

Pernambuco



The small state of Pernambuco is one of the most exciting and varied destinations in the Northeast. Among the earliest centers of Portuguese settlement in Brazil, it has had five centuries to develop rich cultural traditions melding European, African and indigenous influences, especially in music and dance. Pernambuco gave Brazil the now universally popular *forró* but, especially in Recife and Olinda, you'll discover a whole gamut of musical styles from frenetic *frevo* to the big drum beats of *maracatu* – particularly at those cities' wild and euphoric Carnivals.

Recife, Pernambuco's capital, is one of Brazil's biggest cities, a very urban place with a rich cultural and entertainment scene and a fascinating history. By contrast its much smaller and calmer neighbor, Olinda, is a charming, historic town, full of pretty colonial churches, art and artisans.

North and south of these centers stretches a short but glorious coast with dozens of palm-fringed sandy beaches, great surfing waves and crystal-clear reef pools. Porto de Galinhas, south of Recife, is fast developing into one of Brazil's more popular coastal resorts; Tamandaré and Itamaracá are mellower spots for a more relaxed beach stay.

But Pernambuco's most glittering gem sits 500km out into the Atlantic. The archipelago of Fernando de Noronha is a tropical-island getaway to dream about, its spectacular scenery lined with near-empty, postcard-perfect beaches and surrounded by warm, brilliantly clear waters with world-class diving.

From its narrow coast, Pernambuco stretches 600km inland. Some irrigated agriculture now provides an alternative to sugarcane and ranching in the unforgiving interior, but sprawling Recife is still a magnet for many.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Dance in the streets of **Olinda** (p535) and **Recife** (p527) during euphoric Carnaval
- Dive, surf, snorkel, swim or just gaze at the crystalline waters of **Fernando de Noronha** (p541)
- Bliss out on the sand at **Praia dos Carneiros** (p538)
- Soak up the sun and fun at the beautiful beaches around **Porto de Galinhas** (p537)
- Discover the quirky history and creative art scenes of **Recife** (p525) and **Olinda** (p533)

■ POPULATION: 15 MILLION

■ AREA: 43,910 SQ KM



