

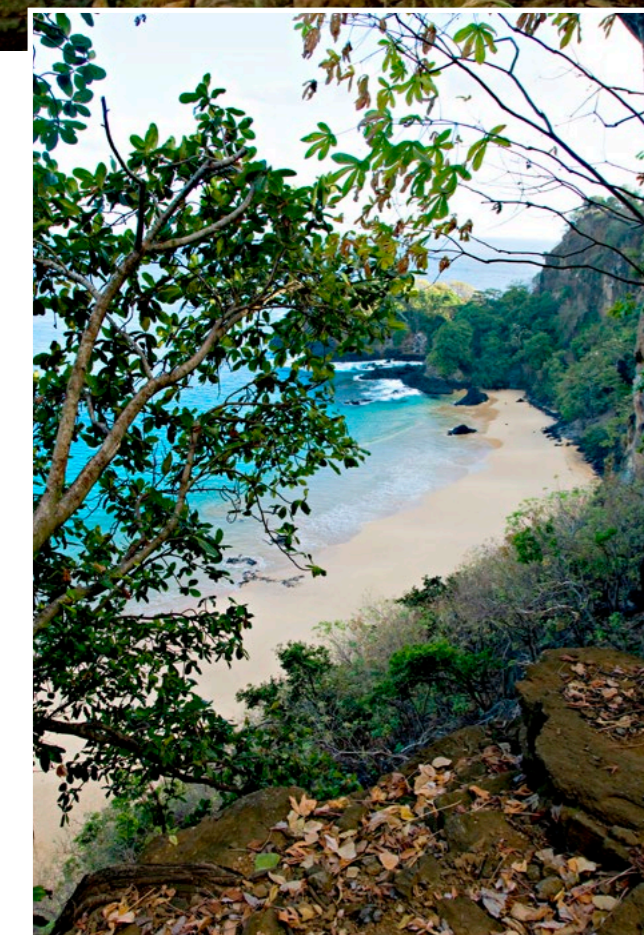


*Brazil's*  
**Fernando de Noronha**

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*Jewel of Nature*





Employees counting dolphins (left side of photo) at Baia dos Golfinhos

**If I were to tell you about a special place where no one locks their doors at night, where crime is virtually nonexistent, where the number of tourists is intentionally restricted to preserve the ecological balance, and where each visitor must pay a daily fee of 15 Euros (approximately US\$20) to protect the environment, would you think about Brazil? Probably not!**

Yet, Brazil's tiny archipelago of Fernando de Noronha still resists the changes and other influences from the continent. The archipelago entails

21 volcanic islands and is located at 360km (224mi) from the closest coast of Brazil (Natal). Spreading over a total area of 26 sq km, it is located in the Atlantic Ocean near the Equator (3° 51' S, 32° 25' W). The main island, the only one which is inhabited, is about 10km long (6m) and up to 3km wide (1.8mi). The archipelago gained international media attention after the terrible accident on 1 June 2009 of Air France Flight 447 flying from Rio to Paris, as searches were conducted by the Brazilian Air Force from the archipelago.'

**History**

Discovered in 1503 by the Portuguese, the archipelago was named after Fernao de Loronha who received it as a gift in 1504 from his friend, King Manoel I of Portugal. However, Loronha quickly forgot this gift and

The fabulous Baia do Sancho

View of Morro do Pico from dive boat. PREVIOUS PAGE: Splendid arch underwater at Pedras Secas







LEFT TO RIGHT: Fernando de Noronha's church; Atlantis dive club fleet; Location where prisoners were punished in colonial times; Buggies are the ultimate vehicles on Noronha

the U.S. forces as a military base during World War II and again in the late 50s and early 60s during the cold war against Soviet Union. Since 1988, the islands have been open to tourism, 85 percent of which being of Brazilian origin. Over two thirds of the archipelago's total land surface is a marine national park, classified since 2002 as part of the UNESCO world heritage.

**Hotels and transportation**

There are no hotels on this preserved site but there are living units, or *pousadas*, in private homes. Infrastructure is very basic. A single seven-kilometer paved road crosses the inhabited island. Buggies are commonly used as a means of

transportation and allow driving outside the main axis.

**Nature and conservation**

The site's nature conservation is exceptional; it has a rich and varied flora and fauna. Non-governmental protection agencies for the study of various species are quite active on the island and entail projects such as the Projeto Golfinho Rotador for the dolphins, the Tamar Project for the turtles, and other projects pertaining to the study of sharks, birds and crustaceans.

Some environmental mistakes made long ago by the Portuguese can still be noticed today. For example, two different lizard species were introduced to eat rats but preferred eggs, chicks and turtles that have just hatched; unfortunately, it is now too late to reverse the process.

**Beaches**

At sunset, whilst visiting Baia dos porcos, you can admire, the Dois Irmaos, the two renowned tiny sister islands. Morro do Pico, an impressive peak rock, is another one of the local spots.

The main island is surrounded by 16 heavenly beaches that are clean and almost deserted, making it almost impossible not to stop and have a look.

Baia do Sancho is without a doubt the most sumptuous beach and is rated first in the Brazilian beach ratings. The water is crystal clear and the shoreline is bordered by dense vegetation. This is an ideal place for snorkeling. You can often see stingrays, turtles, as well as other species.

Nevertheless, access to the beach



is rather difficult, involving a hike down a steep cliff, 50 meters (164 feet) high, if you wish to swim. Two ladders allow crossing of a narrow opening between the rocks, followed by a large flight of stairs that leads to the beach. This is not easy, but it is well worth the effort for both the experience and the view.





Diver passes through a narrow passageway on the way to Caverna de Sapata

### Dolphins' Bay

Baia dos Golfinhos—the Bay of Dolphins—is near Sancho Bay. A large number of spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*) swim together here every morning at dawn. They come to the bay to seek shelter after a night of hunting before returning to their marine odyssey.

These spinner dolphins, commonly named *golfinho rotadores* in Portuguese, are known for their spectacular jumps. They can perform up to seven spins during the same jump. An impressive amount of them can be seen from the observatory at the top of the cliff, some 50 meters above the sea.

Every morning, the employees of the Projeto Golfinho Rotador organization count the dolphins to monitor their progress. Daily, on average, 315 dolphins reach the bay to breed, care for their young, or seek shelter from shark attacks. At times, one can even count up 2,000

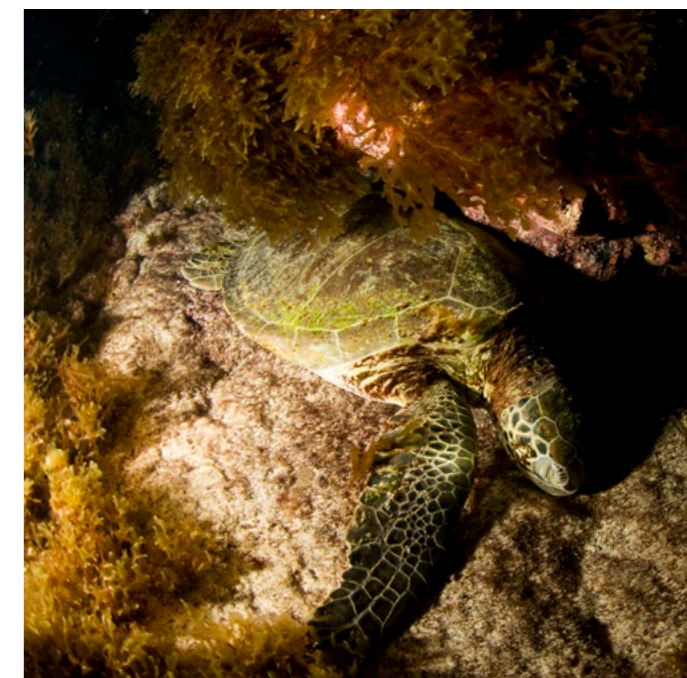
dolphins. Noronha has the largest spinner dolphin count and population density in the world, in a single place.

### Turtles beach

Baia do Sueste is at the other end of the island and sea turtles come there to lay their eggs between December and June. Nests are protected by the Tamar Project patrol (Projeto Tamar). You can see turtles here throughout the year if you swim beyond the bay's surf, equipped with a mask, snorkel and fins.

### Diving

All year round in Noronha, you can have great quality dives, thought to be some of the most magnificent of the South American continent. The water has a pleasant average temperature of 26°C. The visibility is outstanding, ranging from 25 to 45 meters. During the months of September and October, the visibility



is at its best. Although you won't find coral or macro life here as it exists in the Indian Ocean, the underwater world of Noronha is mainly interesting for its volcanic rock formations, narrow

Diver in narrow passageway; Turtle (right) asleep during night dive, Perdras Secas





passageways, tunnels and caves, making it a very special place. Marine species are generally very large and quite numerous. It is not uncommon to encounter dolphins underwater, and if you miss them there, you can often see them swimming alongside boats.

**Sapata Cave**

The magnificent Sapata Cave has a very wide entrance with which a little imagination makes you think of a mouth. A large grouper lives within the entrance, and although it still appears to be quite young, it already weighs over a hundred kilograms (220 pounds).

**Fauna**

During each dive, large stingrays are visible. Barrel sponges are very common. Reef sharks and nurse sharks can be met mainly in the superb reef of Pedras Secas. Sometimes, during a night dive,

you can even come across a turtle sleeping under a rock. There are many schools of fish, and on occasion, you can see manta rays and hammerhead sharks.

**Wrecks**

The Corvette Ipiranga V17 wreck is that of a Brazilian Navy warship that sank in 1982, after hitting a rock that did not appear on any map. She drifted and sank during an eight-hour stretch, reaching the seabed at 62 meters deep (203 feet) in perfectly straight position. She remains in excellent condition.

Diving into the wreck requires trimix, which can be relatively expensive, and requires very accurate preliminary training. On the wreck's deck, there is still a heavy machine gun.

In Noronha's port, there is another wreck which is accessible by snorkeling as it is only about six meters deep (20

Large barrel sponge (above); Stingray at 42m depth (top left); Diver between huge lava rocks (left)





Huge lava rocks underwater (above); Diver in splendid entrance to Sapata Cave (top left); Divers in swim-through (left); Giant grouper, Sapata Cave (right)

feet). These are the partial remains of a Greek ship named *Eleana Stathatos* that sank in 1929.

Fernando de Noronha is a model

of environmental preservation. The tourist industry remains limited due to the small infrastructure and means of access; there are only two medium

sized planes landing there every day. This place has a unique charm as a result of all these factors, making it a true jewel of nature and a true delight to the eyes.

#### Dive clubs and tourism info

There are only three dive clubs in the small archipelago. The nicest and most professional one, with the best ships, is Atlantis Divers owned by

Patrick Muller. The two others are Noronha Divers and Aguas Claras. If you don't speak Portuguese, take a dictionary with you to Noronha, because locals do not speak English. You can also get in touch with Adriana Schmidt from Your Way travel agency in Noronha. She's a great guide and perfectly fluent in English. She can help you with any kind of reservation on the island. Email her at: [adriana@yourway.com.br](mailto:adriana@yourway.com.br).

*Michel Braunstein is a Belgian underwater photographer and dive writer based in Israel. For more information, visit: [www.michelbraunstein.com](http://www.michelbraunstein.com)*

SOURCES: <sup>1</sup> EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/AIR\_FRANCE\_FLIGHT\_447



# fact file



## Brazil



SOURCES: U.S. CIA WORLD FACTBOOK, RAF.MOD.UK, WIKIPEDIA, WWWNC.CDC.GOV

**History** After over 300 years of Portuguese rule, Brazil gained its independence in 1822. It maintained a monarchical system of government until 1888 when slavery was abolished and the military subsequently proclaimed the country a republic in 1889. Exporters of Brazilian coffee dominated politics in the country until 1930 when populist leader Getulio Vargas rose to power. Over five decades of populist and military government passed before power was finally peacefully ceded to civilian rulers in 1985. Brazil, being the largest and most populous country in South America, continues to pursue growth in the industrial and agricultural sectors while developing its interior, exploiting its vast natural resources and a large labor pool. Today, it is South America's leading economic power. As a regional leader, Brazil is one of the first in the area to begin economic recovery. However, there is still large inequality in income distribution in the country, and crime remains a pressing issue. Government: Federal republic. Capital: Brasilia.

**Geography** Brazil is located in Eastern South America and borders the Atlantic Ocean. As the largest country in South America, Brazil shares common boundaries with every South American coun-

try, with the exception of Ecuador and Chile. Coastline: 7,491km. Terrain consists primarily of flat to undulating lowlands in the north, with a few plains, hills and mountains, as well as a belt of narrow coast. Lowest point: Atlantic Ocean 0m. Highest point: Pico da Neblina 2,994m.

**Climate** Primarily tropical, Brazil does have temperate climate in the south. Natural hazards include floods and sometimes frost in the south as well as periodical droughts in the northeast.

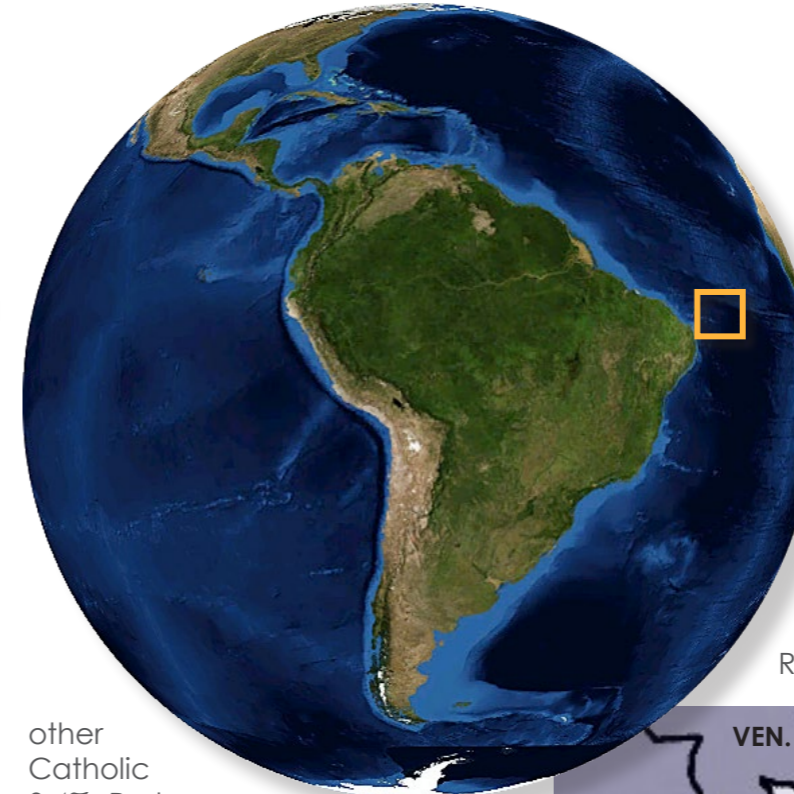
**Environmental issues** Deforestation in the Amazon Basin is destroying habitat and endangering a myriad of indigenous animal and plant species. A lucrative illegal wildlife trade is also having an adverse effect on indigenous species. Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, and other large cities are plagued with air and water pollution. Improper mining activities is causing land degradation and water pollution. Other challenges include wetland degradation as well as devastating oil spills.

**Economy** With vast and well-developed agricultural, manufacturing, mining and service sectors, Brazil has the largest economy of all the South American countries. Expanding its presence in

world markets, Brazil has, since 2003, improved its macroeconomic stability. Economic measures have seen the country's foreign reserves rise and its debt profile fall. Strong growth prior to the 2008 global financial crisis was followed by two quarters of recession but then the country was one of the first emerging markets to begin a recovery. Growth increased leading to rising inflation in 2010, so the government took measures to slow the economy in the following years. Unemployment is at an all time low while the gap in income inequality has steadily decreased. High interest rates attract foreign investors, but the large inflow of capital in recent years has hurt manufacturing, so government intervention in foreign exchange and taxation was necessary. The current administration is committed to fiscal restraint, combatting inflation and maintaining a floating exchange rate.

**Currency** Reals (BRL)  
Exchange rates: 1EUR=3.05BRL;  
1USD= 2.21BRL; 1GBP=3.70BRL;  
1AUD= 2.08BRL; 1SGD= 1.78BRL

**Population** 202,656,788 (July 2014 est.) Ethnic groups: white 47.7%, mulatto (white and black mix) 43.1%, black 7.6%, Asian 1.1%, indigenous 0.4% (2010 est.) Religions: Roman Catholic 64.6%,



RIGHT: Global map with location of Noronha. LOWER RIGHT: Location of Noronha on map of Brazil

other Catholic 0.4%, Protestant 22.2%, other Christian 0.7%, Spiritist 2.2%, other religions 1.4% (2010 est.) Internet users: 75.982 million (2009)

**Language** Portuguese is the official language and most widely spoken. Other, less common languages include Spanish, German, Italian, Japanese, English, and several Amerindian languages

**Health** There is a risk of hepatitis A and typhoid through food and water contamination; dengue, leishmaniasis and Chagas disease from bug bites; as well as malaria, rabies and yellow fever in some remote areas. Check with your doctor 4-6 weeks before your trip for details and updates on vaccination requirements and health risks. For helpful tips for travelers to Brazil, visit <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/brazil>

**Decompression chamber** Fernando de Noronha is remote. There are several chambers in private and military hospital facilities in Brazil's larger cities of Sao

Paulo and Rio de Janeiro as well as naval facilities along the coast, but the closest facility is around 545m (338mi) away in Recife, so please

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Rua Pacifica dos Santos#71  
- Bairro Pais  
Recife, PE Brazil 52010-030  
Phone: +55 81 3423-4431

**Travel/Visa/Security**  
Travellers from North America, most of Africa, Middle East, Asia and Australia are required to



check with your dive operator for more details.

Hospital Sao Marcos  
Rua Domingos Ferreira,  
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Recife, PE Brazil 51011-050  
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apply for tourist visas from their local Brazilian embassy for tourist travel to Brazil. Tourist visas are valid for up to 90 days.

**Web sites**  
Brazil Tourism  
[www.visitbrasil.com](http://www.visitbrasil.com)