www.academiadacachaca.com.br) in the upscale neighborhood of Leblon. You can choose among hundreds of artisanal brands, including Lua Cheia, a fruity, intense cachaça aged for two years (4.20 reais). After a couple of caipirinhas, you might want to turn to the place's Brazilian dinner menu; an escondidinho (16.80 reais), a traditional dish of dried beef served under cheesy mashed yuca, makes for a good appetizer if you cannot wait for dinner.

9 p.m.

3) DESIGNER SALADS

All-you-can-eat churrascarias, or steakhouses, are a dime a dozen, but lighter alternatives also appeal to the bikini-clad set, for obvious reasons. Doce Delícia (Rua Dias Ferreira 48; 55-21-2249-2970), a colorful and modern restaurant in Leblon (with another branch in Ipanema, at Rua Anibal de Mendonca 55) serves dishes like salmon in soy and ginger sauce (29.50 reais), design-your-own salads (15.50 reais with ingredients like palm hearts and papaya) and tempting desserts like a chocolate mousse cake (7 reais).

11 p.m.

4) A LOCAL DRAFT

You could head to one of Leblon's chic and expensive clubs, but save the party for tomorrow and try a more traditional Rio setting: the ultra-social, old-fashioned bars known as botequins, where locals young and old gather for conversation and drinks. The beverage of choice is the Brazilian style of draft beer known as chopp (SHOW-pee), and that usually means a Brahma Pilsener. For a bit more variety, head to Botequim Informal (Rua Humberto de Campos 646, Leblon; 55-21-2259-6967; and other locations) which serves darker chopp as well (3.80 reais).

Saturday 9 a.m.

5) JUICING UP

Juice stands are a way of life in Rio, and they offer a dizzying Portuguese menu of fruits like caqui (persimmon) and graviola (soursop) for about 3 reais. You can't go wrong with tangerine juice and a grilled ham-and-cheese sandwich at Polis Sucos, a popular chain that has a stand in the middle of the Ipanema neighborhood (Rua Maria Quitéria 70A; Ipanema; 55-21-2247-2518). For a supposedly healthier, if more caloric start, order a shake made from açaí (ah-sigh-EE), a high-energy purple palm fruit from the Amazon, often mixed with bananas and topped with granola (about 5 reais).

10:30 a.m.

6) A SAHARA STROLL

Rio is more than just its beautiful coastline. Explore its less touristy center, in the pedestrian-friendly shopping area known as Saara (Portuguese for Sahara), named in part for its Lebanese shops. This is where working-class Cariocas shop for everyday items like bargain clothes and patriotic green-and-yellow party streamers. The people-watching is great, but so is the mannequin-watching: the Brazilian ideal of beauty is reflected in the generously proportioned backsides. Off-beat souvenirs abound, like a Rio public school T-shirt (about 4 reais)

at Paraíso das Crianças (Rua de Alfândega 364; 55-21-2242-6577). There are also several churches in the area, including the São Jorge Church (Rua de Alfândega 382) with its odd display of wax body parts.

1 p.m.

7) ANTI-RIO RIO

Climb up most hills in Rio and you end up in a favela, one of the city's squatter slums notorious for poverty and violence. Santa Teresa is the picturesque exception, a hilltop neighborhood that is considered Rio's artsy anti-beach. Arrive on an ancient tram called a bonde and stroll its twisting streets, filled with great little restaurants and unusual gift shops like La Vereda (Rua Almirante Alexandrino 428; 55-21-2507-0317). Instead of the typical yellow soccer shirts and Havaiana flip-flops, in this shop you'll find paintings by local artists (100 to 1,200 reais), soapstone carvings from Minas Gerais, and cardboard models of favelas.

4 p.m.

8) OLD BOOKS, MODERNIST HOME

With its charming garden and three floors filled with art and furniture, the Chácara do Céu Museum (Rua Murinho Nobre 93; 55-21-2507-1932, www.museuscasmaya.com.br/chacara.htm), feels like someone's house. And, in fact, it is. The name means Country House in the Sky, and the building, a Modernist structure, is the former home of the French-born industrialist Raymundo Ottoni de Castro Maya, who was an avid collector of Brazilian, European and Asian art. Equally fascinating is his impressive library of old Portuguese and French titles. Admission is 2 reais.

7 p.m.

9) TASTE THE AMAZON

Amazonian cuisine is a mystery, even to most Brazilians, so the appearance of a romantic hilltop spot like Espírito Santa in Santa Teresa (Rua Almirante Alexandrino 264; 55-21-2508-7095; www.espiritosanta.com.br), which opened two years ago, has exposed the locals to new flavors. They are found in dishes like piranha soup, steamed tambaqui (an Amazonian fish) and tacacá, a soupy stew made with mandioca root, shrimp and a dark green leaf known as jambu, which causes a slight numbing sensation in the mouth. Dinner is about 40 reais.

11 p.m.

10) DANCE TO THE MUSIC

Dancing the night away in Rio can be done in many settings, from the chic and pricey clubs of Leblon to the sweaty open-air dance floors in São Cristóvão, a neighborhood in northern Rio. But if you're looking for traditional Brazilian rhythms, head to the nightclub-filled district of Lapa, a seedy but pleasant area with dollar beers and friendly crowds. For a mellower atmosphere among the clubs there, try a spot like Sacrilégio (Avenida Mem de Sá 81; 55-21-3970-1461, cover 18 reais) where an easy-going crowd dances to live Brazilian music.

Sunday 10 a.m.

11) THE U.F.O. ACROSS THE BAY

Get up early and take a 20-minute ferry ride across Guanabara Bay to the Niterói Museum of Contemporary Art, also known as the MAC (Mirante de Boa Viagem; 55-21-2620-2400; www.macniteroi.com.br; 4 reais), designed by the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. It resembles a flying saucer, and offers excellent views of the bay and Rio. On exhibition through March 17 is "Greek Gods in Contemporary Temples," with sculptures on loan from the Pergamon Museum in Berlin; contemporary works from the collection of João Sattamini; and statues of orixás (Yoruba spirits) from the Casa do Pontal Museum in Rio. Barcas S/A runs the ferries every 30 minutes on weekends, leaving from the downtown Praça XV de Novembro (55-21-4004-3113; 2.10 reais).

1 p.m.

12) PALMS AND CIRCUMSTANCE

In Rio, your station in life is pretty much defined by which beach you go to for a suntan. Unless you're looking for young prostitutes and their balding admirers, skip Copacabana Beach. Instead, go to Ipanema Beach, its equally famous neighbor one cove over. The beach is delineated by lifeguard stations, or postos, and anywhere near Posto 9 makes for good beautiful-people-watching. Settle into a rented beach chair, buy a bag of the crunchy snacks called Biscoitos Globo, and catch a bit of the amazing hybrid of soccer and volleyball known as futevolei.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Flights to Rio from the New York area require a layover in Miami or São Paulo; they start about \$980 on American Airlines from Kennedy Airport. Cheaper flights, some on the Brazilian airline TAM can sometimes be found through BACC Travel in New York (800-222-2746). A taxi from Antonio Carlos Jobim International Airport to Ipanema is about 60 reais, about \$27 at 2.16 reais to the dollar.

If you want to stay near the beach, Ipanema is cleaner and safer bet over Copacabana. On the higher end is the Caesar Park Hotel (Avenida Vieira Souto 460; 55-21-2525-2525; www.caesarpark.com.br), a 222-room hotel centrally situated on the beach. Rooms from \$285 (it prices in U.S. dollars) a night. On the lower end is Casa 6 (Rua Barão de Torre 175; 55-21-2247-1384; www.casa6ipanema.com), a small and clean hostel with several private rooms, with shared (120 reais for two) or private baths (150 reais). It's on a charming street with other hostels and boarding houses, and an easy walk to the beach. To blend in with the locals, try Cama e Café (literally bed-and-breakfast), a booking service that matches travelers with hosts in the historic Santa Teresa neighborhood (from 95 to 190 reais; 55-21-2224-5689; www.camaecafe.com.br).

Rio de Janeiro Itinerary

Depart USA - July 16th evening

Day 1: Arrive Rio de Janeiro - July 17th morning

Arrive in Rio, nestled between the mountains and the sea. The very sound of its name evokes images of sun, fun and rhythm of the sensuous samba. Few places on earth can match the hospitality, natural charm, beauty and excitement of this city. That's why many Brazilians call Rio the "Cidade Maravilhosa" - the marvelous city. Transfer to the hotel; remainder of the day at leisure. We will be picking up our race packets (9am-6pm - waiting for details from the race) and getting ready for the big race.

Day 2: Race Day! - July 18th

Breakfast included

The morning of the race we will need to take a cab to the finish line to get on the bus. One should not go alone because it is too early and there are very few people around - cabbies may take advantage.

Rio Marathon: Start at Recreio dos Bandeirantes - 42K run to finish at Aterro do Flamengo - 6 hour limit
Marathon Schedule

5h00: Buses begin to leave

6h45: Warm up / Stretching

7h30: Start

11h00: Awards Ceremony

Rio Half Marathon: Start at Pepe Beach (Barra da Tijuca) Praia do Pepe - 21K run to finish at Aterro do Flamengo

Half Marathon Schedule

5h00: Buses begin to leave

6h30: Warm up / Stretching

7h00: Start

Family Run Schedule

Start: Aterro do Flamengo - 6K run

7h30: Warm up / Stretching

8h00: Start

The rest of the day is at your leisure. Those not participating in the races will have the entire day at their leisure. Those interested may purchase an optional Samba Show and Dinner for \$130 additional for that evening.

Day 3: Rio de Janeiro - July 19th

Breakfast included

Morning drive through the bustling city takes you to the base of Corcovado Mountain; a short and scenic train ride through the forest takes you to the summit. Here, 2,400 feet above the city, stands one of South America's most famous and inspiring landmarks -- the 125 foot statue of "Christ the Redeemer". The panorama of the city below is testament to why most visitors consider Rio one of the most spectacular cities in the world. The rest of the day is to be enjoyed at leisure.

Day 4: Rio de Janeiro - July 20th

Breakfast included

Half-day tour of the city, featuring the main points of interest and an excursion to the summit of Sugar Loaf Mountain for a panoramic view of the city, beaches and Guanabara Bay. In due time, return to the hotel.

Day 5: Depart Rio de Janeiro - July 21st

Breakfast included

For those interested in purchasing an optional half-day tour before flying home, let us know if you are interested and we will arrange for one. Transfer to the airport for flight back to USA.

*Price for land only services: * Per person based on double occupancy: \$475 - Standard room*

Note: All prices are subject to change until the actual confirmation of services and availability

Included: Hotel taxes and service charges, Meals as per itinerary, Transfers and tours as per itinerary based on motor coach services

Not included: Air of any kind, Airport taxes and Government Fees, Travel Insurance, Extras or items not included or described in itinerary, Personal expenses of any nature, Tips

Packing list will soon be posted.

Remember that the seasons are opposite ours. July is in the winter in the Southern Hemisphere. For ideas check: http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/South_America/Brazil/Estado_do_Rio_de_Janeiro/Rio_de_Janeiro-1504237/Packing_Lists-Rio_de_Janeiro-BR-1.html

Passport needed

You will need to get a Brazilian Visa. Roxana Lewis suggests using <http://www.zvs.com/Step2.aspx>. The price is approximately \$216. Make sure that you plan at least two weeks advance processing to avoid extra expedite fees. You will need to submit: an application, your US passport (with 2 blank pages and 6 months validity), 2X2 passport photo, copy of your itinerary print-out or roundtrip ticket, copy of driver's license. The visa service will give you specific information.

50states attendees from website:

Marie Bartoletti – with another group

Lois Berkowitz

Paula Boone

Steve Boone

Bill Brown

Paul Butler

Cheryl Cook-McCoy

Tom Brand

Diana Burton

Lisa Donahue

Lou Horton

Deb Ingram

Fran Libasci – no?

Sharon Nollan

Scott Richardson

Jeanette Roostai

Dan Shuff

Susan Sinclair

Nancy Stuparich – no show?

Jason Tung

Karen Van Rite

Pictures from Kevin



