

Welcome to Brazil

Living and learning in a land of Contrasts

As we continue our travels around the world, we make our next stop in Brazil, located centrally on the South American continent. Brazil is a diverse land consisting of wild, untamed tropical jungle on one extreme to large,



modern, metropolitan centers on the other. Its borders reach from the glimmering beaches and sparkling Atlantic waters on the east to the cool, dry mountainous regions of the Brazilian Highlands toward the west. This fascinating country is the fifth-largest nation in the world geographically and the fifth-most populated country as well.

The Location

Brazil is home to the Amazon River, the largest river on Earth (not to be confused with the Nile River in Egypt, which is the longest in the world). The Amazon River alone carries 20 percent of the river water that pours into the world's oceans. The first European explorer to find this mighty river did so because he noticed fresh water while he was still 200 miles out at sea. He turned toward its source and found the great and powerful Amazon waterway.

The Amazon rainforest that grows up and tangles around this impressive river system is the home to more than three hundred mammals, including fierce jaguars and leisurely sloths; thousands of species of fish and birds, among them



the flesh-eating piranha and the beautiful toucan; tens of thousands of trees; and hundreds of thousands of other types of plants. The number of insects that live in this environment, probably somewhere in the millions, is beyond the knowledge of scientists who do not think they will ever

discover and count them all. Reptiles and amphibians are in abundance as well, and the Amazon rainforest is the only place on Earth that you will find the great horned frog or the massive anaconda. (To see a short [and incredible!] video of an anaconda stalking its prey, attacking it, and then swallowing it—whole—visit this website: http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/animals/mammals-animals/rodents-and-rabbits/anaconda_stalkscapybara.html. **Warning: It's pretty shocking to see how the snake swallows its prey. I recommend that you view it first and then show it to your students, if you approve of it.**

Brazil's climate and weather patterns fluctuate very little from season to season since 90 percent of the country is located within the tropical zone between the equator and the Tropic of Capricorn, whose latitude is 23.5 degrees south of the equator. These imaginary lines (along with the Tropic of Cancer to the north) define the region of the Earth that receives the most direct sunlight during the course of the entire year. Temperatures along the equator are high all year round, ranging from 77–104 degrees Fahrenheit. Southern Brazil experiences cooler temperatures with occasional frost in the wintertime (June–August; remember that Brazil is in the Southern Hemisphere).

The native language of Brazilians is Portuguese, not Spanish. In 1500, explorers from Portugal arrived and began to set up trading posts for the collection of the desirable brazilwood, which was used to make a beautiful red dye. Eventually, more settlements were founded along the coast, including Rio de Janeiro and the city of Salvador (Brazil's capital until 1763), as the Portuguese

learned that sugar grew well in this part of the world. This sugar crop became by far the most important Brazilian colonial product until the early eighteenth century, when gold and diamond deposits were discovered in the state of Minas Gerais in southern Brazil. With these discoveries came the burden of excess taxes from the Portuguese Crown, which led to growing unrest and a movement among the people toward independence, which did finally occur in 1822.

African slave power fueled the production of sugar and coffee, which became exceedingly profitable. The colonial years in Brazilian history were extremely turbulent and marked by numerous revolts, including the Male Revolt, which was the largest urban slave rebellion in the Americas and took place in 1835 in Bahia (now known as Salvador). Slavery was finally abolished in Brazil in the year 1888 and thus Brazil became the last country in the Americas to ban slavery.



Today Brazil still exports coffee but uses a paid labor force to do so. Other major exports from Brazil are soybeans, orange juice, textiles, footwear, iron ore, steel, automobiles, aircraft, and ethanol. In fact, Brazil is leading the way as the world's largest ethanol producer (an alternative fuel made from sugar cane), which is widely used in automobiles within the country of Brazil and around the world.

Despite its modern advances, Brazil still struggles with various social and economic issues, such as poverty, urban violence, growing social security debts, and low minimum wage. These issues are mainly found within the large cities, where *favelas*, similar to slums, are

rampant and many people suffer from below-par living conditions. However, in the rural areas, primarily in the northern part of the country, there are still people groups who are hunter-gatherers and lead semi-nomadic lives. Many of these tribal groups who live in isolated regions of the Amazon jungle have only recently been discovered.

Homeschooling

With such a variety of living conditions and people groups, education in Brazil has become a heated topic during the last thirty to forty years. Among a large portion of the population, education has not been a priority. In fact, children from the age of ten (and sometimes even younger) have been needed to work on the family farms and to help provide for the family's financial needs. For this reason, there is a high rate of illiteracy among Brazilian adults today.

To combat this high rate of illiteracy, in 1988 the government of Brazil declared compulsory attendance laws for children between the ages of seven and fourteen. The Council of Education has banned homeschooling in their country for fear that children will not receive the education that they are now guaranteed by the Brazilian Constitution. Attendance rates in public and private schools have skyrocketed to 97 percent as of the year 2000, up from 40 percent in the 1960s. The Council states that it does not want their country to slide backward into illiteracy once again.

Although these fears are understood and recognized, there are approximately one hundred families in Brazil who are fighting for the right to



homeschool their children. They argue that they are responsible, loving families who will not drop the ball when it comes to their children's education. In a recent case put forth by the Carlos Vilhena family, who has been successfully homeschooling for more than ten years, homeschooling was declared an inappropriate method of education within the country of Brazil.

The Brazilian Embassy declared that "although homeschooling may be a very effective system of education in the United States, current Brazilian law does not authorize it and the highest educational priority of the Brazilian government is to ensure that all children receive at least the formal education provided free of charge by the public schools. . . . An educational policy that has been effective in one country [the U.S.] may not necessarily be implemented in other countries with the same results." Read the full letter here -

<http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/Brazil/20011121.asp>.

Chris Klicka of the Home School Legal Defense Association responded, "More and more families in Brazil are considering or actually beginning to homeschool their children. Although Brazilian children are receiving a good education at home by their parents, this method of instruction has still not received official recognition by the government. In fact, the Council of Education has recently condemned home schooling in the Vilhena case. This is a travesty for a free nation like Brazil to deny parents the fundamental human right to direct the education and upbringing of their children." Read Klicka's entire response to the Brazilian Embassy here -

<http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/Brazil/20011120.asp>.

Klicka believes that it is the parents' job to direct the education of their children, not the state's job, regardless of which country you live in. It is hard to say if and when Brazilian parents will receive the right to school their children at home, but many families in Brazil are praying for it urgently because they believe it is the best choice of education for their children. If you will, please take a moment to breathe a prayer on their behalf.

Unit Study

Now that you have read the chapter, it's time to dive in for some hands-on learning to cement your student's growing knowledge of this South American country.

- 1. READING SELECTIONS** - Let's start with some extra reading. Listed below are some great books about Brazil, or set in the South American country of Brazil, that will provide many hours of enjoyable reading. The links below will take you to Amazon.com for more information, but you may be able to find these at your local library. Read for pleasure alone, or have your kids write a book report on one of these selections.



- [B is for Brazil](#) by Maria de Fatima Campos
- [Count Your Way Through Brazil](#) by James Haskins and Kathleen Benson
- [Brazil](#) by Alberto Taliani
- [Brazil in Pictures](#) by Thomas Streissguth

The first book listed above - **B is for Brazil** - is for younger readers. *"From the wilds of the Amazon rain forest to the busy streets of São Paulo; from C is for Carnival to J is for Jangada; from football to Zebu cattle; B Is for Brazil shows this lively South American country in all its colorful diversity."* The next book - **Count Your Way Through Brazil** - teaches your children (ideal for ages 9-12) how to count in Portuguese (official language of Brazil) while learning about a faraway country in the process. In Brazil, Haskins and Benson present an engaging look at this vast country through snippets of information about its people, products, and way of life.

The final two books listed above are great all-around books depicting life in Brazil. These are also geared toward 9-12 year olds. If you would like one more book for the younger kids, check out **Dancing Turtle: A Folktale from Brazil** by Pleasant DeSpain.

2. **HISTORY & TIMELINES** - Learn more about Brazil by compiling historical facts and events from its turbulent history and adding them to your timeline. If you do not have a timeline that you are currently working on, you can construct one by following these directions - [How to Make a Timeline Easily](#). Here is a link to a wonderful resource for timeline entries about Brazil - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1231075.stm>. Here is another one, a little bit more simplified for kids - <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/42/083.html>.
3. **MAPWORK** - A unit study would not be complete without taking a good look at the lay of the land. Pages 80 and 81 contain both a labeled and unlabeled map of Brazil. Have your students mark some of the major cities, the neighboring countries, and the ocean to the east, at the least. For older students, have them use your teacher's map and fill in the rest!
4. **RECIPES** - This is my favorite part - the food from the land! I'm not very familiar with Brazilian cuisine, or any South American cuisine for that matter. But these recipes sound delicious!

Here are a few favorite dishes for the locals. Enjoy!

For an appetizer, you might want to try...

Mandioca Frita (Deep-Fried Manioc)

2 maniocs (also known as "cassava" or "yuca")
water
salt
oil for deep-frying

1. Peel and wash the manioc
2. Cut the manioc into strips
3. Boil the manioc in water with salt
4. Drain and allow to cool
5. Heat the oil in a frying or sauce pan
6. Add the manioc and fry until golden brown
7. Drain on paper towel and sprinkle with salt
8. Serve immediately



Salada de Batata Com Atum (Potato Salad with Tuna)

5-6 potatoes
1 can of tuna
1 cup of mayonnaise
1 tablespoon of olive oil (optional)
chopped green onion
lemon juice
salt and pepper

1. Rinse the potatoes and boil them in water with salt
2. Peel the cooked potatoes and cut them into small pieces
3. Place the potatoes in a bowl and add the drained tuna
4. Add mayonnaise, olive oil, lemon juice, green onion, salt and pepper to taste.
5. Mix well, cover and keep in the refrigerator until ready to serve.



Arroz Branco (Brazilian Style Rice)

Most Brazilians eat rice with beans for lunch and dinner every day!

- 1 tablespoon of oil
- 1 small chopped onion
- 1 clove of crushed garlic
- 1 cup of rice
- 1 1/2 cups of boiling water
- 1 teaspoon salt

1. Sauté the onion and garlic in hot oil.
2. Add the rice and stir-fry well
3. Add the water and salt
4. Let the water boil for a few minutes
5. Cover the pan and lower the heat
6. Once rice is cooked, turn off the heat and let it rest for about 10 minutes
7. Place rice in a bowl - it is ready to serve!

Note: Rice with carrot or tomato is also popular in Brazil. Add either of these ingredients during the first step, while you are sautéing the onion and garlic.



Bisteca de Porco Frita (Pan-Fried Pork Chops)

- 4 pork chops
- 1 clove of crushed garlic
- finely chopped parsley
- lemon juice
- salt & pepper to taste
- oil for pan-frying

1. Place the pork chops in a bowl
2. Season with garlic, parsley, lemon, salt and pepper
3. Cover the bowl with saran-wrap and place in fridge for 1 hour or longer
4. Pan-fry the pork chops in hot oil until golden brown
5. They are ready to serve!

Banana Frita (Fried Bananas)

In Brazil, there are many types of bananas to choose from, such as banana-nanica (dwarf banana), banana-maca (apple banana), banana-prata (silver banana) and more.

- 2 ripe bananas
- 2 teaspoons of butter
- cinnamon and sugar to taste

1. Peel the bananas
2. Heat the butter in a non-stick pan
3. Add the bananas and fry until golden brown
4. Place the bananas on a plate
5. Sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar

Notes: You may add honey and raisins to the bananas when frying them. Fried bananas go very well with vanilla ice cream and/or whipping cream. Brazilians also eat fried bananas with their meal, but the bananas would be coated in egg and then breadcrumbs.



5. CRAFTS -

The people of Brazil make some amazing and exquisite craft items that they use and sell to make a living, including weaving, beadwork and jewelry design.

Here are a couple of fun projects that you can do with your children. The first one is a little easier than the second.



Make a Brazilian mask:

http://www.kiwimagonline.com/ecocrafts/ecocrafts_brazilianmask.php

Create an exquisite Brazilian bead bracelet:

http://www.ehow.com/how_13435_make-beaded-bracelet.html



And remember to have fun!

Around the World

BRAZIL



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