

# The 3 Little Piggies Are Safe in Brazil. The Trouble Is Revamping Place

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Most people would much rather go to a dentist than get involved with a renovation project. Yet, the reality often places us in situations where taking on a renovation is inevitable. This article is designed to serve as an introduction to the property renovation practices and prices prevalent in Brazil.

We will also look into prices and learn some tips that would allow you to accomplish your goals in time, within budget, and with intact sanity.

Before I went to the United States and had a chance to experience myself the shabbiness and defects of dry wall slap-it-together type of construction prevalent there, I was often amazed by how easily mighty American movie characters were able to punch and crash through the walls.

Of course, the mystery had been quickly resolved during my visit to Houston after a run in with furniture piece in my bedroom that when accidentally moved, pierced the wall as if it were made of butter.

Well, it isn't going to happen with you in Brazil. Brick and mortar construction with hand-plastered walls is not exactly conducive to the super-human tricks practiced in American movies.

While dry wall construction is starting to take off down here, most of the older buildings in Brazil can withstand hurricane-force winds or a all-out brawl involving an American football team inside without incurring substantial structural damage. The three little piggies couldn't have found a safer place to hide than your average older Brazilian apartment building.

Of course, for every benefit there is a price to be paid. The downside of the solid construction practices is the amount of demolition that needs to be done and debris removed in order to implement even small changes to the apartment layout.

Another additional headache comes when electrical wiring or plumbing needs to be accessed or repaired. If you are taking on a renovation in an older apartment, you can rest assured that there will be demolition and ripping out of the old wiring and plumbing involved.

## The Cost

Before we launch into discussion of the intricacies of the renovation process in Brazil it would be a good idea to get some notion about the costs of different renovation options.

Let's take a typical Rio de Janeiro apartment of about 100 sq. meters (or 1,060 sq. feet) 2-bedroom/2-bathroom as a benchmark model for the sake of our discussion. The apartment would be about 40 years old with very little maintenance work done on it over the years.

Some of the typical necessary work that has to be done would include:

- Electrical upgrade including re-wiring and relocation of the electrical outlets and switches.

(Many older apartments can have electrical service set as low as 30 amp single-phase)

- Plumbing/sewage overhaul including extending hot water to all bathrooms and the kitchen.

- Retiling kitchen/bathrooms

- Refurbishing cabinets in kitchen and bathrooms

- Window repairs

- Floor repair and refinishing

Note: Many of the older apartments have maid quarters that include an additional small bedroom/bathroom combination that actually turns this apartment into a 3-bedroom/3 bathrooms by other than Brazilian standards.

The overall cost estimates based on the timeline, type of the finishing materials, and a few other factors would be between 300 reais and 1,200 reais per sq. meter or US\$ 14 to US\$ 55 per square foot.

This price includes labor, material, and finish. In case of the lower end of the price the finishing materials would be very basic, mostly inexpensive ceramic tiles and wall paint without plaster.

The high price renovation could include three-coat wall plastering; marble/granite wall and decorative features in the kitchen and the bathrooms; new kitchen and bathroom cabinets; new hardwood floors for living room and bedrooms; granite floors for kitchen and bathrooms; custom light project with decorative moldings features, etc.

550 reais per sq. meter (US\$ 24 per sq. meter) project. Porcelain tile, non-plastered walls, hardwood wallboards. This project required reversal of a bathroom entrance and relocation of the shower and the toilet seat.

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