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# PORT EXPLORER



## ILHABELA BRAZIL

**B**razil takes up much of the South American continent.

The land mass is nearly 3,300,000 square miles. The nation is so large that to the north, west and south ten different countries ring its borders. To the east is the Atlantic Ocean. Brazil finally gained independence from Portugal in 1822 after three centuries of colonial rule. In 1985 the country returned to democratic rule.

Ilha de Sao Sebastiao is the official name of the island though Ilhabela, the name of the town, is commonly used. Since the early 1500s various and nefarious ne'er do wells used the island as a smuggler's den, pirates hideout, a site for unlicensed slave trade and failed coffee plantations. The island is sparsely populated, with the rainforest having long since reclaimed the cleared land on the west coast. In the mid 1980's farsighted Brazilian political and environmental leaders designated over 80% of Ilha de Sao Sebastiao as a national park. The island remains a protected national jewel.



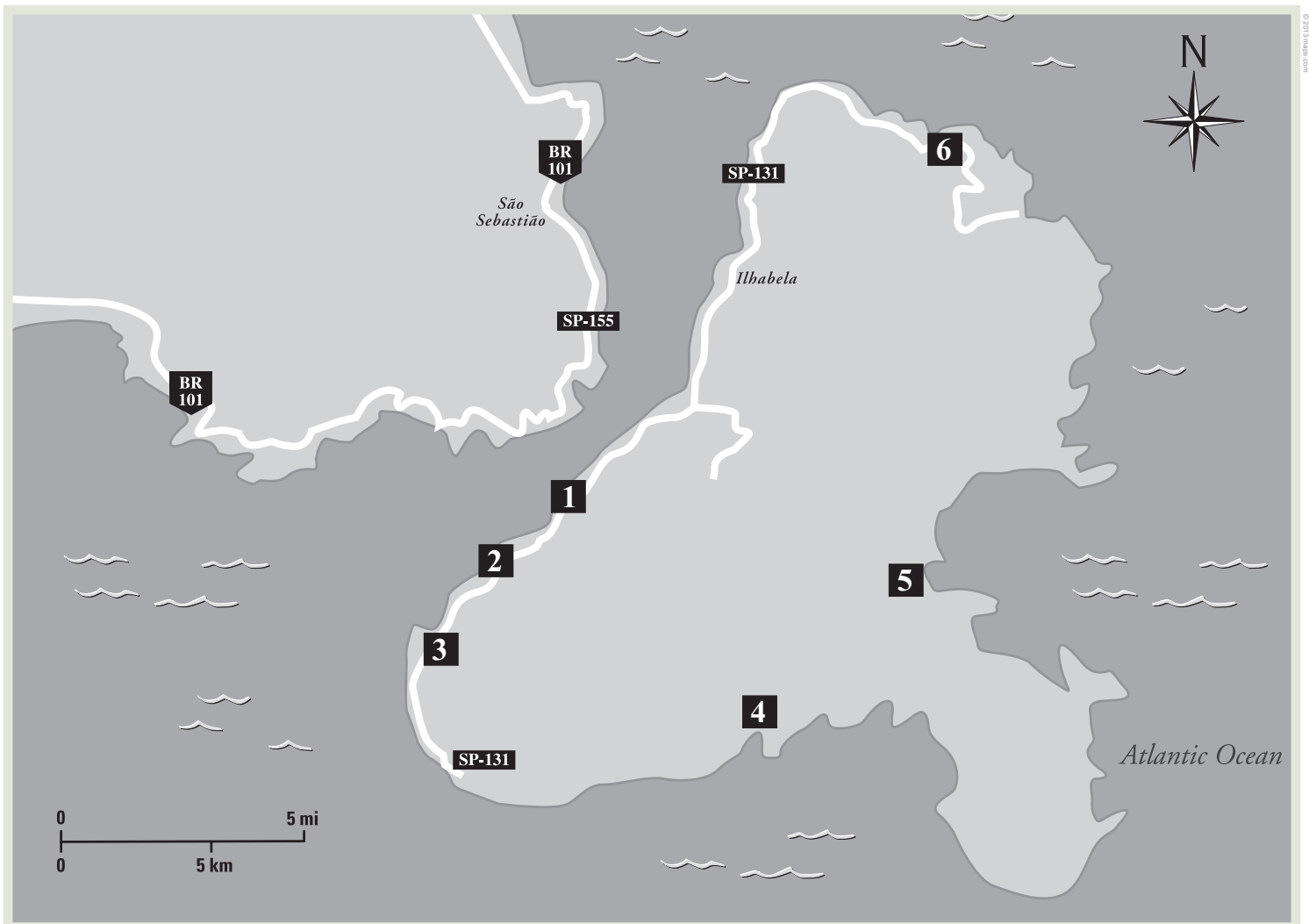
### HISTORY

Prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in the 1500s the island was inhabited by Indians from the Tupinambas tribe. They called their island Ciribai. The great explorer Amerigo Vespucci is credited with naming the island Sao Sebastiao in 1502. It was not too many years later that the island became the haunt of cut-throat pirates and smugglers. Stories and legends of buried treasure still circulate. The numerous sunken galleons that dot the shallow waters of the island are silent testament to a dangerous time long past.

As the indigenous tribes of Brazil had no written language, very little is known about the people before the arrival of the Portuguese. On April 22, 1500, Portuguese navigator and explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral came ashore in northeast Brazil, claimed the land in the name of his king Manuel I, and then promptly sailed away. It would not be until 1549 that Portugal would send a governor together with six Jesuits priests to civilize the native people.

Sugarcane plantations were quickly expanding, however, the Indian slave laborers were quickly dying off by the thousands due to smallpox and measles introduced by the Portuguese and against which the indigenous people had no immunity. Entire tribes were disseminated before they ever saw a European. The Portuguese planters came up with a profitable answer to their frustrating labor shortage. Through African labor colonial Brazil soon supplied most of the Old World's sugar while Portugal, on land and sea, soon dominated the slave trade in the New World.

Brazil declared its independence from Portugal on September 7, 1822, after three centuries of colonial rule. Monarchies, military juntas, dictatorships and eventually Republican Democracies have followed in randomly rotating succession. Brazil's National Indian Foundation (Fundação Nacional do Indio) has worked hard to protect the country's indigenous population yet estimates that fewer than ½ million native people survive today and that just over 20 small tribes still try to refrain from contact with the world outside their own.



## ILHABELA PLACES OF INTEREST

There are many activities available on Ilhabela. Foremost there are the beaches which we will get to in a moment. But the island also offers horseback riding, fishing excursions and wreck diving for certified scuba divers. One of the unique activities is hiking in the state park. The majestic Atlantic rainforest is amazing and the trails are well managed and extensive. Hikers should be sure to take along their swim suits because there are literally hundreds of waterfalls (“cachoeiras”) throughout the park that are great places for a cool dip.

The island can roughly be divided into three parts: the populated western coast, the eastern coast with its secluded beaches and hidden coves, and the park’s rainforest and central mountains that make up the vast majority of the island. And now to the beaches...

**1 Praia Feiticeira** (“Praia” - meaning beach) is a small west coast beach just a few miles south of the pier where the island ferry docks. There are no amenities here but it is a nice beach just the same.

**2 Praia Grande** is a little further south along the coast. This is a long, elegant beach with usually calm waters that make it suitable for swimming.

**3 Praia do Curral** is just a little further south and is perhaps the most popular stretch of sand on the island. It has a number of good cafes and bars that often feature live music. This is a great place to sit back with a cold drink and look out over the Sao Sebastian Channel. Its popularity of course also means that it is often more crowded.



**4 Praia do Bonete** is set in a beautiful and remote cove at the base of the jungle covered mountains in the south/central part of the island. The beach can only be reached by boat or (for the truly intrepid ... and in shape) by a long hike through the forest. There is a small fishing village scattered among the valley’s trees and a refreshing stream that flows into the bay.

**5 Praia dos Castelhanos** is on the secluded eastern coast of Ilhabela. This beautiful white sand beach divides the dark green mountainous rain forest from the deep blue waters of the Atlantic. It has a trail to an astonishing 130 foot high waterfall called Cachoeira do Gato. Castelhanos was voted one of the top 10 most beautiful beaches in all of Brazil. That is saying quite a lot when you consider that Brazil has more than 4,500 miles of coastline.

**6** **Praia do Jabaquara** is another beautiful beach on the island's north shore. There is a beach café where lunch and cool drinks are available.

### **SHORE EXCURSIONS**

To make the most of your visit to Ilhabela and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk.

When going ashore, be advised to take with you only the items you need and secure any valuables onboard. The island is basically a rain forest. If you are sensitive to insect bites, repellent is recommended.

### **LOCAL CUSTOMS**

**Bargaining:** Prices are generally fixed however some small shops may bargain.

**Tipping:** A 10% tip is customary at restaurants.

### **LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES**

Ilhabela is famous for its shrimp. Some Brazilians claim that it is the best in the country. All the seafood in Ilhabela is fresh off the boat. Brazil is a large country but most of the population is found along the Atlantic coast. Brazil's cuisine has been primarily influenced by European immigrants and the descendents of former African slaves. Many of the dishes are regional. Some of the most common include: Feijoada is a stew made with meat and black beans, often served with white rice. Moqueca Capixaba was developed by the Indians of Brazil. It is a fish stew with tomatoes then baked in earthenware. Shell crab, creamy crab meat served in a shell. Shell shrimp, creamy prawn served in a shell. Bait fish, deep fried battered fish bites.

Cachaca is very strong liquor made from sugarcane. It is often mixed with lime, sugar and crushed ice to make a cocktail known as Caipirinha.

### **SHOPPING FACILITIES**

Ilhabela is a natural paradise as opposed to a shopping paradise. There are lots of little tourist shops around town. There is also a small shopping area in what used to be the Sao Paulo Hotel. There you will find some clothing stores that have beach wear, some food and snack shops and a few other assorted shops as well.

### **LOCAL CURRENCY**

Brazil's currency is the Real (BRL). Many shops and vendors will accept U.S. dollars in small denominations. Major credit cards are widely accepted however some shops offer discounts if the item is paid for in cash.

### **POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES**

The Post Office is located next to the cruise ship pier.

Dial the following access numbers to use a personal calling

card:

AT&T: 0.800.890.0288

MCI: 0.800.890.0012

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Taxis are available at the pier and buses run along the north and west coastal roads.

### **TOURIST INFORMATION**

The Tourist Information Office is located next to the cruise ship pier.

### **USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES**

The official language of Brazil is Portuguese.

Hello - Alô

How are you? - Tudo bom?

Thank you - Obrigado

You are welcome - De nada

Yes - Sim

No - Não

Good bye - Tchau (like the Italian "ciao")

