

Why Brazil for Medical Tourism?

Since its emergence as a sought-after service niche, medical tourism has become one of Brazil's fastest-growing industries, a global role reflected in the sophistication of its physicians, surgeons and medical facilities.

According to the Medical Tourism Association, about 14 million people in the world travel to other countries in search of medical care annually.

According to statistics of Patients Beyond Borders Brazil receives about 300,000 patients seeking medical treatment annually.

- 51 JCI accredited hospitals and institutions
- International recognition for outstanding services in the cosmetic surgery field
- High-quality standards of healthcare services in private hospitals and clinics
- Ultramodern technologies and renowned medical expertise of the practitioners
- Dentistry with an outstanding reputation for orthopedics, sports medicine, bariatric surgery, and assisted reproduction
- Cost-effective healthcare system. At the moment Brazil is competing only with Asia in providing medical treatments at low costs and with excellence.

What is JCI hospital accreditation?

The Joint Commission International (JCI) is a U.S based accreditation body dedicated to improving healthcare quality and safety around the world.

Brazil was the first country with an institution outside the United States to be accredited by the Joint Commission International in 1999 when the program was launched. In Brazil doctors and medical professionals are highly qualified and many of them have studied abroad acquiring international recognition and experience. Why more and more medical tourists are heading to Brazil.

By reading this document will give you insight into why more and more people are choosing Brazil as the destination to receive treatment.

According to the World Health Organization, Brazil has the best healthcare system in Latin America and ranks among the top countries, for the same, in the world. This has led to the phenomena of health tourism in this country that has seen a major boom in the recent years.



Brazil has always been an alluring international destination and it is world famous for its beautiful scenery. It has also gained notoriety for its cosmetic surgeons and plastic surgery packages.

Brazil is only behind USA in terms of number of plastic surgeries performed and is also recognized as the “World Capital of Cosmetic and Plastic Surgery”. However, the number of cosmetic and plastic surgeries per capital is higher than in the USA. This way, Brazilian plastic surgeons have a considerable higher number of surgeries performed than other plastic surgeons from around the world.

What began as a curiosity and desire for cosmetic surgery has now opened the doors for medical tourists to receive other medical treatments, such as orthopedic surgeries, cardiac surgeries, fertility treatment, hair transplant, cosmetic surgeries, plastic surgery, dental treatments, dermatology, fertility treatment, general surgery, neurosurgery, Ophthalmology, obesity surgery, oncology.

Why choose Brazil as a destination for travel and treatment?

Medical tourism to Brazil is expected to grow 45% in the next five years, benefiting from the country’s investment in infrastructure, hotels and airports and the influx of international visitors.

Brazil is making major investments in its infrastructure and tourism, Brazilian authorities are trying to showcase the country in a successful light and working

hard to transform and reinforce the country's image by turning it into a major tourism destination. This tourism boost will also greatly benefit the medical tourism industry.

Its attractiveness as a tourism destination is enhanced by its quality and affordable healthcare, friendly and warm people, great food, and paradisiacal beaches.

Medical Facilities in Brazil

Medical Facilities in Brazil are equivalent with hospitals in the United States, with some even exceeding American standards. Brazil offers everything from large, full service hospitals to smaller, intimate private clinics. Brazil has developed into a center of excellence for healthcare in Latin America, with major universities that support research, teaching and training of medical professionals. Outside of the United States, Albert Einstein Hospital in São Paulo was the first to be accredited by JCI, the most recognized healthcare certification group.

Although prices can vary considerably depending on the treatment and facility chosen, international visitors are drawn to Brazil because of its high quality treatment at low prices, often considerably lower than European countries.

A fierce competition between hospitals in the private sector has led to a constant improvement in the knowledge and skill set of the medical staff. In addition, English is increasingly becoming the medium of conversation as hospitals are attempting to attract the medical tourists. The hospitals offer renowned treatment through high tech technology in a diversity of fields.

In Brazil, after a medical student completes his/her residence, he/she have to appear before medical examiners of the Conselho Federal de Medicina (Brazilian Federal Counsel of Medicine) a licensing body before he/she is given the title of a specialist. This ensures that specialists in Brazil have true insight of their profession.

While the general public mainly speaks Portuguese, demands by medical tourists for English speaking personnel in hospitals have been on the rise. This has led to developments in English speaking skills of the medical staff. There are also a number of translational services that hospitals provide for the sake of a smooth conversation between doctors and patients.

Hospitals and Doctors Standards in Brazil

Brazil's success in private healthcare delivery has led to fierce competition with doctors trying to constantly upgrade their skills, their certifications and their medical facilities.

In the field of plastic surgery, for instance, Brazil is recognized worldwide as a hub for great professionals.

Brazil had developed a system for forming great healthcare professionals including strict government oversight in licensing for schools, licensing for professional practice, and norms and standards of practice set by medical societies and councils.

The Brazilian Medical Association, a non-profit organization with more than 140,000 associates, serves to defend the dignity of the medical professional and quality of care to the health of the population.

Some of its private hospitals such as the Sociedade Hospital Samaritano, launched by a group of international doctors, had gone a long way to provide a leading role in Brazil's medical tourism.

A multi-level certification and scrutiny process is in place for medical institute graduates before they are licensed to practice medicine in Brazil.

This ensures quality of the health care givers, surgeons, physicians, etc.

The staff in most private hospitals is well versed in English to cater to patients from all around the world.



Medical Procedures Commonly Practiced in Brazil

Plastic and reconstructive surgery is a reconstruction of part of the human body, whether due to medical or esthetic reasons, restoring physical function and minimizing deformities

- Facial plastic surgery/rhytidoplasty: reduces the more visible signs of aging through the removal of excess fat, repositioning of the musculature and removal of excess face and neck skin
- Eyelid plastic surgery/blepharoplasty: removal of the excess of skin and fat that can accumulate on the upper and lower eyelids, by means of carefully positioned incisions
- Neck plastic surgery: reduces the skin flaccidness and localized fat below the chin
- Nose plastic surgery/rhinoplasty: can improve nasal function, correct defects present at birth, fix respiratory problems or improve facial harmony
- Ear plastic surgery/otoplasty: corrects the excessive prominence and can better define the cartilaginous curves, thus improving facial esthetics
- Chin plastic surgery/mentoplasty: to correct advanced or retracted chins
- Breast plastic surgery/mammoplasty: breast reconstruction or the reduction of or increase in breast size, correction of any asymmetries or flaccidness
- Plastic surgery for reducing male mammas/gynecomastia: corrects the pronounced mammary gland that, due to hormonal changes or obesity, causes discomfort, both esthetic and emotional, for a man
- Arm plastic surgery/brachioplasty: reduces the flaccidness of skin in the arms, with the removal of excessive skin as well as fat from the lower region of the arms, thus improving the local contour
- Thigh plastic surgery/crural listing: diminishes skin flaccidness in the internal area of the thighs
- Gluteus plastic surgery/gluteoplasty: increases or reshapes the backside
- Abdomen plastic surgery/abdominoplasty/dermolipectomy: reduces skin flaccidness, fat accumulation and muscular weakness in the abdomen

- Plastic surgery for formerly obese individuals: reshaping or removal of excess tissue for those who have undergone weight-loss surgery and had significant weight loss

- **Liposuction**: surgery that suctions and removes the excessive fat from certain parts of the body. It is performed through minimal incisions

- **Liposculpture**: the targeted removal of excess fat followed by the injection of some of this fat in other locations

Bariatric surgery (for weight loss): for morbidly obese people; surgery to reduce the amount of food a patient can ingest or digest

- **Restrictive surgery** - adjustable gastric band by videolaparoscopy: consists of placing a band or ring around the stomach, thus reducing the capacity for eating food, creating a "small stomach"

- Disabsorptive surgery by videolaparoscopy: decreases the absorption capacity of the intestine, except for a part of the intestine through which food passes

- Gastric bypass, roux-en-y or restrictive disabsorptive surgery (Capella) by videolaparoscopy: division of the stomach to create a smaller one, then attachment of the new stomach to the intestine

- Intra-gastric balloon: it is a silicone prosthesis introduced into the stomach through endoscopy.

It is used in minor cases of obesity or overweight persons who do not want to undergo more invasive surgery. The balloon can remain in place for up to six months

Ophthalmology: specialty of medicine that treats eye diseases, both clinically and surgically

- Laser surgery: corrects and reduces some ocular problems, improving vision quality

- Myopia: a visual deficit making it difficult to see objects that are far away

- Hypermetropia: occurs when the eye is smaller than normal, causing focusing difficulties on objects close to the eye

- Astigmatism: distorted vision and difficulty focusing which is generally caused by an irregularity of the cornea

- **Cataract:** clouding of the crystalline lens of the eye resulting in the blurring of vision

Dentistry: the evaluation, diagnosis, prevention and/or treatment of diseases, disorders and/or conditions of the oral cavity, maxillofacial area and/or the adjacent and associated structures and their impact on the human body

Check-Up: comprises a complete health examination to detect diseases (and conditions), such as cardiac disorders, high pressure (hypertension) and diabetes before they become clinically apparent

Assisted reproduction (fertility): advanced techniques that aid fertilization/pregnancy

Cardiology: the branch of medicine that deals with disorders of the heart and blood vessels

Dermatology: the branch of medicine that deals with the skin and its diseases

Neurology: the branch of medicine that deals with diagnosing and treating diseases involving the central, peripheral and autonomic nervous system

Oncology: the branch of medicine that studies tumors (cancer) and plans and administers the care of cancer patients

Orthopedic surgery: is the branch of surgery concerned with conditions involving the musculoskeletal system

Sports Medicine: a medical field specializing in preventing, diagnosing and treating injuries related to participating in sports and/or exercise, specifically the rotation or deformation of joints or muscles caused by engaging in such physical activities.

The primary focus is the rapid recovery of patients

Urology: focuses on the urinary tract of men and women, and on the reproductive system of males

Your next vacation with medical treatment in Brazil

Planning your next vacation around your medical procedure may not be at the top of your list, but it should be.

Brazil has many beautiful resorts and hotels that cater to individuals recovering from medical procedures. Medical tourism gives you the flexibility to plan and schedule anything from a minor checkup to a major surgery whenever it is

convenient for you and your loved ones. Studies have shown people who take vacations have lower stress, less risk of heart disease, a better outlook on life, and more motivation to achieve goals.

Vacationing with a medical trip to Brazil will prove to be very rewarding and will provide you with positive life long memories.

Process for Medical Tourist visa in Brazil

A Medical Tourist Visa is basically required for people traveling to this country for some medical treatments. Currently, temporary visa is available for the foreigners under this category, but it should be valid to enter the country for medical assistance.

A foreigner must have a valid passport of validity up to 6-months after arriving in the country. Some country residents are given a tourist visa on arrival and later they can seek medical treatment in the country.

This visa is available only for 90-days. However, the limit can be extended to another 90-days once in 12-months' time.



Some travel tips for Medical Tourists in Brazil

This country is full of lip-smacking dishes that shouldn't be skipped, like Pão de Queijo, Feijoada, Moqueca, Acarajé with vatapá, Galinhada, Farofa and Escondidinho de frango com mandioca are some dishes you must try.

Brazil is a one-stop shop for savvy shoppers.

At local shops and the supermarkets enjoy buying many items which are certainly cheaper than your own country.

Always keep a photocopy of valid passport. Personal safety is another important thing to consider about Brazil, given the frequency of thefts in some regions.

Things to keep in Mind

Language barriers are prominent in the country. The general public only speaks Portuguese and you might have a hard time looking for a translator. Thanks to medical tourism, many private hospitals in Brazil have invested in providing translator services.

The traffic in major cities can be tiresome at times. Hence, when making a trip to your hospital, leave the hotel in time or consider booking a hotel as close as possible to the hospital.

How to get around?

Car rentals are available but they are relatively expensive. Plane rides are another viable option; they minimize travel time by a lot. Taxis are a reasonable ride, and preferable during the night time. In addition, big cities like Rio and Sao Paulo have metro facilities that are very convenient. Avoid taking public buses.

Insurance, medical malpractice and liability

Most Brazilian hospitals accept worldwide international medical insurance. Contact the hospital and the insurance company directly for details regarding coverage.

Most insurance plans do not yet cover costs of specific treatment abroad (when a policy holder travels for the sole intention of having surgery in another country). Policies are evolving and the insurer should be consulted for the latest information on coverage abroad.

Brazil's exposure to western influences has increased the local sensitivity to issues related to medical malpractice and liability.

This influence has attributed to the increase in malpractice lawsuits against physicians and hospitals in Brazil. In response, new types of insurance coverage that include medical liability were made available to protect private hospitals, medical groups and health professionals in Brazil.

When choosing a hospital or a surgeon in Brazil, medical tourists should make sure the health practitioners are covered against medical liability lawsuits.

Since May 21 2023 there is no longer any health restriction related to Covid-19 for travelers to enter Brazil.

With the end of the health emergency of international importance announced by the World Health Organization (WHO), the National Health Surveillance Agency – Anvisa no longer requires presentation of vaccination or tests for entry into the country.

Climate

The climate in Brazil varies considerably from mostly tropical north (the equator traverses the mouth of the Amazon) to temperate zones south of the Tropic of Capricorn.

Temperatures below the equator are high, averaging above 28 °C but not reaching the summer extremes of up to 40 °C in the temperate zones.

There is little seasonal variation near the equator other than the rainfall frequency. Average temperatures below the Tropic of Capricorn are mild, ranging from 13 °C to 22 °C.

Pharmacies

Brazilian pharmacies are wonderful six of the top ten companies in the Brazilian pharmaceutical market are domestic.

Each has a licensed pharmacist who is trained to deal with small medical emergencies and can make recommendations for treatment.

The service is free and medication is fairly inexpensive.

If you take medication that may need replacement while in Brazil, ask your doctor to write out the active ingredients of the prescription, as many drugs are sold under different trade names in Brazil.

Many drugs available by prescription in many other countries are available over-the-counter in Brazil.

Pharmacies are aiming to provide even more services such as blood pressure and diabetes check, bio impedance analysis, vaccinations, quick laboratory exams (like COVID Tests), injectable application and others.

Important items to bring with you include

First-aid kit - 1% hydrocortisone cream, Antibacterial or antifungal ointments, Digital thermometer, Oral rehydration salts, Antiseptic wound cleaner, Insect bite anti-itch gel or cream, Bandages, Disposable gloves, Cotton swabs, Tweezers and Eye drops.

Medical Papers - Medical papers and records are a necessity and should be at the top of your list of things to pack. Just to be safe, it is always a good idea to have extra copies.

Prescriptions, Health insurance documents, Vaccinations, Medications.

General Documents - Copies of your passport and travel documents, Contact card with the street addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of: Family member or close contacts in your home country.

Health care provider(s) at home, Hotel at your destination, Hospitals, clinics and medical facilitator (including emergency services), your country embassy or consulate in Brazil.

Passports and Visas - Keep your passport close at all times and have some foreign currency on hand for incidentals.

The first thing that should be done during the planning stage is to check the rules for passports in different countries and read them carefully.

In addition to a passport, you may require to have a visa too. You should always check with the embassy to see if this is a requirement for Brazil.

Currency - Exchanging currency is easier done ahead of time when you can exchange it at a trusted institution in your hometown, getting the best rates. If you wait until you are out of your element on foreign soil, you may not fare as well financially when you exchange foreign currency.

It's always a good idea to get bills in smaller denominations so there is no problem using them and getting change for low cost items.

Credit Card Alerts - Credit card limits should be checked ahead of time so you are sure to bring the ones you need.

It is also a good idea to let the credit card companies know where you will be, so there is no risk of having them block a transaction for "security reasons."

Travel Companion - Lastly, it is sometimes recommended depending on your disposition and treatment that you bring a trusted companion with you on your medical tourism trip.

Could be a benefit in case of emergencies.

They will also be beneficial to have someone to keep you company during recovery and assist you during the trip back home.

Responsible Tourism Seal

Several states and cities in Brazil already have the “Safe Travels Stamp,” a seal issued by the WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) for destinations and businesses such as hotels, pousadas and guest houses around the world which have adopted their health and hygiene global standardized protocols.



Using a medical tourism facilitator - Medical tourist facilitator can help a potential patient ensure they choose an appropriate hospital and doctor for the procedure they plan to undergo. Services provided by a facilitator can include:

- Recommendations for medical care providers (hospitals, clinics, surgeons and doctors), accommodation, travel and tourism, as well as estimates of potential costs
- Personal assistance and multilingual staff
- Preparation of a total budget for client approval
- Airport pickup and transportation, pre-op accommodation
- Assistance before, during and after hospitalization with 24-hour availability (via the telephone)
- Pre-arranging all dates and accompanying a patient to doctor consultations and pre-op exams
- Arrangements for direct admission to the hospital/clinic for surgery
- Arrangements for post-operative care

Conclusion - After your healthcare treatment and once you are well enough to travel, you are encouraged to take time to explore all that Brazil has to offer as a vacation hotspot! All in all, Brazil is an excellent option when it comes to medical tourism, coupled with providing dual opportunity of vacationing in one of the most pristine countries, medical tourism in Brazil has become a booming industry.