

# BÚZIOS

*When urban-weary cariocas need a breather from Rio's inexhaustible energy, Búzios is usually their go-to destination. Just a two-and-a-half-hour drive north of Rio de Janeiro, this peninsula's seductive shoreline has city escapees smitten. With a thriving dining scene bolstering its natural appeal, it's easy to see why.*

*by Mandy Hegarty*



Back in the 1960s, Búzios was just a backwater village when French starlet Brigitte Bardot rocked into town and publicly sang its praises. This celebrity endorsement triggered a surge in popularity, particularly among Rio's well-to-do. Soon it was being touted as the 'Brazilian St. Tropez'. But this much-cited nickname does Búzios a disservice. This likeable seaside resort town is no mere Mediterranean knock-off.

Deciding what to do in Búzios is not tough; days are inevitably spent at the beach. The real conundrum is, which beach? There are more

than 20 heavenly stretches to choose from, all of different shapes, sizes and suitability. Many are within walking distance of the cobblestone town centre, but most holidaymakers elect to hire a beach buggy, allowing them to travel from shore to shore with minimal exertion.

There is no one best beach; it depends on personal preference. **Geribá**, on the south side of the peninsula, is a broad expanse popular among surfers, for instance, while **Ossos** - a former pirate hideout and the rumored top pick of screen siren Bardot - is now

a place to see and be seen. The startlingly white and difficult-to-access **Olho de Boi** welcomes nudist bathers who want to tan their white bits, while horseshoe-shaped Ferradura on the eastern edge possesses blissfully calm waters.

As afternoon stretches into evening, Búzios' beachgoers usually make the journey from deckchair to bar stool. If you're at **Ferradura**, stop for a sundowner at the **Eden Beach Lounge**, part of the **Insólito Boutique Hotel** — a slick 12-room retreat. Join the guests lolling on daybeds and watch the



waves lap gently on the shore - an idyllic setting for an end-of-day cocktail. The obvious drink choice is a caipirinha, Brazil's ubiquitous and rather potent lime, sugar and cachaça concoction. At Brava beach, Búzios reaches peak chic as the stylish set gather at **Rocka**, a restaurant-cum-beach-lounge where exemplary seafood, bubbles, sun loungers and sea views invite customers to linger.

While the choice of loafing around in the sand all day is there — and is one many visitors understandably indulge in — it's not the only option. **Santiago Bebianno**, a

Búzios local and proprietor of **Casa Brancas Boutique Hotel & Spa**, extols the range of activities on offer. "Fine dining, pristine exotic beaches, water sports, such as surfing, diving, kite surfing, deep-sea fishing, and nightlife — all in one place." And his top picks for things to do? "Watch the sunset from the terraces of **Casas Brancas Boutique Hotel**, rent a local fishing boat to go on a private tour or have lessons on kite surfing in Praia Rasa."

The waters around Búzios are seriously clear, so going diving and snorkeling here simply makes sense. Scuba divers usually head to **Ilha**

**da Âncora**, about a half hour away by boat, to take advantage of the excellent visibility. Beneath the surface, jewel-colored corals and barracudas, monkfish and green turtles rival the tanned and taut above-shore Brazilians with their ravishing good looks.

If a typical day in Búzios begins at the beach, then a typical night ends at a table eating fresh seafood. The siren call of Búzios' beaches has lured foreigners to settle on its shores, and the cosmopolitan and culturally diverse inhabitants are reflected in its restaurants.





Numerous international food cultures are represented, from neighbouring Argentina and Colombia to far-flung Japanese, French and Italian cuisines.

“You have all kind of options, expensive and cheap, Asian food, traditional Brazilian food, contemporary...” says Fred Barros, co-founder of **Menu Búzios**, an online dining guide designed to help visitors navigate the dining scene. “Here food is a really cultural thing. Seafood is amazing, drinks are awesome, ice creams are made with Brazilian fruits you never heard of but you never forget the taste!”

The main dining hubs are around the areas of **Rua das Pedras**, Orla Bardot and Rua Manoel Turíbio (parallel to Rua das Pedras). If you’re in the vicinity of **Rua das Pedras**, visit Argentinian-run **San Telmo Parrilla** for a meat fix or try banana cake in **Maria Maria Café**. About a five-minute drive south from here is **Porto da Barra**, where there are many more culinary finds. Standouts include the intimate **Cais de Gaia**, which serves up simple but superb dishes such as **Bolinho de Bacalhau** (cod fritters), and buzzy **Zuza**, which produces skillfully executed seafood, including a teeming fish platter and fresh octopus drizzled with a balsamic vinegar sauce.

During summer, post-dinner fun is there for the taking. Bars blare live music and a handful of big-name clubs, including **Privilège and Pacha**, open their doors to Brazil’s bold and beautiful. Tamer late-night activities include a stroll down the Orla Bardot promenade, where Búzios’ celebrity fan, Brigitte Bardot, is cast in solid bronze with her gaze fixed out toward the sea. Camera-touting tourists line up to pose with Bardot, and a few are struck with an irrational twinge of jealousy. And who could blame them? After all, she gets to stay here indefinitely.