
After Discovering João Pessoa I'm Moving to Brazil and Bringing My Friends

Contributed by Richard Conti
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My name is Richard Conti. I am originally from New York City. Being raised in the shadows of the once towering World Trade Center little or nothing surprises me or shocks me these days. I now live and have lived in beautiful Boca Raton Florida on the southeast coast of Florida for about eight years.

No other city has impressed me as much as Boca Raton until I discovered a most wonderful place in Brazil.

A little about myself, I work as a General Contractor and Designer in Florida. I take great pride in our designs and the work we do here. I was more than impressed with what I saw in Brazil and the building costs as well. Let's not even mention at this point the cost of real estate in Brazil, a fraction of what it would cost in the States and elsewhere.

On a personal note, about 4 years ago I met a most wonderful lady named Gleyce and was shortly there after introduced to her son Felipe. Yes, they are Brazilian but both have dual citizenship here in the States and have been in Florida even longer then I have been.

Thus, my interest in Brazil. Through them I have met many wonderful Brazilian people here and Americans married to Brazilians as well. We have formed ourselves a nice happy group to say the least. Brazilians are wonderful people.

An important member of our group is Brian, a Canadian married to a Brazilian woman named Edna. Last year he expressed an interest in a real estate project in Brazil to Jay, a friend of ours and myself. So shortly after and after hours of research and reading we were off to the city he was interested in called Natal, in northeast Brazil on the Atlantic Ocean. The northeast unlike many other areas in Brazil has summer-like weather all year long with a presence of cool ocean breezes.

We spent ten days in Brazil altogether. To say the least I was not very impressed with Natal as the articles we researched were dishonest to say the least and not as accurate as they could have been. I found the entire city to be almost as dishonest right down to the police.

Prostitution was more then evident especially during the evening hours by the beaches. The city was dirty, disorganized, in a state of disrepair and not as friendly as it could have been.

The one good thing about this trip was a day trip on the advice of a young man and now a friend to take a drive to a nearby city called João Pessoa, nearby... well in Brazil that is about a two hour drive over some roads that are not in the best of condition with very few lights along the way. Othamar lived in João Pessoa.

Brian did not want to go and decided to stay around the pool at the hotel we were staying at in Natal. So we took the car and went without him. Luckily we had his wife's cousin Elias (a Brazilian) with us and he drove and followed Othamar.

Once we arrived in the João Pessoa area we were immediately delighted at the contrast in the two different cities. João Pessoa was a nice town. Unlike Natal in many many ways. With a population of over 500,000 it still retained a quaint feeling that invited you immediately and welcomed you with open arms.

We spent the day driving around and comparing prices for real estate to those in Natal. They were half the price of Natal and the people we spoke with seemed so much more honest and professional than what we experienced in Natal. We left at the end of the day knowing we found an undiscovered city in Brazil.

On our arrival back at the Hotel in Natal we were all too eager to tell Brian of our find. Although seemingly impressed with Natal, Brian agreed to return with us the very next day to João Pessoa and he was just as impressed as we were.

So much so that he returned there a week later with his Brazilian wife who was vacationing in another part of Brazil and joined her when we returned to the States. They both loved it on his second visit and stayed a few days.

For over a year all I have talked about or thought of doing was to return to João Pessoa. This year my girlfriend decided it was time for her to visit her Mom as she had not been back to Brazil for almost four years. She left in June and I followed her there in August and stayed for three weeks myself.

I agreed to go to Governador Valadares as well as some other cities with her if she and her son Felipe would go with me to João Pessoa. She did and we went. To my joy being the person to first introduce her to another city in Brazil, João Pessoa, I was concerned she and her son may not approve, but they loved João Pessoa very much.

Unlike other cities in Brazil João Pessoa is very conveniently located to the airport, which is soon to become an international airport presently under construction. It took us a mere 10 minutes to get to downtown and another five minutes to get to the beach area. Immediately Gleyce brought to my attention the abundance of out of town license plates from other cities in Brazil.

We were picked up at the airport by Othamar's friend, Fabio, and taken to our Hotel. the Tropical Tambaú, a very nice hotel located directly on Cabo Branco beach. What a place, beautiful!

Although we were not immediately impressed with our first room with an ocean view. After voicing our concerns to the management they agreed the Ocean View rooms were in the process of being updated, apologized and moved us to a much newer as well as larger two bedroom suite for the same price with a Garden View. It was Great.

Each morning they fed us like royalty with a huge Brazilian style breakfast buffet with everything imaginable. Omelettes cooked to order, an array of tropical fruits some of which I have never seen nor heard of, breads, cakes, juices, coffees and teas... amazing! And all you can eat too. Brazilians love their meals.

Although Fabio did take us around quite a bit when we were there we did venture off by ourselves on several occasions with no trouble at all. Within minutes of the Hotel there was all anyone could want, shops, restaurants, cafes, vendors and the streets filled with the most friendly happy people you ever wanted to meet and beaches, beaches and more beaches. So much more comfortable than Natal to say the least.

The city was extremely well organized and kept clean day and night by street sweepers. The class of people was remarkably better. The prices cheaper and amazingly low. You felt an immediate connection to the city and the people.

Such a safe, welcoming , relaxing place. No crime to speak of, no hurricanes, no earthquakes, no threats of terrorism and a stress relieving environment of which I have never seen or experienced in my life. It was all I wanted and hoped Boca Raton would be but never was to me. I found it Paradise... a place a person could live like a king for so much less.

After a short while there it was evident that there was an absence of Americans although there were a few, and very few Europeans as well. Just Brazilians from all parts of Brazil. We were however very much welcomed and it dawned on me that no one other than Brazilians knew about this place at all, as a matter of fact I have learned that even some Brazilians do not know about this place. A very well kept secret for sure or at the very least an undiscovered paradise of a city... João Pessoa.

The most memorable part of this second visit to Brazil was of course meeting Gleyce's mom for the very first time and only second by returning to João Pessoa and introducing it to Gleyce and Felipe. They loved it and anyone who visits this place will as well I am sure.

In fact, we loved it so much we are planning on constructing a private community there for ourselves and our friends both American and Brazilian alike. We will call it Vila dos Amigos... Village of Friends, on the beach of course.

A most pleasant place to vacation with your family and even a better place to consider for retirement. Remember the name... João Pessoa as you will undoubtedly hear so much more about this place as people begin to discover it as we did and have.

I am looking forward with great anticipation to years and years of stress free happiness there with my Gleyce and Felipe, and our friends both old and new: American and Brazilian!!

I almost forgot to mention the essentials to Americans... yes they have wonderful malls and plenty of them and the supermarkets are not to be believed.

Born and raised in New York City Richard Conti now lives in Boca Raton, Florida. He is presently doing design work and general contracting, but his dream is to complete his private community in João Pessoa, Brazil, and to move there with his Brazilian girlfriend. Once there he wants to devote time to building many more projects with Americans and Brazilians in mind. The author welcomes comments at Guyfrmbk@adelphia.net. This text appeared originally in gringoes.com.