



PARATY, RIO DE JANEIRO

Situated on the *costa verde* in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Paraty is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that combines beautifully preserved colonial architecture with a stunning backdrop of rainforest and ocean. The origins of the town lie in the late seventeenth century when Portuguese *bandeirantes* ('standard bearers', or pioneers) were seeking a deep-water port they could use to ship the mineral wealth of the inland state of Minas Gerais back to Europe.

Superseded after a few decades by the much bigger port of Rio de Janeiro, Paraty spent most of the next 350 years in tranquil isolation – indeed, it only became accessible by car in the '50s. Paraty has been acquiring a higher profile thanks to its

successful hosting of Latin America's biggest annual international literary festival, held every July since 2003.

Climate

Paraty's climate is similar to that of Rio de Janeiro. Temperatures in the high 30s are not uncommon in the summer (December-March). Although the heat is usually much less intense throughout the rest of the year, on clear days in mid-winter it will still be warm enough for sun-worshippers to enjoy the beaches.

How to get there

Paraty is about four hours' drive from Rio de Janeiro, which lies 250km to the east, along the *costa verde* route.

Accommodation

Paraty tends to be a little more expensive than many of the other destinations in south-east Brazil, but there

are *pousadas* (guesthouses) to suit every budget.

What to do there

- Admire the charming colonial architecture of the *centro histórico* with its baroque churches, merchants' mansions and cobbled streets. Arguably there is no better place in Brazil to catch a glimpse of what the country looked like in centuries gone by.

- For sun-worshippers there are numerous quiet beaches on the coast nearby, many of which are lined by thick forest.

- Take a boat trip around the bay and plunge into the sea for a spot of swimming or snorkeling. The area around Paraty is regarded as having some of the best dive spots on the Brazilian coastline.

- Enjoy some of the best food in south-east Brazil, as

the town has some superb, award-winning restaurants.

- Book-lovers should try to visit Paraty during the town's international literary festival, the biggest in Latin America. It has attracted literary figures such as Salman Rushdie, Martin Amis, Ian McEwan and Will Self, among others.

