

# Navigating Origins

## BRAZIL

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PHOTOS BY DR. FLÁVIO MEIRA BORÉM AND JUAN GIMENES

BRAZIL IS KNOWN as the country of World Cup football, Gisele, the Amazon and açaí. It's a nation that built its history on the harmony between different peoples and cultures. It's the land of the Carnival, samba and beautiful beaches. From north to south, Brazil is a mosaic of geographic diversity and abundant nature, home to 20 percent of the world's biodiversity. An example of this wealth is the Amazon tropical rainforest, with 3.6 million square kilometers. Learning about this country of continental dimensions, which occupies 47 percent of the area of South America, is a challenge that transcends all of these symbols. Throughout its 8.5 million square kilometers, Brazil keeps its treasures unknown to casual travelers, preserved under the veil of its most well-known icons.

### BRAZIL COFFEE

**PLANTED AREA**  
2.3 million hectares

**AVERAGE PRODUCTION**  
40 million bags

**PRODUCERS**  
300,000 coffee growers

**FARM SIZE**  
From .5-10,000 hectares

**CUP PROFILE** Due to Brazil's diversity, almost any cup profile from other origins can be found.

**MAIN GROWING REGIONS**  
Paraná, Mogiana, South of Minas, Cerrado, Matas de Minas, Espírito Santo e Bahia.

**ALTITUDE** 400-1,600 meters

**CLIMATE** Tropical or subtropical, with a dry winter and warm summer

**HARVEST MONTHS**  
May-September

**PROCESSING TYPES** Natural, pulped natural, semi-washed, fully washed

The same parallel can be made with Brazil's coffee culture, which reflects the country's great calling for agriculture. Brazil's first coffee seedlings were brought from French Guiana in 1727, arriving at the city of Belém in northern Brazil. Seeking regions better adapted to coffee cultivation, farmers migrated south through the states of Maranhão, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Paraná. During this journey, coffee grew to become an essential product for the national economy.

In 1975, Brazil suffered a devastating frost. Many producers abandoned their crops in the south and southeast and resettled in Minas Gerais state, an area less affected by frost. The combination of technology, best practices in cultivation and the farmers' willpower enabled Minas Gerais—in little more than 30 years—to stand out as the biggest coffee-producing state in Brazil. To recognize the country's quality coffees, Brazil pioneered the juried Cup of Excellence competition a decade ago. And today, the country is the world's largest producer, responsible for about 40 percent of production. Arabica makes up about 80 percent of the country's coffee, with Conillon—a type of robusta that has become a valuable commodity in domestic and foreign markets for its use in instant coffee—making up the remainder.

Most of the genetic material used in Brazilian coffee crops stems from the Catuaí and Mundo Novo groups, developed by the Agronomy Institute of Campinas (IAC) in the 1930s. Depending upon the characteristics of each coffee-producing region, different variants are recommended and planted, including Red Catuaí, Yellow Catuaí, Mundo Novo, Acaiaí and Acaiaí Cerrado. Recently, producers

and researchers have begun working together to determine which coffee trees show the highest potential for quality, considering both terroir and processing methods.

### REDISCOVERING BRAZIL

Today, it is not rare to find people who refer to Brazilian coffee as "Santos coffee." Historically, it was common to identify Brazilian coffees by the port that exported them. Rediscovering Brazil's specialty coffee, however, means looking much deeper than



the ports and the country's capacity to service large-scale global demands. Because of the interactions between plants and the many kinds of weather, topography and

soil, almost any flavor or characteristics from other origins can be found within Brazil. The great variety of specialty coffee in Brazil is a result of the country's investment in infrastructure and technology, and the use of various methods of farming, harvesting and milling.

The interaction of these factors has created specific coffee-producing regions that are steadily gaining commercial recognition. The most prominent regions producing quality coffee are Mogiana Paulista in São Paulo state, Chapada in Bahia state, and South of Minas, Cerrado and Matas de Minas in Minas Gerais state. The Brazilian coffee belt has the benefit of a broad range of southern latitudes, embracing production regions from the 14th parallel south to the Tropic of Capricorn, at the 23rd parallel.

One of the first regions to receive official recognition from the Brazilian government is Cerrado Mineiro in the western part of Minas Gerais state. This region was Brazil's first geographical indication for coffee,

meaning that beans grown there exhibit a characteristic "taste of place." Cerrado has altitudes of 500-1200 meters, with annual precipitation of 600-1,000 millimeters and an average annual temperature of 19-24 degrees C. In these drier areas, advanced irrigation techniques enable increased production and expansion of the cultivation area, which was previously barren. Here, coffees are noticeable for their sweet flavor, intense aroma with notes of chocolate, caramel and nuts, delicate acidity, moderate body and long aftertaste.



In the Atlantic forest regions, where climates differ tremendously, a variety of tastes can be found. In regions with average annual temperature of 21 degrees C, altitudes equal or higher to 1,000 meters and annual precipitation of 1,000-1,500 millimeters, the coffees display medium body, citric acidity and herbal aromas, and an underlying sweetness with subtle flavor of lemon balm and lemongrass. On the other hand, high in the mountains of the Matas de Minas region there are gentler temperatures, 1,000-1,200 millimeters of annual precipitation and altitudes of 400-1,000 meters. There, the coffee is stronger and sweeter, with heightened acidity.



In Brazil's cooler regions, like the South Sierras of the state of Minas Gerais, the altitudes are the highest, ranging from 800-1,600 meters. Annual average temperatures fall between 12-22 degrees C, and 1,500 millimeters of annual rainfall is common. In these regions, some of the best coffees in the world can be found, with citric, fruity or floral flavors, delicate and pleasing acidity, solid body, marked sweetness and prolonged aftertaste.

### PROCESSING AND QUALITY

In addition to its different climatic regions, Brazil is also rich in processing methods that help coffees express their full potential.

The production of natural coffee, traditionally known as dry processing, is the oldest method and is broadly used in the regions of Cerrado Mineiro and



Mogiana Paulista, where harvest coincides with the dry season. The natural process tends to be seen as characteristic of large-scale productions and areas where water is not abundant. For this reason, it carries the stigma of as a method applied to coffees of substandard quality. However, natural coffees that are correctly processed from mature fruits can result in exceptional beverages. The presence of the outer skin makes the drying process much slower, with metabolic changes in the seed that can result in a pleasant sweet flavor and a complex, full body, which has become essential in the best espressos in the world.

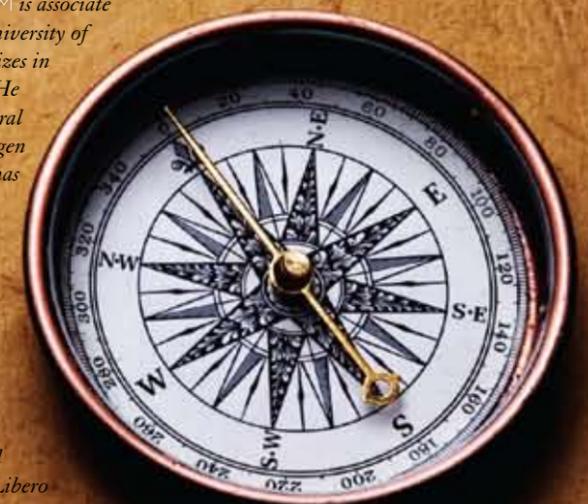
Brazil's producers also developed wet processing technologies as a solution for certain microclimates with mountainous areas and high levels of humidity similar to other coffee-producing countries along the equator. In Brazil, three types of wet processing are used: pulped natural, semi-washed and washed. The most popular are pulped natural and semi-washed. Recently, coffee producers have expressed an increased interest in washed coffee, but the demand for it is still lacking in national and international markets.

Brazil's coffees have taken a significant leap forward in quality with the introduction of technologies and equipment for peeling only ripe fruits—as well as determining how much mucilage to remove—enabling the production of extraordinary specialty coffees in different regions.

Though it is a relatively recent movement in the history of Brazilian coffee, there is a significant change in behavior among coffee growers regarding the quality of their production. They have realized that the sustainability of their business depends on this differentiation associated to best production practices. Brazil has restructured itself from a country that produces a single quality level to a coffee origin with many regions and a vast range of aromas and flavors. Savoring a cup of Brazilian coffee is like getting to know the secrets of the exuberant beauty this country has to offer. It means experiencing the coffees from the forests, the waterfalls and the mountains. These and other treasures make Brazil truly unique in the world of coffee production.

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### BRAZIL FACTS

**OFFICIAL NAME**  
Federative Republic of Brazil

**AREA** 8,511,965 square kilometers

**LOCATION** Situated on South America's Atlantic coast, Brazil is bordered by Venezuela, Guyana, Surinam and French Guiana to the north; Bolivia, Peru and Colombia to the west; and Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay to the south.

**CAPITAL** Brasília

**LANGUAGE** Portuguese

**POPULATION** 155 million

**MONETARY UNIT** Real