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BRAZILIAN BRILLIANCE

For a distinctive and exotic meetings destination, Salvador de Bahia is an hidden gem with many facets

WORDS RALF WALTERS

With global travel exploding, it's never been a more exciting time to be an event planner, creating "once in a lifetime" experiences for business teams and corporate global attendees practically anywhere in the world. One such easier-than-you-might-think destination is UNESCO World Heritage site Salvador de Bahia, Brazil.

Situated off the beautiful southern Atlantic coast of South America in All Saints' Bay, the colorful and historic city of 2.1 million people and the nearby Coconut Coast to the north are delightful places for meetings, conferences or incentive trips. With direct flights connecting Salvador International Airport (SSA) with destinations across the world, including a number of US cities, the region offers MICE venues that cater to a wide range of budgets and space requirements.

Regarded as the "cultural capital" of the Brazilian state of Bahia, Salvador was founded by the Portuguese in 1549, and became the nation's first capital. Remnants of this rich past with its colorful, ornate architecture and cobble streets, still adorn the old city. Bahia is known throughout the world for its African influences, manifested in music, dance, religious festivals and unique cuisine.

"Bahianos" – a proud mix of African, Portuguese and indigenous peoples – are outgoing and welcoming. So don't feel inhibited speaking a few simple Portuguese phrases such as "Bom Dia!" (Good morning!) or "Obrigado!" (Thank you!) and "Tchau" (pronounced "Chow" for-Good-bye) when given the opportunity.

Besides its diverse culture, glorious sun, beaches and resorts, ecotourism is a big attraction here as well. Bahia has Brazil's highest number of distinct biomes: marine, coastal, Atlantic rainforest, savannah and "caatinga" desert vegetation. It is also has the greatest collection of caves in Latin America, as well as waterfalls, crystal clear pools and subterranean lakes. Add golf, wine, watersports and religious tours, and you'll begin to appreciate the boundless opportunities for meetings and conventions the region offers:

CITY OF SALVADOR ARENA FONTE NOVA

A multi-functional space opened for the Confederations Soccer Cup in



2013, the downtown Arena is capable of hosting large-scale events and international congresses, as well as musical productions. Covering an area of 968,751 square feet, the stadium has ten stories, three-tier grandstand seating, food kiosks, press rooms, panoramic restaurants overlooking the field and two big screens.

Total seating capacity: 50,000

Distance from SSA airport: 14 miles

BAHIA OTHON PALACE HOTEL

This oceanfront hotel offers meeting, banquet facilities and two restaurants. One-minute walk to Ondina beach. Guests can visit Bahia Yacht Club or shop in Barra Shopping Center, both within 1.2 mi from the hotel.

Hotel rooms: 278; Beds: 556

Free WiFi, free parking, free breakfast

Total convention capacity: 1,000

Distance from SSA airport: 22 miles

NEW BAHIA CONVENTION CENTER

(opening date December 2020)

Total convention capacity: 16,000



Salvador was founded by the Portuguese in 1549, and remnants of this rich past still adorn the old city

FIESTA BAHIA HOTEL AND CONVENTION CENTER

Located near two of Salvador's famous beaches, Farol da Barra and Lighthouse of Itapuã, the hotel and convention center is also next to City Park. Within walking distance of the hotel is the largest shopping area of the city offering five malls. The old city center and public market (Pelourinho and the Mercado Modelo) are 7.5 miles away.

Hotel Rooms: 244; Beds: 976
 Free WiFi, free parking, free breakfast
 Business center, meeting and banquet facilities
 Total convention capacity: 1,200
 Distance from SSA airport: 15.5 miles

GRAND HOTEL STELLAR MARIS URBAN RESORT AND CONVENTIONS

This hotel and convention center is located on the beachfront of Stella Maris, regarded as being among the best and most beautiful beaches in

the country. It is 18 miles from downtown and the historic center.
 Hotel Rooms 334; Beds 668
 20 meeting rooms, the largest with capacity for 1,300, total capacity 2,500
 Distance from SSA airport: 4.3 miles

HOTEL DEVILLE PRIME SALVADOR

This hotel is located in a scenic landscaped park filled with lakes and rare birds, and is a six-minute walk from Itapuã beach. It has two restaurants, two bars and a tennis court.
 Hotel Rooms: 206; Beds: 412
 Free WiFi, free parking, free breakfast.
 Business center
 Total convention capacity: 700
 Distance from SSA airport: 5 miles

THE COCONUT COAST

About 50 miles north of Salvador, the Coconut Coast is a tropical paradise with a number of resorts boasting convention and meeting facilities. The surroundings may make you think you've booked Jurassic Park, and though the dinosaurs are gone, the population is no less exotic: tree monkeys, colorful birds, wild turkeys, giant tortoises and a few intriguing iguanas ambling around the grounds. For collegial bonding, these eco-friendly venues also offer outdoor activities that will create a special camaraderie for your team and guests.

ARENA SAUÍPE WITHIN COSTA DO SAUÍPE HOTEL RESORT COMPLEX

The Arena is among the largest event venues housed within an all-inclusive resort in all of Brazil. In addition to three hotels on the beach, it hosts nearly 55,000 square feet of multipurpose space, plus 10,000 square-foot foyer perfect for cocktail receptions or exhibitions. The resort is five miles from the Eco Parque Sauipe nature reserve, but with its own multiple outdoor pools, a lake and zip line, plus five sports centers, spa, gym and a kids' club, there is much to do on site. All-inclusive meals and drinks are served in 10 restaurants and 13 bars. Be sure to visit nearby Project TAMAR turtle sanctuary and marine aquarium.
 Hotel rooms: 1,564
 Distance from SSA airport: 52 miles

GRAND PALLADIUM IMBASSAÍ RESORT

Located within the Imbassaí nature reserve alongside the sea of Costa dos Coqueiros, Grand Palladium Imbassaí Resort & Spa is near the idyllic village Praia do Forte. Featuring modern and exclusive facilities, its meetings and conventions center welcomes corporate events and team gatherings.
 Hotel rooms: 654 Beds: 1,308
 Total convention capacity: 450 people
 Distance from SSA airport: 42 miles

CASTRO ALVES CONVENTION CENTER AT IBEROSTAR PRAIA DO FORTE HOTEL AND RESORT

Next to Praia do Forte's white sandy beaches, the Castro Alves Convention Center has 13 rooms which can accommodate up to 1,800 people at this luxury Atlantic coast resort. The hotel also offers four spacious conference rooms, a 2,700 square-foot reception patio, nine meeting spaces and one 16,000 square-foot ballroom. The latest audiovisual equipment includes big screens, graphics, sound equipment and support services. The all-inclusive resort has five swimming pools, six restaurants, a sports

complex and various entertainment programs.

Hotel rooms: 536

Total convention capacity: 3,050

Distance from SSA airport: 35 miles

TIVOLI ECORESORT PRAIA DO FORTE

Tivoli Ecoresort is set in a green and luscious natural reserve amid 25,000 trees. All 296 guestrooms have ocean views, and the luxury resort also has two event spaces that cater to corporate and business uses. Casa da Torre is a flexible space that can encompass over 4,000 square feet. A second meeting space, Garcia D’Ávila, totals 2,153 square feet.

The entire resort can be booked exclusively for corporate clients and offers tastefully decorated rooms with balconies, some with panoramic sea views of the ocean just steps away. Team building events are possible with more than 30 outdoor sports activities including walking trails to nearby natural attractions or fisherman’s village.

Hotel rooms: 296; Beds: 592

Business Center; Free WiFi

Total convention capacity: 575 people

Distance from SSA airport: 32 miles

Besides its diverse culture, glorious sun, beaches and resorts, ecotourism is a big attraction here

Below: Tivoli Ecoresort Praia do Forte

great icons of Brazilian culture, Vinicius de Moraes. His living quarters and office, complete with typewriter, mementos and photos, are enshrined to provide a window into this interesting, poetic hero’s life. With two pools and a charming restaurant – Casa Di Vina – the pace of life slows at this romantic getaway. The dinner menu and wine selection is excellent and the free breakfast buffet is varied and fresh. Be sure to add Brazilian chocolate to your cup of coffee or espresso.

HOTEL FERA PALACE

Reminiscent of the famous Flat Iron building in Manhattan, this elegant boutique hotel built in 1934 is within walking distance of many of Salvador’s cultural attractions. The art deco design lends a classic and dignified appeal. From the downstairs lobby, bar and stylish dining room take the quaint elevators to the rooftop terrace with its bar and swimming pool; here, watching the sun set over All Saints’ Bay is a sight not to be missed. If you like strong drink, order a “Caipirinha,” Brazil’s national cocktail, made with cachaça, sugar and lime. On Friday night, the hotel is a popular in-spot for Salvadoran cosmopolitans.

SALVADOR ATTRACTIONS

In no particular order: tour Pelourinho, the old city sector – great for people watching, boutique shops, and many of the following sights: Bonfim Church (founded by slaves), the Afro-Brazilian Museum, Carnival House (opened 2018), Mercado Modelo (public market), Lacerda Elevator (vertical passageway between the upper and lower city), Fallen Cross Memorial, Monte Serrat, Irma Dulce Memorial, Pituçu Park, Abaeté Lagoon and Casa do Rio Vermelho, the house museum and urban forest of world-renowned author Jorge Amado.

For more information about Bahia tourism and meeting venues, contact the Bahia Tourism Hotline: (+55 71) 3103-3103 or visit ba.gov.br/tourismo or bahia.com.br. 

VILA GALÉ GUARAJUBA RESORT

This large resort is located on the seafont of Guarajuba Beach. It has rooms for meetings and international conventions. It is highly adaptable to other events such as team-building activities.

Hotel rooms: 530

Total conventions capacity: 1,500

Distance from SSA airport: 31 miles

HAVE A FEW DAYS LEFT FOR ‘BLEISURE’?

Mar Brasil Hotel in Itapua – Located between the city and the airport near the beach and Farol de Itapua Lighthouse is a charming, upscale hotel that was once home of one of the

