

## Travel Agents to Get Red Carpet and Free Ticket to Brazil

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One of the most successful products of the Brazilian Institute of Tourism (Embratur) in 2004 will continue this year. The Brazil Caravan began a year ago and has already sponsored 19 trips to 80 spots in Brazil.

147 Brazilian travel agents and 47 foreign travel agents were led to prepared tourist locations. A study carried out by the Embratur's Management of Sales Support found that 85% of the Brazilian agents that took part in these caravans made up travel plans that included the spots included in the tours.

In 2005, 22 of the 27 planned Caravans will be international, that is, they will bring travel agents from other countries to get to know or become better acquainted with the country's tourism possibilities.

"Following this strategy, the trend is to diversify and increase the sale of Brazil abroad," according to the director of Embratur's Leisure and Incentive Tourism, Airton Pereira.

In his view, eleven tourism products were launched in 2003 to increase Brazil's foreign appeal. "We are sun and beach, but we are also golf, resorts, business, events, diving, sports fishing, and ecotourism."

The visits were divided into thematic groups: ecotourism in Bonito, business and events in São Paulo, Cities/Historical Patrimony in Minas Gerais.

The government's strategy seem to be working. Up to September 2004, foreign visitors to Brazil spent US\$ 2.325 billion in the country, an increase of 33.3% over last year.

José Francisco Lopes, at the Brazilian Tourism Corporation (Embratur), says tourism is now one of the top ten sources of revenue for Brazil. And it is not just foreign tourists. Domestic tourism is also up 17% over last year.

Lopes says that tourism is an important part of government plans. One target for the sector is to raise revenue to US\$ 8 billion by the end of 2007, which would mean attracting 9 million foreign tourists. That will be double the number who came to Brazil this year.

Lopes points out that tourists nowadays are more demanding and not willing to settle for pretty sunsets anymore. "They want to see historical sites and go on adventure and ecological treks.

"One very popular place in Brazil is the Foz de Iguaçu waterfalls and surrounding region where 400,000 tourists arrived this year. Most of them from Argentina, along with 26,000 Spaniards, 25,000 French, 8,300 Japanese and 5,000 Chinese," said the Embratur director.

Lopes also says that foreign tourists are visiting Brazil more than once because they are satisfied. An Embratur survey of 36,000 tourists found that 87% said they thought their visit was better than they expected. 97% said they wanted to come back.

"That is the best advertising," says Lopes.

Translation: David Silberstein  
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