

Santa Catarina



Life's a beach. Certainly that's true in sunny Santa Catarina, which boasts 560km of spectacular coastline.

If you like your beach deserted, there is a spot of sand for you in the south of Ilha de Santa Catarina. If you prefer a party scene, head further north on that same island. Crave the life aquatic? You'll find excellent snorkeling and diving at Praia Bombinhas. If you're all about big surf, take your pick from any number of beaches south of Florianópolis.

While beaches might be the main draw, there is more to this southern state than sun and sand. Running parallel to the coast, the Serra Geral offers cool temperatures and stunning mountain scenery, promising rewarding hiking and horseback riding.

The inland regions are also where Santa Catarina exhibits the profound influence of its German ancestry. It is most evident during Oktoberfest, Blumenau's huge festival for folk dancing, accordion playing and beer drinking. But the Alpine architecture and fresh-brewed beer are here to enjoy year-round.

Like the other southern states, Santa Catarina enjoys some of Brazil's highest standards of living. The state's prosperity means that its infrastructure is sound and the people are welcoming.

Keep in mind that, on the coast, crowds and prices go up with the temperature. Visit outside of January and February to avoid the craziness and costliness of summer in Santa Catarina.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watch the sun drop behind the mountains while slurping oysters in **Ribeirão da Ilha** (p341)
- Snorkel in the crystalline waters off **Ilha do Campeche** (p341)
- Sample brews straight from the barrel at the **Eisenbahn Cervejaria & Fábrica** (p346) in Blumenau
- Swim and snorkel from the docks of the floating restaurants in **Caixa d'Áço** (p348) near Porto Belo
- Catch a wave at **Praia da Joaquina** (p340) and you're sittin' on top of the world



■ POPULATION: 5.8 MILLION

■ AREA: 95,433 SQ KM

History

In the 1820s, a newly independent Brazil realized the strategic importance of this region on the frontier between the Spanish and Portuguese Americas. The emperor invited German-speaking immigrants to develop the land and serve as a buffer against Spanish insurgency. The German immigrants – and Italians who followed – never adopted the plantation culture of the Northeast. Instead, the economy was based on small, family-owned farms, a legacy that lives on in the region's egalitarian politics and equitable distribution of income.

Climate

The coastal lowlands of Santa Catarina enjoy a semitropical climate, with hot, humid summers and mild winters. The central highlands are drier in summer and colder in winter. At the highest elevations of the Serra Geral, snow is surprisingly common.

Getting There & Around

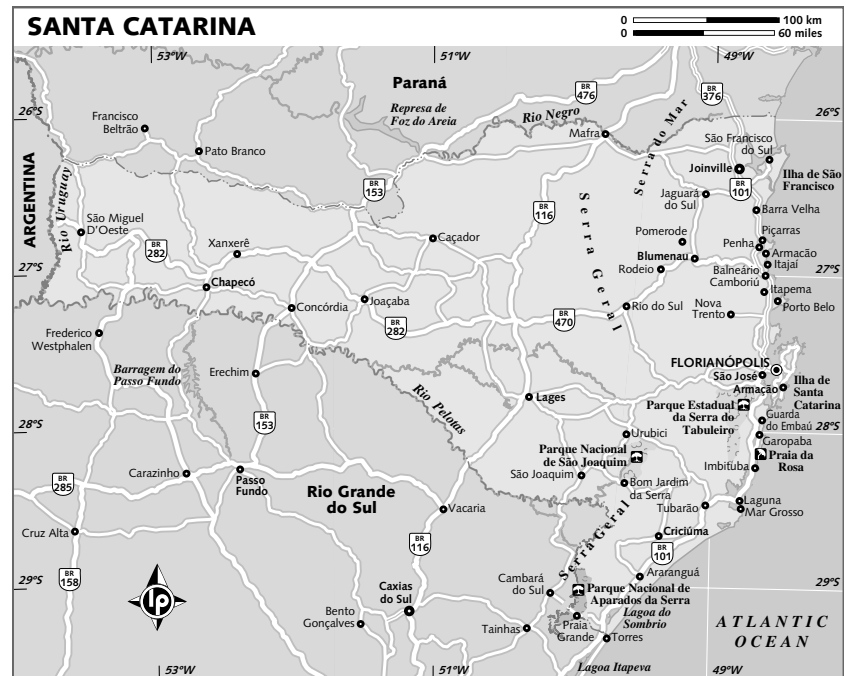
Florianópolis is the state's transportation hub, with direct bus and air services to every

major city in Brazil. Joinville also has direct air services to São Paulo, with connections to other major cities. Most destinations within Santa Catarina are accessible from Florianópolis by bus service, which is extensive and dependable.

ILHA DE SANTA CATARINA

Ilha de Santa Catarina has a vibrant and varied coastline, from the calm, crowded beaches of the north, to the wild, cliff-hugging bays of the south. But it's not just the beaches that make this island so enchanting. A forest of protected pines protect the east coast, while the dunes near Praia da Joaquina create a lunar landscape. The spine of mountains, luxuriant with the Mata Atlântica (Atlantic rain forest), drops precipitously down to the lovely Lagoa da Conceição. The gateway to the island is Florianópolis, political capital of Santa Catarina and cultural capital of southern Brazil.

The north of the island borders on being overdeveloped, and the shores of Lagoa da



Conceição are crowded with restaurants, hotels and pubs. The best beaches lie along the east coast, especially for surfers. In general, further south means less developed.

Plan on big crowds and high prices (listed here) between Christmas and early March. Prices can fall 20% to 40% outside peak times.

FLORIANÓPOLIS

☎ 0xx48 / pop 406,600

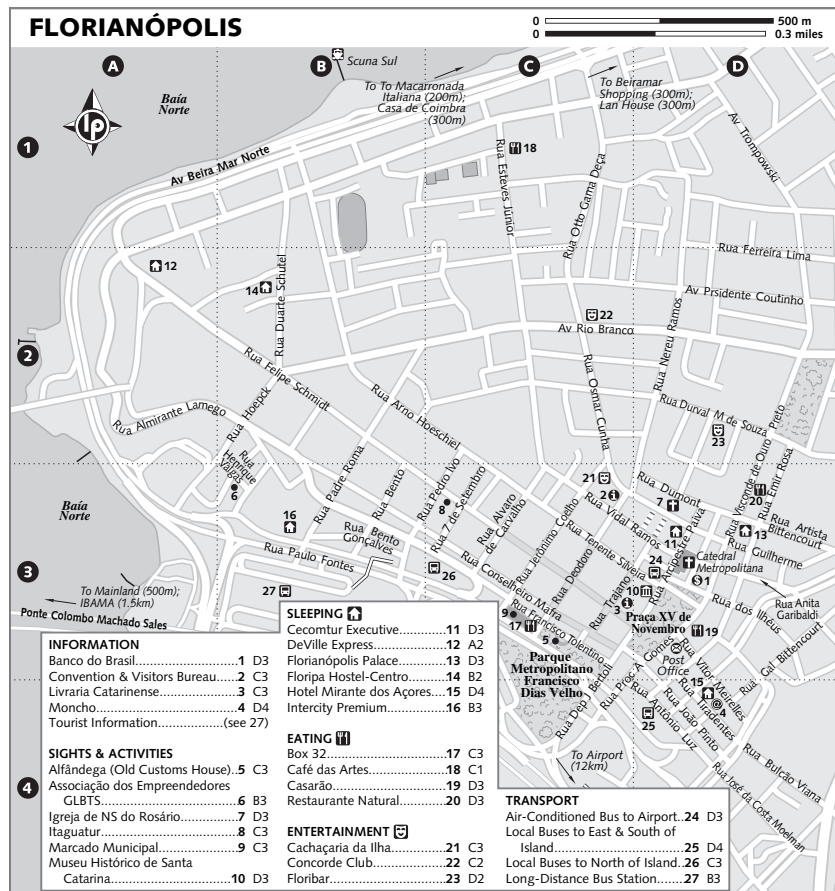
There are two sides to Florianópolis. On the mainland, the industrial zone occupies the districts of Estreito and Coqueiros. Across the bay, the island holds the historic center and the chic district of Beira-Mar Norte. Two picturesque bridges link these halves. The old suspension bridge, the Ponte Hercílio Luz, is

no longer open to traffic, but it still lights the night sky, acting as the defining feature of Floripa's spectacular skyline.

Florianópolis is a convenient transportation hub, with all of the island's 42 beaches within an hour's drive. While in the center, travelers can explore the colonial, cobblestone streets that fan out from the recently renovated Praça XV de Novembro, or take a sunset stroll along the embankment in Beira-Mar Norte.

Orientation

The city's major sights – as well as a range of hotels and restaurants – are just east of the long-distance and local bus stations. The upscale Beira-Mar Norte neighborhood sits on the bay 2km north of the center.



GAY FLOR-EE

Floripa is becoming Brazil's second gay capital. Its Pride celebration, **Parada da Diversidade** (www.diversidadefloripa.com.br), has grown into one of Brazil's biggest, attracting 30,000 people in 2006. The city also hosts GLBT-centered 'Gay Pop' events during Carnaval. Gay and lesbian travelers from around the world descend on Florianópolis, which is safer and more affordable than Rio.

One agency that caters primarily to gay and lesbian clients is **Outing Turismo** (☎ 8419 7184; www.outingturismo.com.br). Popular hangouts include Floribar (p336), Concorde Club (p336) and Praia Mole (p339).

For more information, including the useful *Guia GLBTS*, visit the **Associação dos Empreendedores GLBTS** (☎ 4009 2595; www.diversidadefloripa.com.br; Rua Henrique Valgas 112).

Information

BOOKSTORES

Livraria Catarinense (Rua Felipe Schmidt 60; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat) Small selection of foreign-language titles.

EMERGENCY

Bombeiros (☎ 193) Fire and medical emergencies.
Federal Police (☎ 3281 6500)

INTERNET ACCESS

Lan House (☎ 3028 0477; Beiramar Shopping; per hr R\$3; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2-8pm Sun)
Moncho (☎ 2106 2775; Rua Tiradentes 181; per hr R\$4; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Sat)

MONEY

Change your cash at one of the money-exchange houses on Rua Felipe Schmidt.
Banco do Brasil (Praça 15 de Novembro 20) For traveler's checks and ATMs.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The city suffers from a shortage of maps, but otherwise the information offices are helpful.
Convention & Visitors Bureau (☎ 3222 4904; www.florianopolisscvp.com.br; Rua Jerônimo Coelho 393)
Tourist information (☎ 3248 0002; long-distance bus station; ☎ 8am-10pm)

Sights

The center of town is the inviting **Praça XV de Novembro**, with its shady walks and 100-year-old fig tree. On one side sits the **Museu Histórico de Santa Catarina** (☎ 3221 3504; Praça 15 de Novembro 227; admission R\$3; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat-Sun), formerly the colonial governor's palace. Its collection of indigenous and colonial artifacts is perhaps less interesting than the building itself, which boasts ornate parquet floors and outrageous 19th-century ceilings.

Catedral Metropolitana sits grandly at the high end of the square, covered by scaffolding at the time of research. The best-preserved colonial church, **Igreja de NS do Rosário**, sits picturesquely atop the steps at Rua Trajano.

At the other end of the square, the busy promenade **Rua Felipe Schmidt** is fine for people-watching and window-shopping. Or continue down to the waterfront to the well-preserved **Alfândega** (Customs House) and **Mercado Municipal** (Municipal Market).

North of the center, **Av Beira Mar Norte** runs along the coast of the Baía Norte. The waterfront promenade attracts runners, bikers and walkers, enjoying the breeze off the bay and a sweeping view across to the mainland.

Tours

Itaguatur (☎ 3225 3939; www.itaguatur.com.br; Suite 208, Rua Felipe Schmidt 515; adult/child R\$45/22.50) Day tours visit destinations around the island.
Scuna Sul (☎ 3225 1806; www.scunasul.com.br; tours R\$28-35) Boat tours of the bay stop at some pretty 18th-century Portuguese forts.

Sleeping

Florianópolis suffers from a lack of budget sleeping options, although prices drop dramatically outside the high season, making many midrange places more affordable.

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

Floripa Hostel – Centro (☎ 3225 3781; www.floripa-hotel.com.br; Rua Duarte Schutel 227; dm HI-member/student/regular R\$22/28/30, d R\$50/59/65; ☎) On a residential street, halfway between the city center and Beira-Mar Norte, this orderly HI hostel is an easy walk from either. Kitchen and shared bathroom facilities are spotless. Sturdy wooden bunk beds are lined up in the dorms, which are segregated by gender.