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TRAVELING TO BRAZIL



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When tourists or business executives travel in foreign countries, they often turn to their GPS-enabled phones for assistance. Yet unbeknownst to a troubling number of foreign visitors, when traveling in Brazil, many mapping services provide directions through favelas, or shanty towns, which up until recently were “no-go” areas for Brazilian law enforcement. Unfortunately, the decision to rely on their phones’ GPS resulted in death for several foreigners; for others, it led to a very close encounter with criminals who were intent on defending their turf with extreme violence.

168 Murders a Day

While Brazil’s favelas provide an extreme example of the dangers that await visitors in this country, Brazil’s murder rate indicates that the government’s inability to tackle crime extends far beyond the slums. To underscore that point, the Brazilian Public Security Forum, a non-governmental agency, estimates that the country experienced 61,619 homicides in 2016. That’s 29.9 homicides per 100,000 people, or 7 murders an hour. InsightCrime, a news agency focused on reporting the activity of organized crime around the globe, reports that security-related operations resulted in the death of 4,222 Brazilian citizens in 2016, while 453 military and police officers died in the line of duty.



In addition to the country's murder rate, an astonishingly high number of citizens were killed during security operations. Furthermore, crimes of opportunity such as muggings, robberies, and pickpocketing thrive in large cities. In light of the country's shaky security footing, business travelers must exercise caution as they travel around and between the cities that serve as hubs of economic activity. Here are some suggestions to help ensure a safe and productive business trip in Brazil:

- **Never rely on commercially available GPS software.** It bears repeating that commonly used GPS software routinely directs users through favelas. If in doubt regarding the safest way to move around the city, ask your hotel's concierge for guidance on areas to avoid. Or, instead of running the risk that comes with entering a crime-ridden shanty town, consider engaging a prescreened, local driver who has experience navigating around and between business districts.
- **Don't drop your guard around popular tourist sites.** One of the unique threats facing business travelers in Brazil is the potential for crime to happen at well-known tourist sites. For example, robberies take place quite often on the trail leading to Christ the Redeemer. Avoid all tourist locations after dark, and always visit sites with others. Ideally you would visit these areas with a security professional who possesses knowledge of the area as well as the training to defuse an encounter with threatening individuals or the means to prevent an attack with force.



- **Take steps to prevent carjacking.** While driving a car, or being driven by someone else, lock the doors and windows. If you are driving, use the middle lane if possible to avoid being attacked from the sidewalk or median. Leave half a car's length between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you to allow you to maneuver away from an attempt to seize the car. When stopping for gas, pick well-lit gas stations and avoid filling up after dark or very early in the morning.

- **Don't provide criminals with a reason to attack.** Muggings and assaults rely on the element of surprise, and criminals must feel that an attack justifies the effort. Consequently, street criminals look for individuals who appear wealthy but unaware of their surroundings, as they are therefore less prepared to defend themselves. Similar to many countries in Latin America, in extreme cases, an attack can take the form of an express kidnapping, where a team of criminals abduct someone and force him or her to withdraw a ransom payment via ATM to secure his or her release (for more information on how to avoid as well as survive an express kidnapping, [click here](#)).





In a country with a thriving tourist industry as well as the world's 9th largest economy, Brazilian law enforcement continues to wage a decades-long fight to prevent violent criminals and drug-trafficking gangs from dragging the country towards anarchy. So while traveling anywhere in the world comes with certain risks, before traveling to Brazil, take the time to familiarize yourself with the threats you'll face, as one wrong turn could prove fatal.

For additional information on how to prepare for international travel, [click here](#). To learn about FirstCall's security services for traveling executives, including our in-vehicle security and GPS monitoring capabilities, contact us today at:

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