

One Month Before Carnaval, 425 Blocos Get Permits to Parade Through Rio

Written by Lana Cristina

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Rio's most famous event during the city's Carnaval celebrations is, of course, the huge parade ("desfile") of the main samba schools ("escolas de samba") that have as many as 5,000 participants.

But hundreds of much smaller schools, known as "blocos," pop up all over the city and parade around neighborhoods. They are what gives Rio Carnaval its special flavor.

This year no less than 476 blocos requested permission to parade. Only 425 got authorization.

According to Riotur, the city's tourism office, authorization depends on a bloco's history and traditions, parade routes and what they call "logistics," that is to say, how much the parade will disrupt things like traffic.

According to the head of Riotur, Antônio Pedro Figueira de Mello, for this year's Carnaval celebrations the city will set up 15,000 portable bathrooms, 80 mobile intensive care units, mobilize a thousand people (traffic facilitators) who will work with the police to keep the city from coming to a standstill and distribute 500,000 explanatory pamphlets.

"Our concern was to analyze each request for parading, watching the city as a whole, giving attention to the Carnaval, which is the principal feast of our calendar, but also and mainly taking care of the locals.

"We did a thorough evaluation in order for the street revelry in Rio not to lose its roots and brightness, while the revelers can have fun, avoiding conflicts of routes and giving reassurance to locals across the city," says Mello

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In less than 40 minutes more than 36,000 tickets for special bleachers and individual chairs of the special group of Rio's Carnival sold out. The parades take place on February 19 and 20.

According to the Independent League of Samba Schools of Rio de Janeiro (Liesa), the sale was made by phone only to those who live in the area code 21, a number reserved for Rio residents.

Liesa's sales coordinator, Heron Schneider explained that 18,400 tickets were offered for each day of the parade. Prices ranged from 120 to 400 reais (67 to 224 dollars).

He noted that there will be a new opportunity for those who were not able to buy tickets: "We already have scheduled January 23 to make a new call to those who did not make the payment and provide a new sale opportunity."

According to Schneider, January 18 and 19 will be the days to pay the tickets, which can be done through a bank. For this, buyers will have to show up and show the cashier their identity and social security number.

Demand for tickets has increased this year. For the sales coordinator a Liesa, this is due to the fact that the Sambadrome is being expanded. The avenue of samba is getting an extra four modules of bleachers, friezes and VIP boxes in the space occupied by the former sector 2.

Sales of tickets for the parade of champions, which takes place the Saturday after Carnival, will be made starting January 30. As for the popular bleachers, the sale will begin on February 8, also through the phone, and payment should be made on February 11 at the Sambadrome.

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