Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – the biggest party in the world is about to take place. Dive in and enjoy the Samba Parade! You will be part of this coming together of music, poetry, dance, theatre, gigantic decorated floats and a veritable sea of costumes.

This document is meant to help you understand the background and concept of Rio Carnival and the Samba Parade, in particular. It contains lots of useful information about:

1. **RIO CARNIVAL**
2. **THE SAMBA PARADE**
3. **WHO IS WHO IN THE PARADE**
4. **THE SAMBADROME**
5. **PARTY PLANNER**
6. **USEFUL NUMBERS, INFORMATION IN RIO**
1. RIO CARNIVAL

The roots of Carnival trace back to the ancient Romans and Greeks who celebrated the rites of spring. Across Europe, including France, Spain and Portugal, people annually gave thanks by throwing parties, wearing masks and dancing in the streets. Such traditions were carried over to the New World.

Carnival starts on Saturday and ends on Fat Tuesday leading up to Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent in the Roman Catholic calendar. It usually takes place in February, the hottest month in the Southern Hemisphere when summer peaks in Brazil.

Carnival is very important to the Brazilians. It is seen as a time to forget the dull, difficult and unpleasant things in life. During this time, everyone can pretend to be someone else, beggars turn to kings, bankers into clowns and men change into women’s gowns. People dance as wildly as they can. They run red lights and do everything quickly.

One of the greatest aspects of Carnival is that it not only provides entertainment for many people around the world but at the same time it also gives a chance to learn about the true culture of Brazil. It is certainly a very important part of the “Brazilian life”.

There are carnival celebrations in virtually every corner of Brazil, the best-known ones taking place in Recife together with the neighboring Olinda (in the North of Brazil) and Salvador. There are carnival celebrations even in the smallest villages. But the biggest and most famous carnival is undoubtedly the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

The Portuguese first brought the concept of “celebration or carnival” to Rio around 1850. However, despite being settled by the Portuguese, the traditions soon became very different in Brazil. The black
slaves also became actively involved in the celebrations. They would paint their faces and dress up in their masters’ clothes. Slaves were able to be free for three days.

Carnival has come a long way since it was brought to Rio. Now Rio Carnival is regarded as the wildest weeklong Carnival in the world. It is a euphoric event where people dance, sing, party and have tons of fun. There are many parties which take place before, during and after Carnival all night and all day. It allows someone's true (or wildest) heart to come out and have as much fun as possible.

The music played in Rio’s Carnival is predominately Brazilian music (mainly from Rio) and a dance form that started among the poor Afro-Brazilians. There are many different types of samba music, basically differing in the way how it is presented and how fast it is. Nevertheless the basic rhythm and accompanying dance style is more or less the same. The most involved groups in Carnival are the poorest neighborhoods, the slums called *favelas*. The favelas are shantytowns usually occupying the hills in Rio.

No matter how bad a situation the favelas’ residents are in, they join in the festivities and they actually “make” Carnival happen. Carnival really means a lot to them because for once during the year, they get to go out and have as much fun as they can. And you will see...they can indeed. Residents of the favelas are often members of a local samba school and are deeply involved with the preparations, performance and costumes of their groups – the samba schools. Carnival and samba is their passion alongside football.

The samba schools are associations of people from the same neighborhood, usually a working class community of the favelas and bring a sense of community and belonging. They get together on a regular basis for rehearsals and samba nights and are actually not teaching institutions as their name suggests.

The origin of the name “samba school” comes from the legend that the early sambistas used to rehearse in an empty lot near a college. “We also teach! Here the students learn to breathe and live samba!”

They have a huge impact on their neighborhoods, being the best organized entities in the favelas, with thousands of people
joining the rehearsals - dancing, singing and boozing.

The best samba schools create a pageant with 3,000-5,000 people for the Samba Parade. The samba schools have to pick themes, write music and lyrics, design and make costumes and floats and practice all year round to succeed in the competition. They have a strict hierarchy and are judged by many different criteria.

The schools raise money from ticket sales, television broadcasts and dance events. Some of the money, given by members and sponsorships, comes from illegal gambling.

Gays and drug queens also come and help out and become very involved. For everyone, this is a time to come together as a whole and have fun together. Brazil once becomes the most tolerant society.

Everyone eagerly anticipates the start of each year’s carnival. They are lots of parties and celebrations leading up to it. They start already in October with the samba school rehearsals in their dance halls.

Then, the processions of the Carnival street bands start around two weeks before and lead up to Carnival.

Each neighborhood in Rio has its favorite Carnival street band. They consist of an orchestra, mainly bass, marching along a pre-determined route, followed by hordes of enthusiastic samba revelers dressed in costumes, bathing suits, plain clothes and many in drag.

The operation of a Carnival street band is really quite simple. Firstly, people gather at some well known spot, such as a square or neighborhood bar. After a couple or more hours of warming and getting the spirit up, the band starts marching its way down the streets. Do not miss the warming up bit. Enjoy the show performed by drag queens and children, stopping cars and buses trying in vain to make their way through the crowds.
Finally, the Rio Carnival officially begins, on Carnival Saturday, with the crowning of Fat King (King Momo), who is presented with the giant silver and gold key of the city by the Mayor.

Then, the Band of Ipanema stages its own procession in the Ipanema district of Rio, a few days before the big Parade. Its main character is Carmen Miranda, the famous samba singer of the 1940’s, known for her lavish costume style using giant hats adorned with fruits. She has become a true carnival symbol and you will find lots of people (many in drag) dressed up in her style.

However the highlight of Rio Carnival is undoubtedly the Samba Parade on Carnival Sunday and Monday.
2. THE SAMBA (SCHOOLS) PARADE

The Parade is the review of and actually a fierce competition in between the samba schools. The schools are subject to strict hierarchy.

The top 12 schools (the Special Group) march on Carnival Sunday and Monday, 6 different ones on both nights.

Each year a school is downgraded from the Special to the Access Group (also called Group A, which comprises the 12 less successful schools which parade in the Sambodromo on Carnival Saturday) and vice-versa.

The 5 schools that score best in the Special category, earn the coveted honor of marching again the following weekend, at the Champions' Parade on Saturday.

The judges and spectators watch the Parade in the Sambodromo which holds around 60,000 people. This can be considered as the "stadium" of samba. The Sambodromo consists of the parading Avenue (the samba run-way) and several concrete structures for the spectators (the Sectors) along both sides of the parading Avenue.

The Parade is not a street carnival, where people move chaotically about but more of a highly orchestrated show of vast proportions. Every parader has a specific role and place according to his costume in a particular wing at a particular section of the samba school he is parading in support of.

Each year each school chooses a different theme for the Parade. It can be celebrating a particular period or some famous figures of the Brazilian history, highlight a special event or talk about anything really what might move the spirit and imagination; like a special animal or the elements water, fire, etc.
The school has to illustrate the chosen theme through all its work - the samba music, especially composed and written for that year’s theme, the richly decorated floats and the costumes of their 3,000 to 5,000 parading members designed by the school’s carnavalesco (carnival designer).

The parade of every school is highly organized and designed. They line up in a unique way to present their pageant. The schools are divided into a number of sections and each section has a number of wings of about 100 people wearing the same costume. Sometimes even two wings (i.e. around 200 people) have the same costume design. You will find more info about the role and name of some special sections below.

As mentioned, the Parade is a really glorious competition, for which the scores are given by the judges. There are ten categories that decide which samba school will be the grand champion of the year. They are the Percussion Band, Samba Song, Harmony, Flow and Spirit, Theme of the Year, Overall Impression, Floats and Props, Costumes, Vanguard Group and the Flag Bearing Couple.

There are 4 judges of every category (altogether 40 of them) and they are spread along the samba avenue in their booths. Scores are given on a scale 5-10 (with fractions), 10 being the best one. The scores are counted and announced on Ash Wednesday, just after Carnival.

The costumes are extremely imaginative, colorful, elaborate and detailed. They are very original, designed and made from scratch each year. They have mirrors, feathers, metallic cloth, silk and sometimes gems or coins. These costumes take months to make and are begun to be put together roughly 8 months in advance.

Each samba school has its own distinctive colors and costume style. The biggest and most elaborate costumes are worn by destaque, members chosen with honor by the samba schools to wear these special costumes. The Parade starts at 21:00 and goes on until sunlight the next day, around 5-6 a.m. Each samba school has a time of 60 to 75 minutes to make it through the run-way.
3. WHO IS WHO IN THE PARADE

This part explains the special roles which the paraders have in the Samba Parade. You could take this part with you to the Sambodromo. It will be interesting for you to identify these roles and help you understand what is really going on beyond the sheer beauty of the costumes and dance performance.

KING OF CARNAVAL (KING MOMO)

“Momo” is the name of the God of Mockery in the Greek mythology. According to Carnival tradition, King Momo should be jolly and as big as a house.

Legend suggests that he was expelled from the Olympus to come and settle down in Rio, the city of Carnival. Carnival officially opens with the delivery of the key of the city to King Momo.

When King Momo sambas, everything - sequins, feathers and flesh and all people around should also samba with him.

He will be opening all major Carnival events including the Parade, every day, passing through the samba run-way around 20:00.

QUEEN OF CARNAVAL AND THE PRINCESSES OF CARNAVAL

The Queen of Carnival is chosen in a contest, based on her beauty, self-assurance, sociability, ease of expression, congeniality and samba abilities. But most importantly, she must possess the "carnival spirit".

The 2nd and the 3rd place candidates in the Queen of Carnival contest are named the Princesses of Carnival.
CARNIVAL DESIGNER

This is the creative individual who is designing, producing and directing the school's parade. Sometimes they even choose and write the year’s theme, too. They design every costume and float, choose and supervise the purchasing of materials, the construction of floats and manufacturing of costumes and all accessories. They can earn a lot of money in a top school. The top carnival designers’ names are as well known as the names of the best-known film directors. They have their own idiosyncratic style, some being known for being very futuristic (Salgueiro), baroque/rococo (Imperatriz or Mangueira), or have special preference for a particular topic (like Beija-Flor’s liking of anything native Brazilian-Indian).

WING

The building blocks of a school’s parade, a group of 20-150 people wearing the same costume. The costume will illustrate a particular aspect of the school's chosen theme/story of the year.

VOCALISTS

There is main, male, well-known vocalist who is accompanied by many others. They are usually on top of the sound truck right behind the percussionists or march along the samba run-way.

THE FLAG BEARING LADY AND HER MALE ESCORT

She is carrying and presenting the school's flag as the symbol of the School, as the couple dances down the Sambodromo. He is there to protect her (originally he even had a knife to make sure that the other schools do not damage the flag, loosing the competition). Their dance is the most elaborate and elegant.
The schools have more than one couple of flag bearers but only the front one (the one in front of the percussion group) is important, judged and gains scores.

THE SWIRLING LADIES

They are elderly ladies dressed in glitzy variations of the traditional costume of Bahia (a state in and the spiritual heart-land of Brazil) with big skirts, having tubes inserted inside, so that they lend themselves for some beautiful swirling. And so they move along the Avenue, swirling away, and represent the soul of the samba schools, their African roots.

There is a minimum number of these ladies that must parade or the school gets penalty points (at least 80 in the Special Group). They are old ladies of the community, who have been with the School for many years like the samba dancers. This is an honor and the samba school pays for their costumes. They are much respected and often get a round of applause when passing.

Today only women can have this role while in earlier years men started to dress in those costumes, too.

Some schools (like Beija-Flor, Grande Rio, Salgueiro, etc.) also have wings of little swirling girls.
PERCUSSION GROUP

This is the heart of the School which gives life and energy for the whole parade. A community wing so that the costumes are paid for by the school. The Head of the Group chooses who is going to play in the group through continuous auditions at the rehearsals, months before Carnival. The group’s costume will also reflect the school’s theme. It can be so big that it’s hard to play. Some groups are nowadays also choreographed and put on their own performance and show. There are overhead mikes carried alongside the group and a sound truck with the singers.
QUEEN OF THE DRUMMERS

She is an outstandingly beautiful female samba dancer in front of and introducing the Percussion Group to the crowd. She is supposed to motivate and inspire the hundreds of male drummers behind her.

SAMBISTAS

They are a small wing of the finest samba dancers of the school - no more than 15-20. It’s very hard to dance samba at Rio’s speed whilst moving forward at nearly walking pace for almost one kilometer - the sambistas are a star turn. They are chosen each year through competition.

VANGUARD COMMISSION

This is a group of 12-15 dancers with a highly choreographed routine, who parade at the front of the school, "presenting" the school to the crowds. Their costumes do not have to reflect the school’s theme. Originally they were only well-dressed men. Recently they have become a spectacle on their own, with great choreography.

STEWARDS OF THE FLOW

Each float and each wing has a number of dedicated stewards to ensure that the flow of the parade is kept up. They wear the T-shirts of their wings. There are penalty points if the school takes too long to pass through the samba run-way and points are lost if there are any gaps between or inside the wings, thus their role is essential.
4. THE SAMBODROMO

The Sambadrome (also known in English as Sambadrome or Sambodrome) is the "stadium" of samba. It consists of the parading Avenue (also called the samba run-way) and several concrete structures for the spectators (the so-called sectors) along both sides of the Avenue.

The Sambadrome was designed by Brazil's world-famous architect, the modernist Oscar Niemeyer. It was purpose-built for the Samba Parade and inaugurated in 1984. Being made of concrete, it seems a bit dated for today’s post-modern eyes and feels derelict if not ugly, surrounded by slums, serving only little cultural events, during the year.

However, it comes to life and is really magnificent and totally overpowering, being lit up with all special effects, on Samba Parade nights, filled with thousands of cheering spectators and surrounded by other thousands of people who did not get in.

It can seat around 60,000 people, which is already far too few for the ever growing Rio Carnival Parade. However, it cannot be rebuilt not even extended since it is under protection.

The Sambadrome begins at Avenida Presidente Vargas and ends in Rua Frei Caneca. The large square at the end of it, crowned by an idiosyncratic and very memorable large concrete M, is called Apotheosis Square. The parading avenue or samba run-way was named after Professor Darcy Ribeiro since it was decided by him to
move the Samba Parade from the city center to here. It is 700m (half a mile) long.

There are snack bars, refreshment stands and restrooms in each Sambodromo sector. In addition, everybody has access to a promenade within the Sambodromo, behind the bleachers, which is lined with restaurants, ice-cream stands, souvenir shops and some more restrooms.

The Sambodromo on Samba Parade days is considered to be the safest place in South America. There is a very high concentration of international celebrities, politicians and royalties among the crowd. It is surrounded by huge fences which no-one can pass without using the gates and being checked for both commercial and safety reasons.

Like all stadiums and being ring-fenced, entry to the Sambodromo is usually only possible with tickets for some event. However it opens its doors and offers free entry to the grand stand seats in almost all sectors on rehearsal days, on the weekends before Carnival.

TICKETS

Samba Parade tickets consist of two parts which are only valid together (apart from tickets for the Luxury Suites). One part, with a magnetic stripe, will be retained at the first gate to the Sambodromo. The remaining part, which you can put around your neck with the supplied string, is for the entrance to your sector. After you have checked into the Sambodromo with your magnetic card, you can come and go out of your own sector and walk around within the Sambodromo but you can only re-enter your own sector again.

Take all parts of the tickets which you receive from us with you to the Sambodromo.

In emergency or with special needs, you can agree with the coordinator of your sector to leave the Sambodromo and return later that night.
WHEN TO ARRIVE

The Sambodromo opens its doors at 17:00. Some already queue up for it to get the best seats in the sectors without allocated seats, which are considered to be the ones near the front.

There is a little welcome show at 20:00 with King Momo opening the night passing through the Sambodromo. Not very interesting in our opinion.

An average person truly enjoys and generally watches 3-5 samba schools. Thus, we think, to arrive only around 22:00-22:30 is not a bad idea. You can also time your arrival to watch the best schools.

Here’s the rank of the last 5 years combined:

1. Beija Flor - Sunday
2. Grande Río – Monday
3. Salgueiro - Sunday
4. Unidos da Tijuca – Sunday
5. Unidos de Vila Isabel - Monday
6. Mangueira - Monday
7. Viradouro - Sunday
8. Portela – Monday
9. Imperatriz Leopoldinense - Sunday
10. Mocidade Independente – Monday
11. Porto da Pedra - Monday
12. Império Serrano – Saturday Feb 13th
13. Caprichosos de Pilares – Saturday Feb 13th
14. São Clemente – Saturday Feb 13th

PARADE SCHEDULE

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<th>Starts</th>
<th>Special Group Day #1</th>
<th>Special Group Day #2</th>
<th>Winners’ Parade</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Sunday, Feb. 14th</td>
<td>Monday, Feb. 15th</td>
<td>Saturday, Feb. 20th</td>
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<tr>
<td>21:00</td>
<td>União da Ilha</td>
<td>Mocidade Independente</td>
<td>6th best School</td>
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<tr>
<td>23:10-23:40</td>
<td>Unidos da Tijuca</td>
<td>Portela</td>
<td>4th best School</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:15-01:00</td>
<td>Unidos do Viradouro</td>
<td>Grande Rio</td>
<td>3rd best School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:20-02:20</td>
<td>Salgueiro</td>
<td>Vila Isabel</td>
<td>Vice-Champion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02:25-03:40</td>
<td>Beija-Flor de Nilópolis</td>
<td>Mangueira</td>
<td>Champion of the Year</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

HOW TO DRESS AND WHAT TO TAKE

Wear whatever you prefer. There are no rules, not even standards what to wear (bear in mind that people in Rio go even to weddings and funerals in Bermudas, etc). People and celebrities in the boxes will dress up however. In the Grand Stand sectors, informal street style rules. Use very light clothing as it is usually hot throughout the night, and dark colors not to get too dirty. A raincoat should be considered for the eventuality of a summer shower nevertheless if it rains, vendors will surely have them on sale there.
One person can only take up to two plastic containers of 500ml and two items of food (e.g. sandwich). Umbrellas, objects made of polystyrene, bottles, glasses, firecrackers and fireworks are not allowed.

There are fast food kiosks in all sectors. However be prepared that the quality is usually “weak” with long queues. So we suggest having your dinner before setting off. You could take some food such as fruits.

As the show is extremely long and goes on until sun-rise, some people take little mattresses and/or pillows to seat and even have a nap on.

You can take some toilet tissue as in the later hours it might run short in the toilets. Some people take binoculars/theatre glasses.

You can take any type of still picture camera. However video cameras are not allowed. It is totally safe inside the Sambodromo. But be warned – only show them after you already checked in and be careful with anything valuable outside.

HOW TO GET THERE

The absolute most convenient way to get to the sambadrome is with our guided roundtrip shuttle service. It picks you up at your hotel or nearby and you can return any time back to your hotel after midnight. All guided and assisted with our staff at the sambadrome. If you want to make it on your own, the best and easiest way is by subway or taxi. The subway is safe on those days and leaves you very close to the Sambodromo when all other traffic comes to a still-stand around the Sambodromo. Avoid taking busses there.

Option 1 – Guided Roundtrip Shuttle Service – US$ 79 per person
This transfers will leave you within 2 blocks to entrance of your sector.

Returning from Sambodrome to Hotels.

After midnight, upon the end of each samba school presentation (each lasts approximately 1 hour), a bus will be leaving from the Sambadrome to take guests back to their hotels. Drop-offs are done only at hotels located along the beach – therefore guests of hotels not located along the beach should get off of the bus at one of the beach-side hotels and walk and/or take a taxi to their respective hotels.

Unfortunately guests will not be accompanied by bilingual staff on the return bus ride to the hotel; Guests should contact Blumar/Rio Carnival staff at the Sambadrome to receive information and direction to the return bus pick up location.

Option 2 – Private Guided Transfers

All Private Guided Transfers to Sector 7, 9 and 11 will be provided by BLUMAR TURISMO, our rep in Brazil. Blumar 24-hour Emergency phone number is 021-7845-5940.

Private round trip transfer with guide - USD 1,250 bulk service – includes pick up at hotel, drop off at sambadrome / pick up at sambadrome , drop off at hotel. Clients will be accompanied by a English speaking tour guide during transfer. Car will be at clients disposal during parade, so they can return to the hotel at the time they choose. Clients must inform our carnival staff at sambadrome approximately 30 minutes in advance before leaving . Service is done by sprinter with space for 1-9 passengers.

This service can also be booked:
- Private Transportation - Hotel/Sambadrome – with guide and Sambadrome/Hotel without guide – USD 998 bulk service.
- Hotel/Sambadrome in private transportation with guide and Sambadrome/Hotel by shuttle –USD 650
bulk service.

For all above services, the guides do not stay with clients in Sambadrome. Guides will accompany clients during the transfer service, however will not be allowed access into Sambadrome (Inside Sambadrome, all assistance will be done by our Rio representative Blumar staff)

**Option 3 – Taxi Service**

**By Taxi Service** - Coopertramo- Ph : 2560-2022 / 2560-1474

We suggest the use of private taxi companies, rather than street cabs. Coopertramo is the taxi company with credentials to serve the Sambadrome with exclusivity, on samba parade days.

Call Coopertramo any day from February 10 on to schedule your pickup. In the way back, you should go to Sector 11 and look for their booth or somebody walking by with their name on the t-shirt. English spoken by people taking the orders. Approximately US$ 40 each way per car with capacity for 4 people.

**Option 4 – Subway. Or Tube. Or Metro.**

Will be working uninterruptedly from Saturday (Feb 13) to 11 pm of Tuesday (Feb 16).

For clients staying in Ipanema or Copacabana area, best option is to take one of the subway stations in Copacabana – Line 1:

- Estação Cantagalo - Praça Eugenio Jardim – Copacabana
- Estação Siqueira Campos – Rua Siqueira Campos – Copacabana
- Estação Cardeal Arcoverde – Rua Barata Ribeiro – Copacabana
- Estação General Osório – Praça General Osório - Ipanema

To go to Odd numbered Sectors 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11, Get off on Estação Central. (walk 10 min)
To go to Even numbered Sectors 2, 4 and 6, get off on Estação Praça Onze. (walk 15 min)
It’s okay to use the subway if you are parading with a costume. In fact, you will see lots of people dressed to parade with the Samba Schools.
5. PARTY PLANNER

This is your Program Guide for the 2008 Rio Carnival. We have organized it into 2 sections

A - MAJOR EVENTS DAY BY DAY - only the most important and interesting ones
B - EVENTS ORGANIZED BY TYPE OR LOCATION

It is, in fact, already a few weeks before Carnival that many parties, the most animated school rehearsals, the competition for the election of the Carnival King and Queen, the samba shows, the final rehearsals in the samba schools and the costume exhibitions have already started to take place. Start and dive into it straight after your arrival.

We have added our own recommendations in {...}

Please note that all times are “Brazilian times”. Take them with a pinch of salt and do not expect any event to start on the dot.

A - MAJOR EVENTS DAY BY DAY

You will find the most important events of the day here. You will find the description of these events in the 2nd part under the chapter given in {...}

EVERY CARNIVAL DAY

After 20.00 - Popular dances at Cinelândia Square [2.F]

20.00 Concerts start at Samba Land and in Lapa [2.D, E]
23.00 Rio Scala ball [2.C]

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH

13.00 Official opening of the 2010 Rio Carnival. Rio’s mayor crowns the Carnival King (Momo) and hands over the keys of the city to him in the presence of the Carnival Queen and Princesses

{only symbolical importance, not a must}
19.00 Children’s Samba Schools Parade [2.A.a]

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13TH

09.30 Street Band Cordão do Bola Preta [2.G]
16.00 Banda de Ipanema, Ipanema [2.G]
20.00 Street Band Competition in Av. Rio Branco, Centro (Downtown) [2.G]
23.00 The Magic Ball at Copacabana Palace Hotel [2.B.b]

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH

21.00 Parade of the Samba Schools in the Special Group [2.A.c]

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH

21.00 Parade of the Samba Schools in the Special Group [2.A.c]

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH

16.00 Banda de Ipanema goes out for the last time [2.G]
23.00 Gay Costume Ball in Rio Scala [2.C]
B - EVENTS ORGANIZED BY TYPE OR LOCATION

A. SAMBA PARADES IN THE SAMBODROMO
B. CARNIVAL BALLS
C. RIO SCALA
D. SAMBA LAND (TERREIRÃO DO SAMBA)
E. MERRY MAKING IN LAPA (RIO FOLHA)
F. POPULAR STREET PARTIES
G. STREET BANDS
H. DANCING NIGHTS IN THE SAMBA SCHOOLS
I. PARADE REHEARSALS IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE SAMBODROMO
J. SAMBA CITY

We suggest sampling a bit of all types of programs and going to every type at least once. We have printed in bold or highlighted with {our recommendation} the “best” ones, in all categories.

You can combine events in the same area one day/night, like Dances in Cinelândia with Merry Making in Lapa, which are very close, both happening downtown.
A. SAMBA PARADES IN THE SAMBODROMO

A show, display and competition of the samba schools.

The two major nights are Sunday and Monday. Only miss them if you can’t afford to go. In that case you can go on some other day, which are significantly cheaper and also give you an idea.

Second best night is the Champions’ Parade on Saturday, third best being the Access Group on Friday.

Venue: Sambódromo, Rua Marquês de Sapucaí, Praça Onze, Cidade Nova

1. Children’s Samba Schools
   Friday, February 12th, 19.00 (doors open at 17.00)
   These are branches of the big samba schools made up of children of each community
   Their parade follows the procedure of the big schools.

2. Samba Schools in the Access Group (Group “A”)
   Saturday, February 13th, first school at 21.00
   They are 10 large and important schools. The champion and the runnerup of this parade ascends to the Special Group.
   {A good opportunity to see a parade on the cheap. It’s a very good opportunity to parade with a costume….It’s a full-crowd, animated party. However the quality of the schools is not as excellent as the Special Group. }

3. Samba Schools in the Special Group
   Sunday and Monday, February 14th and 15th, doors open at 17.00, opening ceremony at 20.00, parades start at 21.00
   This is THE Parade, the high-point of Rio Carnival, with six schools parading on both nights.
   The schools belonging to this group are especially magnificent and sumptuous, each containing approximately five thousand participants including Brazilian show-business celebrities and jet-set personalities.
   {Only miss it if it is beyond your budget}
4. Samba Schools in Group “B”
Tuesday, February 16th, starts at 21.00
They are also called the Base Group, as it is where also all the other big, leading schools originated once. The schools are relatively small; each school having approximately one thousand and five hundred participants. Nevertheless they also parade with much vigor to succeed and ascend in the hierarchy.
{Rather go to the Champions’ Parade or Access Group}

5. Champions’ Parade
Saturday, February 20th, starts at 21.00
The 5 best samba schools of the Special Group, from Sunday and Monday, parade in their entire splendor once more with fireworks.
{Very beautiful and much cheaper than on the competition nights, the second best parade}

B. CARNIVAL BALLS

1. THE MAGIC BALL AT COPACABANA PALACE HOTEL
Saturday, February 13th
This legendary ball is not just the high point of the night but also the most famous Carnival ball; the natural choice for glamour and sophistication. Luxury costumes or black tie are required, and a number of international and local VIPs are always among the guests. Buffet dinner and free bar. There are different tickets for the individual dining rooms. All tickets provide access to all ballrooms.

In the Golden Room you can dance to the sounds of a live band.

Standing tickets are without a table; however, good weather allowing, there are tables on the balcony.
Tickets for the Golden Room include a seat at a table of 6, 10 or 12 people.
Tickets for the Noble Room include a seat at a table of 10 or 12.
Standing tickets do not offer a table seat; however, good weather allowing, there will be tables on the balcony.
Golden Room: US$ 1,804 per person – SOLD OUT
Noble Room: US$ 1,199 per person – SOLD OUT
Standing: US$ 943 per person – available
Venue: Copacabana Palace Hotel, Avenida Atlantica 1702 – Copacabana
Contact our [TicketCenter](#) for tickets. As of February 4th, we still have tickets available.
C. SCALA BALLS

In its 20th year, the Scala nightclub offers thematic dances every night during Carnival, having the grandest indoor carnival parties of the city. The venue is big and very well-known.

Venue: Rio Scala, Avenida Afrânio de Melo Franco 296 - Leblon

You are advised to buy tickets for the Scala Balls in advance.

Table prices per table seating 4 people.
VIP box prices are per person and include unlimited alcoholic drinks (except whiskey) and free buffet with sushi, fruit and snack bar.

Thursday, February 19th
Salgueiro Carnival Ball

It is a good opportunity to experience the music and atmosphere of one of the most traditional and well-known samba schools (Salgueiro) without having to visit its rehearsal space. The School will have it all - its drummer group, its principal samba dancers and the flag bearer and her escort. It is a true and real samba night; you can dance all night or just watch and enjoy the crowd.

Admission: US$ 104.00
VIP box seat: US$ 333.00
Table for 4 people: US$ 519.00

Friday, February 12th
Red and Black Ball

This night celebrates and is dedicated to the world-famous Rio football team, Flamengo, with the red-and-black striped flag. It is one of the most popular nights.

Admission: US$ 125.00
VIP box seat: US$ 365.00
Table for 4 people: US$ 606.00

Saturday, February 21st
Mangueira Carnival Ball

Formerly on Thursday, the Mangueira Ball has moved to Saturday. The School will have it all - its drummer group, its principal samba dancers and the flag bearer and her escort. It is a true and real
samba night; you can dance all night or just watch and enjoy the crowd.
Admission: US$ 104.00
VIP box seat: US$ 333.00
Table for 4 people: US$ 606.00

**Sunday, February 14th**
**A Night in Ibiza**
This is the biggest ball in the series with some special guests.
Admission: US$ 104.00
VIP box seat: US$ 281.00
Table for 4 people: US$ 606.00

**Monday, February 15th**
**Ball of the ´Beer´**
A new event in the series. Unlimited and free beer all night. Live music by a Carnival band taking turns with a Rio DJ (Mc Marcinho).
Admission: US$ 104.00
VIP box seat: US$ 333.00
Table for 4 people: US$ 433.00

**Tuesday, February 24th until 7:00 am**
**Gay Costume Ball**
It is probably the most famous night in the series. A truly exotic collection of characters take to the two floors and a grand entrance is de rigueur - the ball is broadcast to the whole of Brazil. A flamboyant crowd with lots of drag queens and their admirers.
It is very popular with all folks not only gay boys and girls.
Admission: US$ 125.00
VIP box seat: US$ 417.00
Table for 4 people: US$ 693.00

To get tickets, contact our [TicketCenter](#).

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**D. SAMBA LAND (TERREIRÃO DO SAMBA)**

This is an open-air space that resuscitates the old atmosphere of Praça Onze, a big square downtown near the Sambodromo, the cradle of samba. It is inaugurated before Carnival, and is functioning at full steam through all nights of the festivity.
Concerts of Brazilian popular music mixed with samba take place on an imposing stage. Kiosks sell
food and drinks.

{Do sample it and don’t take it seriously. A festival atmosphere prevails. They play a hotchpotch of popular Brazilian music now, having abandoned the old tradition of only playing carnival music with samba}

Venue: Praça Onze - Centro (Downtown)
Admission: R$5.00 (on the door)

E. MERRY MAKING IN LAPA (RIO FOLHA)

It takes place near the Arches of Lapa, where the young usually gather Friday nights all year around.

Rio Carnival has been long known as a nursery for novelties of rhythm and styles. It always has pleasant surprises featuring concerts ranging from traditional Brazilian music to the latest trends.

{A total hotchpotch of all styles and qualities; young crowd; go once; best late at night}

There is an eating area (of Brazilian style, do not expect any sophistication) which includes little drink and barbecue stands. Lots of booze and cheap “junk” food. The essence of Brazilian life.

Venue: Arcos da Lapa – Lapa
All Carnival nights (Friday-Tuesday) after 20.00
{Go late and just linger around and let it go; more suitable for the young}
F. POPULAR STREET PARTIES

From Carnival Saturday to Tuesday, open-air dances take place throughout the city. The emphasis is on joy and spontaneity. The biggest and most organized one is on Cinelândia Square.

DANCES AT CINELÂNDIA

At Cinelândia, the open-air party lasts for five days to the sounds of acclaimed orchestras and singers, symbols of carnival music, reviving the atmosphere of the carnival balls of the past.

There is a stage on the square with the idols and most well-known singers of the times of the wireless (from the 40-60s). Good, old Brazilian-Rio music, mainly samba. The crowd (mainly older and working-class people) joins in with all vigor and dances away just like in the good old times.

{Go at least once, you will be transformed, returning to old times, a way of life and fun long disappeared in the West}
Venue: Praça Floriano - Cinelândia - Centro (Downtown)

Every Carnival night (Friday-Tuesday)

OUTSIDE THE SAMBODROMO

On Samba Parade nights, it does not only get packed and crammed inside the Sambodromo. Before, during and after the Parade, thousands of people gather on the streets around the Sambodromo, too. They are also joined by those who paraded in costume and just want to party more, making the crowd even more colorful with their fancy-dresses. It turns the whole downtown area into a huge and lively open-air bar.

{Go and join in by all means but dress down and have no valuables with you, every year people get mugged there, tourists being the obvious target}

G. STREET BANDS

They are an absolutely essential part of the Rio Carnival. Street bands (mainly bass) moving through the streets and all people joining in, drinking and dancing away. All you have to do is to turn up and join in; you can also buy the respective T-shirt and start already dancing before the group even takes to the streets.
{Go to a few ones probably in Av. Rio Branco and to the **The Band of Ipanema** - we have pre-selected for you the most interesting and well-known ones}

The biggest ones take place in Av. Rio Branco, Downtown (Centro). From Saturday to Tuesday you can see the greatest variety of street bands there, and it is where the merrymaking is at its wildest. A visit at the end of the afternoon is always entertaining.

The most famous Carnival bands are

- **Cordão do Bola Preta** is one of the most traditional bands parading downtown
- **The Street Band of Ipanema (Banda de Ipanema)** goes out on three separate days in Ipanema, followed by a huge crowd with lots of gay revelers
- **Suvaco do Cristo** parades in the Botanic Garden District, right below the Redeemer's arm. The name translates into "Christ's armpit" in English, and was chosen for that very reason
- **Carmelitas** was supposedly created by nuns but in fact it is just an allegory of the band. It parades in the hills of Santa Teresa

We are listing here a selection of the best Carnival Street Bands

**ZONA SUL**

- **Simpatia é Quase Amor**
  City District: IPANEMA
  Parade: One Saturday before Carnival and Carnival Sunday 17:00
  Route: Teixeira de Mello and Vieira Souto - Posto 10 (Country Club)

- **Imprensa Que Eu Gamo**
  City District: LARANJEIRAS
  Parade: two Saturdays before Carnival 16:00
  Route: Mercadinho São José das Artes, Rua Gago Coutinho
**Banda de Ipanema**
City District: IPANEMA
Parade: both Saturdays before Carnival and Shrove Carnival 17:00
Route: Praça General Osório, Ipanema Beach, Leblon

**Monobloco**
City District: COPACABANA
Parade Sunday after Carnival 9:00 am
Route: along Av. Atlântica

**Rancho Flor do Sereno**
City District: COPACABANA
Parade: Carnival Monday 18:00
Meeting: Bar Bip-Bip, Rua Almirante Gonçalves 50
Route: Av. Atlântica, along the beach

**Suvaco do Cristo**
City District: JARDIM BOTÂNICO
Parade: Sunday before Carnival 13:00
Meeting: from noon onwards at Bar Jóia (on the corner of Rua Jardim Botânico and Rua Faro)
Route: Rua Jardim Botânico, Praça Santos Dummont, in front of the Jockey Club

**Bloco Que Merda é Essa?!**
City District: IPANEMA
Parade: Carnival Sunday 14:00
Meeting: corner of Rua Garcia d'Ávila and Nascimento Silva
Route: Garcia d'Ávila, Vieira Souto to Arpoador

**Bip-Bip**
City District: COPACABANA
Parade: Carnival Saturday at 00:01am and Shrove Carnival at 11:59pm
Meeting: Bar Bip-Bip, Rua Almirante Gonçalves 50

**Esse é o Bom, mas ninguém sabe**
City District: COSME VELHO
Parade: Wednesday before Carnival 18:30
Meeting: Quadra dos Guararapes, Ladeira dos Guararapes
SANTA TERESA / DOWNTOWN

Céu na Terra
City District: SANTA TERESA
Parade: Carnival Monday 16:00
Meeting: Rua Dias de Barros, in front of the Bar do Serginho

Bloco das Carmelitas
City District: SANTA TERESA
Parade: Friday before Carnival 18:00 and Tuesday after Carnival 17:00
Meeting place: on the corner of Dias de Barros and Ladeira de Santa Teresa
Route: Dias de Barros, Alte. Alexandrino and Largo do Guimarães

Escravos da Mauá
City District: DOWNTOWN - Praça Mauá
Parade: Thursday before Carnival 19:00
Meeting place: Largo de S. Francisco da Prainha, close to Rua Sacadura Cabral
Route: Rua Sacadura Cabral, Praça Mauá, Av. Rio Branco, Rua Mayrink Veiga to Largo de Santa Rita, Rua do Acre, and back to Praça Mauá

Cordão do Bola Preta
City District: DOWNTOWN - (Cinelândia)
Parade: Carnival Saturday 16:00
Meeting place: Rua Sacadura Crabral, 373
Route: Rua Araújo Porto Alegre, Rua México, Praça Melvin Jones, Av. Nilo Peçanha and Largo da Carioca
H. DANCING NIGHTS IN THE SAMBA SCHOOLS

This is the best way to make contact with the real samba.

All the samba schools have a rehearsal hall that opens, in most cases, at the weekends for anyone. This can be a covered space or be open-air one where you can dance and learn the samba lyrics that will be sung at Carnival. Definitely an experience not to be missed and which won’t be forgotten. There is usually some little admission fee.

The parties take place in the rehearsal spaces of the schools, where the school members and all people interested come together for a dancing night. While dancing mainly to the school’s samba tunes of the year they all sing the song together, practicing it.

It is a bit like a big dance club however with people of all ages, including many old people. You can go to the party of any school. Some of them are very far, even outside of Rio. They can be a bit “too much”, and overpowering at first. We recommend going to Mangueira which is the biggest, safest and most famous one with many tourists.

People arrive much later than the starting time, just like for a club. Go about 2 hours after the advertised time. However you might not get into Mangueira if you arrive after midnight. A note of warning - they are in very poor areas often on the border of the favelas so don’t go flashy or have anything valuable with and on you. Best to arrive by taxi. Nevertheless it is not as dangerous as it appears. The schools are involved and they make sure that the pundits are fine.

This is the full list of all the 12 schools in the Special Group. Just show the address to your hotel stuff or any taxi driver. Everyone
knows them. We recommend the ones in bold as the most accessible and best-known ones with tourists.

**BEIJA-FLOR**  
Pracinha Wallace Paes Leme 1025 - Nilópolis  
Tel: 2791-2866  
Thursdays 21:00

**GRANDE RIO**  
Rehearsals: Colégio São José - Av. Presidente Kennedy  
Fridays 22:00

**IMPERATRIZ LEOPOLDINENSE**  
Rua Professor Lacê 235 – Ramos  
Tel: 2560-8037  
Sundays 20:00

**IMPÉRIO SERRANO**  
Av. Ministro Edgard Romero 114 - Madureira  
Tel: 2489-8722 / 2489-5696  
Saturdays 23:00

**MANGUEIRA**  
Rua Visconde de Niterói 1072 - Mangueira  
Tel: 3872-6786 / 3872-6787 / 2567-4637  
Saturdays 22:00

**MOCIDADE**  
Rua Coronel Tamarindo 38 - Padre Miguel  
Tel: 3332-5823  
Saturdays 22:00

**PORTELA**  
Rua Clara Nunes 81 – Madureira  
Tel: 2489-6440  
Wednesdays 20:00  
Fridays 22:00

**PORTO DA PEDRA**  
Rua Lúcio Tomé Feteira 290 - Vila Lage - São Gonçalo  
Tel: 2203-2705 / 2291-9449  
Wednesdays 20:00

**SALGUEIRO**  
Rua Silva Teles 104 - Tijuca  
Tel: 2288-3065  
Saturdays 22:00
I. PARADE REHEARSALS

REHEARSALS IN THE COMMUNITY

These are real parade rehearsals with the wings and the drummers more or less in place, usually taking place in and marching through the streets. However they happen in the schools’ communities which are a really long way and in very impoverished areas. You can go to watch
this type of rehearsal of any school but you can only participate in the one of your own School with which you will parade.

{They can be dangerous for tourists, only go with local people}

REHEARSALS IN THE SAMBODROMO

There are grand, main rehearsals which already take place on the samba run-way in the Sambodromo itself. It is almost like the Parade only without costumes and floats (their places are usually taken by busses) and with less people. They have already started at the beginning of December and they are a few almost every weekend. You could go to last rehearsal in the Sambodromo

Sunday, February 15th

19.00 Testing of lights and sound with the Samba School Beija-Flor, the 2007 and 2008 Champion

{It is beautiful; we recommend it.}

You can go and watch it. It’s free. You can try most Grand Stand sectors although it will be very busy and you will have to elbow your way and fight for your space. It is a good opportunity to warm you up for the great party that will develop during Carnival.

After the rehearsal there will be a big free street party with very good live samba music and people dancing on the samba run-way. Some will already wear costumes and colorful dresses. It is a true experience.

Outside the Sambodromo there will be an eating area (of Brazilian style, do not expect any sophistication) which includes little drink and barbecue stands. Lots of booze and cheap food - the essence of Brazilian life.

J. SAMBA CITY
This is a recent project of the city to bring the “factories” of all the 12 samba schools in the Special Group under one roof. Every school has its own block within the compound, to produce its floats and many of its Samba Parade costumes. It is also meant as a tourist attraction to introduce visitors to the production part of the samba schools’ activities.

The lay-out of Samba City is of a geometric shape, with the factories surrounding the main square. They are meant to symbolize the parts of a bigger group, linking hands, forming a large circle. The world of samba is embracing here its ancestors, who came to this place during the 17th and 18th centuries, bringing African art, dance and music, to make them integral parts of the culture of today’s Brazil.

Go and ‘peep behind the scenes’ to gain some insight into how Rio Carnival is actually ‘produced’. It is in a dangerous area however, best to go by taxi and do not walk around outside the compound.

Address: Rua Rivadávia Correa 60, Gamboa
Open Tuesdays to Saturdays 10:00-17:00
Admission: R$10.00 (Rio residents: R$5.00)
Shows for all visitors at 10:00, 12:00 and 15:30
Tel: 2213-2546 / 2213-2503

Disclosure

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All efforts have been made to have all dates, times and prices correct. However there might be mistakes. Please check with the venue before making your arrangements. We cannot take responsibility for decisions made on the basis of this Guide.

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USEFUL INFORMATION, NUMBERS IN RIO

Office Hours During Carnival
Our Hospitality Desk will function at the

Rio Othon Palace Hotel
Avenida Atlantica, 3264
Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, RJ
Thursday February 11th thru Tuesday February 16th and February 19th and February 20th, to assist those who booked for the Winners’ Parade. 
From 10 AM to 5 PM Local Time.
Click here to see location in Google Maps.

The Internet! Always!

All emails will be answered/checked during business hours from 10 AM to 5 PM daily, including Saturday and Sunday during Carnival.

Emergency Phone Numbers:

For Tickets, transfers to sambadrome, costumes: 021-7566 0633
For hotel accommodations, airport transfers and tours : Blumar 021-7845 5940