

39 BRAZIL Brasilia, Modern Architecture

Area, 3,287,185 square miles, population, 80,222,000.  
Capital, Brasilia, population, 90,000. Official  
language, Portuguese. National flower, Ipe.

For many years, Brazilians planned to build the national capital in the heartland of their country. Since the beginning of the Republic in 1889, a section in each successive constitution has authorized the establishment of the national capital on the Central Plateau. Even as early as 1823 Jose Bonifacio de Andrada e Silva suggested that the capital be moved to the State of Goias and that it be called Brasilia. However, it was President Juscelino Kubitschek who turned these plans into reality, and on April 21, 1960, the Federal Capital was officially moved to Brasilia. However, Brasilia is not the only city that suddenly sprang up in the Brazilian hinterland. Goiania was the first great and bold enterprise in the sense of achieving the old desire of many Brazilians to transfer the capital to the interior. Also, the creation of Belo Horizonte, more than half a century ago, was an important step toward the development of the interior.

In the late 1940's a study commission for the location of the Federal Capital carried out a thorough exploration of the Central Plateau, which offered advantageous geographic characteristics. The area has an average altitude of 3,300 feet, and Brasilia itself is 3,900 feet above sea level, enjoying a temperate climate. Rains are copious, with two distinct seasons. The rivers are perennial, being fed by subterranean waters during the dry season. The vegetation consists mainly of grasslands suited to extensive cattle raising.

Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer were the outstanding architects responsible for the building of Brasilia; Costa for the planning of the city, and Niemeyer for most of the ultra modern buildings. Nowhere else has

a completely new metropolis been built on such a scale and at such a pace. The basic layout of the city is two axes crossing at right angles, designed to accommodate up to half a million people. In order to adapt it to local topography, one of the axes is in the shape of an arch confined within the equilateral triangle which defines the urban area. This triangle is the seat of the three powers of government; the executive and the Supreme Court at the base, and the National Congress at the apex. The Congress faces a huge rectangular esplanade, along which the ministerial buildings are situated. Congressional offices occupy two 38-story twin towers.

The residential area extends along the arched axis. The civic and administrative centers, the cultural and recreational sectors, the municipal administration sector, the barracks, warehouses, supply and small industry zones, and the railroad station are laid out along the transversal axis, which is the base of the planning system. The cultural sector is next to the Ministry of Education, which is the last in line of the ministries; it is laid out in the form of a park, in order to provide better environmental location for the museums, libraries, planetarium, and the University of Brasilia, founded in 1962.

The people in Brasilia live in super-blocks, or neighborhood units, each of which will eventually have a school, a supermarket, a health center, and a social club with a swimming pool and playground.

One of the most beautiful and interesting places to visit is the Alvorada Palace, permanent residence of the President. This masterpiece of Brazilian modern architecture, which covers an area of around 130,000 square feet, was built in 13 months. Two lakes and a grass-covered garden surround the marble building. One is impressed by the sobriety and nobility of its lines, which give the palace an elegant and harmonious appearance.

The twin towers housing the administrative offices of Congress dominate the Praca dos Tres Poderes, where the Executive Palace, the Palace of Justice, and the two houses of Congress are located. The National

Congress includes a huge area, 656 by 252 feet, with facilities for the public, the press, bar and cafe, hearing rooms, lounges and reception rooms, and the private offices of the president and vice president. The library, restaurant, and 600 offices for congressmen are located in two separate units of 28 floors. Attached to this group is an enormous television hall in which 5,000 persons are able to watch the parliamentary sessions.

At about half a mile from the Alvorada Palace, on the shores of Israel Pinheiro Lake, is the Brasilia Palace Hotel. The hotel offers its guests first-class accommodations, a beautiful panoramic view, and a boite and swimming pool for entertainment. Water sports can be enjoyed at the lake. The building includes three floors mounted on pillars called pilotis.

- 39A Cathedral (project by Oscar Niemeyer)
- 39B National Congress and senators building
- 39C Statue by Sereias
- 39D View of the Alvorada Palace (dawn)
- 39E Church's palace
- 39F Night view of the Alvorada Palace
- 39G Residence of the President (Alvorada Palace)
- 39H Minister's Building
- 39I Brasilia's Museum for History and Art.  
(Project by Oscar Niemeyer)
- 39J Commemorative plaque, detail, Justice Building