

Cultural Guide to Porto Alegre

When we travel or move to a different country, it is always useful to know the peculiarities of that culture. When it comes to a country the size of Brazil, each region can have its own idiosyncrasies, especially when it comes to colloquialisms and traditional dishes. Different parts of Brazil were occupied at different times by people coming from different parts of the world. Thinking specifically of Rio Grande do Sul, besides being inhabited by the natives, the Portuguese and African slaves, the state received numerous Italian and German immigrants during the 19th and early 20th centuries (later, Slavs would join them).

Taking this into consideration, below, we have compiled a few typical expressions and situations, and a list of different places to explore in the state's capital, Porto Alegre, while you are here. We hope you enjoy your stay!

Gaúcho accent and colloquialisms

Another aspect that varies regionally in Brazil is accent. Even in Rio Grande do Sul itself accent varies. Therefore, as a learner of Portuguese, you might notice differences in pronunciation when talking to people who have always lived in Porto Alegre and to people who were born in the countryside of Rio Grande do Sul or in other states and have only recently moved to Porto Alegre. But do not worry, you will get acquainted with the accents with time!



Apart from the local accent, there are also colloquialisms. Several expressions cannot be translated literally from Portuguese to English, as with any other pair of languages. If this were to be done, the meaning would get lost in translation and end up confusing *Gaúchos* and foreigners alike.


Check out this article published by one of Porto Alegre's largest news companies and understand what we mean:

<http://zh.clicrbs.com.br/rs/esportes/copa-2014/noticia/2014/06/me-caiu-os-butias-do-bolso-veja-a-traducao-de-expressoes-uteis-para-turistas-em-porto-alegre-4518733.html>

Daily life situations

Churrasco

Several of your *Gaúcho* friends will invite you to eat *churrasco*, a kind of barbecue and a very traditional meal in Rio Grande do Sul. It is a major family/friends event and is usually eaten at *churrascarias* (restaurants that only serve this kind of meal) or at home, given most people own grills for the sole purpose of making *churrasco*.



A little warning for international students that are used to the more common, traditional meat cuts: Brazilians enjoy eating grilled chicken hearts. Similar to all gastronomic situations in life, always keep an open mind. You might just enjoy this treat!

Greetings

Brazilians are known to be warm, caring people. This is very true and of course it is extended to *Gaúchos* (even though they are perceived as colder and more reserved by Brazilians from other regions). Several times during your stay, you will be introduced to new friends, professors, staff members and maybe even have to introduce yourself to others. When this happens, do not be startled if women lean in for a kiss on each cheek or if men shake hands and tap each other on the back.

Brazilians are a very friendly people, so kidding around and asking about each other's family life, weekends and life in general are all very common topics for a first conversation. Just tag along and be caring about your new friend and their likings.

Visiting someone's home

Whenever you are invited for dinner at someone's home or for a casual gathering, it is expected of the guest to bring a gift. These can range from several different things, such as chocolate or a bottle of wine. If you are going in a large group, sometimes a group gift might be easier and can easily be arranged.

It is like a thank-you gift to the host for inviting you and welcoming you to his or her home. This is very polite and gives off a very nice impression. Also, as a foreigner, it would be very interesting if you decided to share a little bit of your traditional dishes, maybe offering to bring a typical dessert dish or some appetizer. Always leave the main course to the host, unless asked to contribute.

Partying

The party scene in Porto Alegre is well distributed throughout the entire city. You can find smaller bars, called *botecos* or *barzinhos*, around the central/downtown area of the city. Porto Alegre also has a strong tradition of cafés, ranging from trendy to more traditional ones.

Clubs can be found around the city, and the best recommendations will always come from your local friends, who know what each club offers and can help you with what you are looking for. Some of the best are situated at the bohemian neighborhoods Cidade Baixa and Bom Fim; more bourgeois nightclubs can be found at Moinhos de Ventos. Parties usually start at around midnight and they go on until around 5am or 6am.

Smoking

In Brazil, federal law forbids smoking in public and private enclosed spaces (even if only partially enclosed). That includes cigarettes, cigarillos, cigars, pipes, hookahs and other products. It is also important to mention that the possession, sale, and transportation of marijuana or other drugs in Brazil are illegal and might characterize drug trafficking.

Punctuality

Punctuality, or polite lack thereof, is something very common in the daily lives of Brazilians. It is extremely understandable that one may be late because of traffic and it is usually expected. Of course, there are exceptions, such as punctuality for classes. Professors are usually tolerant and understand a 5 to 15-minute delay, but more than that is considered unacceptable. Nonetheless, strict punctuality is expected at business meetings.

When you are invited to someone's home for dinner, for example, it is actually polite to arrive 20 to 30 minutes after the set time. This does not put a lot of pressure on the host and there is no need for him/her to rush things. It is almost inconsiderate to arrive on time because delay is expected and sometimes appreciated.

Traffic

Traffic in Porto Alegre may be unpredictable at times. It is always important to understand a little more about traffic if you plan on driving but also if you are a pedestrian. Unlike most places, drivers rarely respect crosswalks and stop lights. Always be aware of your surroundings and of cars coming from different directions. Also, rush hour complicates traffic a lot on a daily basis. So, take that into consideration if you have a class or some other kind of appointment early morning or early evening.

Porto Alegre has been implementing more and more bicycle lanes the past couple of years. This has been great for those who love to ride a bike to move around the city. However, if you will join the bike riders, beware of the traffic and pedestrians around you, even if on a bicycle lane, especially on corners and traffic lights.

City bikes

Porto Alegre has this great initiative of renting quality bikes for the general public for a small amount (R\$5.00 a day or R\$10.00 a month). This service is called Bike POA and aims to offer a transportation method that is accessible and less polluting than cars. There are several stations located around the city, operating with solar power and wireless technology.



Information on how to register and use the bikes can be found at:

www.mobilicidade.com.br/bikepoa



Politeness

The use of cell phone grows by the day. However, its use in movie theaters, museums or in classes, for example, even for texting, is not considered polite.

It is also expected of people to respect lines, in observation to the principle that the first who arrived will be the first to be attended to. At places such as banks, public agencies, health services, it is very common to distribute numbers to organize the lines. Therefore, when you arrive at one of these places, take a look around and see if people are holding a kind of paper in their hands. If they are, that means you will need one too.

Health services and emergencies

If you or someone you know is not feeling well or has a medical emergency, make your way to the closest hospital. In case you have no means of transportation, call an ambulance by dialing 192.

Be sure to carry your health insurance card in your wallet together with a note with the name of a few accredited hospitals. If you do not have health insurance, you can seek free health assistance at hospitals accredited by SUS (the Brazilian Unified Health System).

Something very useful to know is that some pharmacies operate 24/7. These include Pánel, Popularmed, Farmais and Biomed. Also, you can check online if pharmacies have delivery service (which most of them do) and if they take orders online.

Commerce

Business hours for stores and shops are usually from 9:00am to 6:30-7:00pm. This is what can be expected. In the case of shopping malls, they usually operate from 10am to 10pm. Porto Alegre has several shopping malls located throughout the city and should definitely be checked out.

Supermarkets are also well distributed throughout Porto Alegre. Some of them stay open until midnight.

Voltage

Electricity in most part of Porto Alegre is supplied at 110V. However, it is common to find 220V sockets especially provided for air conditioners or showers, for example, or houses and apartments with electricity fully supplied at 220V. Therefore, when you move in to your new house/apartment, inquire about the voltage available before plugging in any electrical devices.

Holidays

To get to know the holidays and, therefore, the days in which you will not have classes, you can check UFCSPA's academic calendar at:



www.ufcspa.edu.br/index.php/calendario-academico

The image shows a vertical banner on the left side of the page. The top portion features the Brazilian national flag (green, yellow, and blue with a white star and the motto 'Ordem e Progresso') waving against a clear blue sky. The bottom portion shows a palm tree and other green foliage against a similar blue sky.

Society

In this section, we present some general aspects of the Brazilian society. It is unnecessary to remember that these are generalizations and that, in your everyday life in the city, you will find a whole variety of people with different beliefs and sets of mind.

- Even though most of Brazil's holidays are Catholic and, according to statistics, most Brazilians consider themselves religious, **Brazil is a secular state**, which means the government cannot interfere with the life choices of its citizens regarding religion. That is why you will find a lot of religious diversity in Porto Alegre. Although Catholics are a majority in the country, Evangelical churches are gaining momentum over more traditional forms of Christianity. Beyond those, you will cross Brazilians who follow African cults (in fact, it is one of the cities in Brazil where they are the most common), Spiritism, Judaism, Islam and, growingly, Buddhism (there is even a big Buddhist community in Três Coroas, in the countryside of the Rio Grande do Sul state, which is worth visiting), or people who are just plain atheists or "spiritual but not religious". All of these creeds and their corresponding lifestyles are held to be worthy of the same respect as long as they do not interfere with the respect of differences;
- **Brazil is a Democratic State under the Rule of Law** where the principles of individual self-determination and freedom of expression are held as extremely important. All the political decision-makers must be accountable to their voters and the bureaucratic staff must be recruited through merit. Every public act of civil service entities must be performed in due respect to the 1988 Brazilian Constitution;
- **Brazil has legislations regarding minorities** that aim at increasing their civil recognition and participation in society. Racial minorities benefit from laws criminalizing racism and from affirmative actions in universities and civil service. Women are protected by law against domestic violence and have been increasingly integrated to the education system and to the work market (you will have the possibility to see it by yourself at UFCSPA, where most of our students, faculty and staff are women!). Besides, Porto Alegre was one of the first cities in Brazil in which a same-sex couple got legally married. Since 2013 same-sex couples are allowed to marry and adopt children in Brazil. You will probably notice gay-friendly attitudes in Porto Alegre, especially in more bohemian/hipster neighborhoods near the university. At UFCSPA, transgender people have been recently permitted to use their chosen names;
- Although Brazil is a democratic and secular state and although the last two decades have witnessed some progress in the field, Brazilian society has not yet solved one of its biggest challenges: **social inequality** (and all the other problems that follow it). Southern Brazil holds better social indicators when compared to other regions in the country; nevertheless, during your stay in Porto Alegre, you will probably experience situations when social inequality becomes evident and its consequences will require your attention (pickpockets, robberies, etc.).

Places to visit/things to do

Bearing in mind that this city is completely new to you, we compiled a very comprehensive list of cultural activities and places to visit in Porto Alegre. Take a look at this list but also ask your friends; people always have some sort of activity going on and they would be happy to have you tag along.

City Bus Tours

- Contact: (51) 0800-51-7686 or (51) 3289-0176
- Hours of operation: Runs from Tuesdays to Sundays, 11am to 10pm
- Price: During the week - R\$25 / Weekends - R\$30

The City Bus Tours are an excellent way to explore the city and see things from a different perspective. Operating on double-decker buses with open tops, you will be able to choose from two routes: the Historic District route and the South Area route. The Historic District route covers cultural and historic landmarks, including the Public Market and the Cathedral. There are five different stops where you can hop on and off. The South Area route covers the beautiful landscapes and sceneries of Porto Alegre including Ipanema Beach and the Nossa Senhora Mãe de Deus Sanctuary, where you can enjoy a 360° view of the city.



Check out the schedule for routes online at:

www.portoalegre.travel/site/linha_turismo.php

Cisne Branco

- Contact: (51) 3224-5222
- Hours of operation: From Tuesdays to Sundays, departures at 10:30am, 3:00pm, 4:30pm and 6:00pm
- Price: R\$28

An option to get to know Porto Alegre from a different point of view is to go on a tour on the Cisne Branco boat. The most popular itinerary “Sailing through Guaíba” lasts one hour and travels the main islands of the Guaíba River. During the tour, you learn a little about the history of Porto Alegre related to the points visited.

Iberê Camargo Foundation

- Address: Avenida Padre Cacique, 2000
- Contact: (51) 3247-8000
- Hours of operation: Fridays and Saturdays, 1pm to 5:30pm
- Price: Free

Seeking to be “a center of excellence dedicated to the work of Iberê Camargo and the reflection on modern and contemporary art,” the Iberê Camargo Foundation is a beautiful modernist building designed by Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza. The foundation is located by the Guaíba River and is an excellent place to observe the astonishing sunset. The museum holds a large collection of masterpieces, including more than 5,000 works by Camargo himself. There are four main floors with temporary exhibitions by other artists and the Camargo exhibition, which rotates pieces every six months. The museum also has a café where one can enjoy excellent





food while admiring one of Porto Alegre's most beautiful views. The foundation offers free art workshops.

Check out the foundation at:

www.iberecamargo.org.br

Santander Cultural

- Address: Rua Sete de Setembro, 1028
- Contact: (51) 3287-5500
- Hours of operation: Open from Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10am to 7pm; Sundays and holidays, 1pm to 7pm

Located in the Historic District of Porto Alegre, Santander Cultural is a center for arts, culture, music and theater. With a very busy agenda, the center offers daily movie screenings, weekly concerts, and several exhibitions of both national and international artists. It is an amazing place to explore more about Brazilian culture and what the city has to offer. Check out the schedule of exhibitions and concerts at:



www.santander.com.br/br/institucional/cultura/santander-cultural/programacao-santander-cultural

Historic District

The Historic District of Porto Alegre is a beautiful neighborhood. You can explore several different places on foot and get a real sense of the city. The Historic District is home to several government buildings and the Metropolitan Cathedral. You can also explore its beautiful streets and admire the European-style architecture. It is usually very busy during weekdays, with hustle and bustle of hundreds of people. You can visit the historical Public Market (Mercado Público de Porto Alegre), founded in 1869, where you can not only buy fresh produce, but also have lunch in one of the many classic restaurants.

The Public Market's contact number is: (51) 3289-4801. It opens daily from Mondays to Fridays, from 7:30am to 7:30pm. On Saturdays, the Public Market opens from 7:30am to 6:30pm.



www.mercadopublico.com.br

From there, you can visit Theatro São Pedro, the city's oldest functioning theater. It is always good to alert tourists about pickpocketing in the area. Always be aware of your surroundings and your belongings. You can check out Theatro São Pedro's agenda at:



www.teatrosaopedro.com.br

Parks and green areas

Porto Alegre is the Brazilian capital city with the most trees. Maybe it is because of that or it is a cultural behavior, but Porto Alegre's residents tend to spend a lot of time outdoors with friends and family. Some of the most famous parks to enjoy some *chimarrão* (traditional *Gaúcho* tea-like drink) or a picnic are:



Parque Moinhos de Vento, known as Parcão

- This large park is great for all occasions. It has several different running routes and a nice lake.

Parque Farroupilha, known as Redenção

- At Redenção, an antique fair/flea market runs every Sunday from 9am to 6pm. It is definitely worth it to check it out.

Parque Marinha do Brasil, known as Marinha

- This park, although a little further away from downtown, is great for those who practice sports. It has several sand volleyball courts, basketball courts and sports facilities.

These will always be full of people riding bikes, families, couples and groups of friends hanging out together on weekends and during sunny afternoons.

Gasômetro

Gasômetro, an old power generation plant turned into a cultural center, is a great place from which to watch the famous sunset of Porto Alegre, from the shores of the Guaíba River. The center has theater, movie theater, space for exhibitions, shop, and coffee shop.

For those who enjoy exercising, along the margin of the Guaíba River, starting at Gasômetro, there is a 5-km running track. It is worth it to check it out!

Soccer stadiums

The southernmost capital city, much like other major Brazilian cities, has soccer rivalry. The two biggest local teams are Grêmio and Internacional. These teams play matches in town at least once a week. When they play against each other, the games are nicknamed Gre-Nal. You should definitely attend a game at one of the following soccer arenas:

Arena Porto-Alegrense (Grêmio)

- Address: Avenida Padre Leopoldo Brentano, 110 - Humaitá
- Telephone: (51) 3019-1903
- Buy tickets at:



www.arenapoa.com.br/ingressos

Estádio Beira-Rio (Internacional)

- Address: Av. Padre Cacique, 891 - Praia de Belas
- Telephone: (51) 3230-4600
- Buy tickets at:



www.internacional.com.br

Always look for student discounts at all venues. You can always get good deals with your student ID plus your declaration of enrollment or with your TRI bus card, so carry it around with you at all times.

UFCSPA

There is no way we can leave UFCSPA out of this guide route! The university's culture programme gets better by the year. It is filled with varied activities, all for free, such as music, movies, visual arts, literature, etc. Check it out at:



www.ufcspa.edu.br/index.php/agenda-cultural

Ospa

Ospa is the Porto Alegre Symphony Orchestra, hosted under the Department of Culture of the State of Rio Grande do Sul. It enjoys a busy statewide concert calendar, including several concerts in Porto Alegre. You can check upcoming events at:



www.ospa.org.br/?post_type=sp_events&eventDisplay=upcoming

Agenda Lírica

Agenda Lírica (Lyric Schedule) is a website that publicizes Classical music events happening in Porto Alegre. Take a look at:



www.agendaliricapoa.com.br/ProximosEventos.asp

Annual cultural events

Feira do Livro de Porto Alegre

In 2014 Feira do Livro de Porto Alegre (Porto Alegre Book Fair) had its 60th edition. The fair is held at Praça da Alfândega, in the downtown area of Porto Alegre, starting in the end of October. Besides the numerous bookstands, the public can find lectures, book signing sessions, performances and much more. You can check out the fair's programme at:



www.feiradolivro-poa.com.br/programacao

Restaurant Week

The Brazilian Restaurant Week is a gastronomic festival that happens in more than 15 cities in Brazil, including Porto Alegre. The best restaurants in town offer a special menu for a special price. More importantly, for every meal sold, R\$1.00 is donated to charity. The participating restaurants and the dates the festival will come to Porto Alegre can be found at:



www.restaurantweek.com.br

Semana Farroupilha

September 20th, a holiday in Rio Grande do Sul, is the date *Gaúchos* celebrate the revolution called Revolução Farroupilha, in which the state of Rio Grande do Sul fought against the Brazilian imperial government between 1835 and 1845, in an attempt to declare independence from Brazil.



The week preceding September 20th is known as Semana Farroupilha. Across the state there are celebrations of *Gaúcho* traditions, with more than usual *churrascos* and *chimarrão* and people dressed in typical clothing. On the 20th, most cities have a parade in the morning.

Porto Alegre, in particular, has a camp, known as Acampamento Farroupilha, which is set up on Parque da Harmonia (close to Gasômetro) right before September 7th (Brazilian Independence Day) and broken right after the 20th. There you can eat *churrasco*, buy a pair of *alpargatas* at one of the small shops or watch a band play traditional *Gaúcho* music. If you are in Porto Alegre around that time of year, you can check out news on Acampamento Farroupilha at:

www.portoalegre.rs.gov.br/acampamentofarroupilha

Porto Alegre em Cena

Porto Alegre em Cena is a theater festival promoted by the Porto Alegre City Hall since 1994. It takes place yearly in the month of September, bringing plays from all over the country and the world. Information about the programme can be found at:



www.portoalegreemcena.com

Carnival

All foreigners know how Carnival is a huge party in Brazil in the month of February, especially in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and in the Northeast. In Porto Alegre, we have our own parade, with our own *escolas de samba* (samba schools). Information about the parade can be found at:



www.portoalegre.rs.gov.br/carnaval

However, Porto Alegre also has *Carnaval de rua* (street Carnival), mainly in the Cidade Baixa neighborhood. The year's programme is widely released in the news by the end of January. Pay attention!

POA Jazz Festival

The Porto Alegre Jazz Festival started in 2014 with the intention of spreading jazz music in Porto Alegre, bringing to the state's capital great national and international names of contemporaneous jazz. Check out the festival's programme at:



www.pojazz.com.br