

# Bahia

Land of all saints and all gods, Bahia is the main centre in Brazil for religious syncretism (the pairing of saints and gods from the Christian and African religions). The state on whose coast the caravels of Pedro Álvares Cabral first dropped anchor, on the 22 of April 1500, it is one of the units of the Brazilian federation which is most closely linked to the history of the country. Here was founded the first Brazilian capital, [Salvador](#). It was also in Bahia that the mixing of the Portuguese arrivals with the indigenous peoples of the land, and some time later with the Negroes exiled from Africa as slaves, first gave rise to the miscegenation of the Brazilian population. Bahia was the last colonial command to join independent Brazil - it remained loyal to Portugal for two years - and was the scene of the [War of Canudos](#) one of the most bloody popular revolts ever recorded in the country's history.

The state always played a key role in the life of the nation, and from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, became one of the most important economic and cultural centres of Brazil. Bahia has the second largest petrochemicals centre in the country, second only to the state of São Paulo, and was the birthplace of the most innovative movement of Alternative Culture to arise in the country, called [Tropicalism](#), at the end of the 60's. Riding on the worldwide Hippie wave, Tropicalism gave rise to artists like Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil and Gal Costa, three musicians of major importance on the national artistic scene. The state of Bahia is also the birthplace of songwriter Dorival Caymmi and the great singer of [bossa nova](#) João Gilberto, as well as Maria Bethania, one the great voices of [MPB](#), ("Música Popular Brasileira" - Popular Brazilian Music). Also from Bahia are Jorge Amado, the most translated Brazilian author in the world (in 60 countries over five continents); Castro Alves, one of the most discussed poets in Brazil; and [Glauber Rocha](#), a film director who is a symbol in his area.

In Bahia, the religious and secular [feasts](#) carry on the whole year round. It's such a captivating land that many foreigners "adopt" it, as in the case of the sculptor Carybé, an Argentinian artists who has lived in Salvador since 1938. Others, such as the French photographer and anthropologist [Pierre Verger](#), not only adopted it but dedicated their life to studying it. In his main works, Verger expounded on the local religious syncretism. Also, the state of Bahia was always a force in politics, being one of the major leadership influences on the Brazilian scene. The jurist and politician Rui Barbosa was from Bahia, and one of the country's greatest prides, since he participated in the League of Nations conference at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because of his great performance there, he came to be known as the "Eagle of the Hague".

The elements of Brazil come together most perfectly in Bahia, in terms of art, mysticism and music. No other state has so well assimilated the mixture of African, indigenous and Portuguese elements in its cuisine, culture and [religious life](#). These three races came together in such a way that the whole nation was illuminated by their influence. This state, therefore, continues to be the main centre in the country of the [Candomblé](#) (this and other terms come from the Yoruba language of West Africa), the syncretism of African origin which lives side by side with the Catholic church. In its ceremonies, *babalorixás*, *ialorixás*, and *iaôs* (priests or counsellors represented as spiritual "fathers" and "mothers", and their spiritual "sons" - younger members) dress in traditional costumes, dance and sing to the sound of the atabaques (long tubular drums struck with the hand) and agogôs (handheld bell-like instruments), and make offerings to the saints. These rituals invoke the Orixás, spiritual beings who correspond in some ways to the Catholic saints. However, these

cults and the Catholic church have never found it easy to coexist, and even at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there is still tension between them. For a long time, the Catholic leaders pressured the police into repressing the Candomblé, and even now, when it has become more or less accepted, the church continues to penalize priests and nuns who are more tolerant of this syncretism.

As the fourth most populated state of Brazil, with more than 12 million inhabitants, Bahia is the leader in the North-East, and its capital Salvador is the largest city in this region. The Bahian economy has undergone major changes during the last 30 years, with the growth of industrial activity and the modernization of the commercial and service sectors. With the exception of a few centres of development in the interior, this forward thrust in the economy is concentrated in Greater Salvador. This growth has accelerated to the extent that the composition of the Gross Regional Product has changed: industry increased its contribution to the state's GDP, while agriculture declined, as did the trade and services sectors.

The process of industrial expansion has accelerated with the installation, at the end of the 70's, of the Petrochemical Centre of Camaçari. This was characterized by the setting up of small and medium size companies, specializing in the production of intermediate goods and taking advantage of natural resources such as petroleum, natural gas and various types of minerals and agricultural products. The main sectors of the transformation in industry are chemicals / petrochemicals, metallurgy, foodstuffs, nonmetallic minerals and drinks, amongst others. Bahia is one of most mineral-rich states in Brazil. In 1991, an invoice total of US\$ 259.4 billion was recorded : in the trade in this area. Gold, copper concentrate, magnesite, chromite, rock-salt, barite and manganese gave leverage to this trade performance.

In spite of recent recession, commerce and agriculture continue to be strong within the total economy of North-East Brazil. Agriculture has been modernized, mainly in the [irrigated regions](#) on the banks of the river São Francisco, and has surpassed the regional norm for the production of goods. With 11 million cattle, in 1996 Bahia ranked among the six states with the largest herds in Brazil. In addition, there are 4.5 million goats and 3 million sheep. The trade maintains its importance and tradition in the region, to such an extent that the Commercial Association of Bahia, created in 1881, was the first organization of its kind founded in Brazil.

From the decade of the 60's on, [tourism](#) came to figure strongly in the economic profile of Bahia. In a survey conducted by Embratur, the government tourist organization, Bahia was shown to be the second port of entry for tourists to Brazil, after Rio de Janeiro. At the start of the 90's, the state had already received 2 million visitors per year.

## Information Table - Bahia

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[www.bahia.ba.gov.br](http://www.bahia.ba.gov.br)

[www.svn.com.br/bahiatura](http://www.svn.com.br/bahiatura)

Capital	Salvador
Area	567,295.3 km <sup>2</sup>
Towns	415
Location	South of the North-East Region
Population	12.993.011 inhabitants

Population in the Capital	2.302.832 inhabitants
Climate	Tropical
Mean Annual Temperature (capital)	25° C
Time in Relation to Brasília	The same
Density of Population	22,9 inhabitants/km <sup>2</sup>
Urbanization Index	59.12
Infant Mortality	52,0 per thousand live-born
Illiteracy Rate	26,9
Contribution to GDP	4,25%
Representation at National Congress	42 Members of Parliament
Vegetation	Tropical rain forest, coastal swamps, dry scrub and thorn forest and savanna
Tourist Information	Empresa de Turismo da Bahia S/A - Bahiatursa Tel: (71) 370-0110 Loteamento Jardim Armação s/nº, Centro de Convenções da Bahia 41750-270 Salvador - BA

Sources:

IBGE 1998 and Projections for 1999

Abril Almanac

Gabeira, Gabriel Luiz - "Synthesis of the Brazilian Economy", Rio de Janeiro, National Trade Confederation (CNC), 1999