



National Congress
Brasília

BRASÍLIA, FEDERAL DISTRICT

Purpose-built in the late 1950s and the country's federal capital since 1964, Brasília is often neglected by foreign visitors but those who do go are rewarded by its stunningly original modernist architecture, a wide variety of bars and restaurants, plentiful green spaces, and easy access to the beautiful *cerrado* (savannah) region of Brazil's central *planalto* (high plain).

Climate

Brasília has very comfortable temperatures, rarely exceeding 30 degrees in summer (Dec- March) or falling below 15 degrees in winter (June-September). Rainfall is lower than the Brazilian average.

What to do there

- Perhaps the first thing visitors need to do is get a feel for the city's unique

layout, often compared to an aeroplane. The principal government and public buildings are to be found in the 'fuselage', while the 'wings' contain the residential areas, with a great many bars and restaurants. Visitors should also be aware that attempting to get around on foot can soon become tiring.

- Running through the 'fuselage' is the Eixo Monumental (Monumental Axis), lined by gleaming government buildings including the huge Palácio Itamaraty, which houses Brazil's foreign ministry. The nose of the fuselage includes the Congresso Nacional (Parliament) and the Palácio do Planalto (President's office). The outstanding architectural features in Brasília are far too numerous

to list here, but the Congresso Nacional (one of Niemeyer's most famous creations) perhaps deserves a special mention as it consists of two 28-story-high towers flanked by the futuristic dome of the Senate and 'saucer' of the Chamber of Deputies. It is possible to arrange guided tours of the Congresso Nacional, the Palácio do Planalto and Palácio Itamaraty, and to watch parliamentary debates from a public gallery.

- The pyramid-shaped *Teatro Nacional* (National Theatre) is also a very striking building. Its three auditoriums are used for a wide range of cultural events and concerts by the Orquestra Sinfônica de Brasília (Brasília Symphony Orchestra).
- Finally, Brasília also serves as the main point of

departure for the burgeoning ecotourism opportunities in the *cerrado* region. There are various waterfalls and cave systems within easy reach of the city, and the spectacular Chapada dos Veadeiros national park is less than 250km away.

