



**Pre-Departure Packet**



**2012 Edition**



**iracambi**   
 Mata Atlântica - Brasil  
 Fazendo a nossa parte

# About Iracambi

## Our Story:

Twelve years ago, Iracambi set out to save the Atlantic Rainforest by practicing conservation alongside sustainable development. Today, Iracambi is a unique blend of research and practice, with both international input and local output. Over the years, we have welcomed those from around the globe to join us and help us do our part.

## Our Vision:

Thriving communities living sustainably in a thriving landscape

## Our Mission:

To work with the community to make the conservation of the rainforest more attractive than its destruction



## The Atlantic Rainforest

The Atlantic Rainforest (Mata Atlântica) is quite different from its much more famous neighbor, the Amazon Rainforest. Like the Amazon, it is humid, averaging 2000 mm (80 inches) of rainfall each year. Unlike the rainforest, it is cooler here, with temperatures ranging from 14-21 C (57-70 F). The great variations in temperature help contribute to the rainforest's immense variety of plants and animals.

That said, the term "rainforest" technically refers to forest that receives a minimum monthly rainfall of 100mm (4 inches) throughout the year, and our part of the forest doesn't. So, where Iracambi is based is the Atlantic Forest, not the Rainforest. Since a significant part of the Atlantic Forest is true rainforest — and since the entire forest has become popularly known as a rainforest — the name "rainforest" sticks.

The Atlantic Rainforest stretches between Rio Grande do Norte to Rio Grande do Sul and spreads from the coast up into the mountains. Depending on the longitude and latitude of the forest, vegetation varies significantly. This means that the Atlantic Forest can lay claim to greater biodiversity than that of even the Amazon Rainforest.

The different classes of forest featured within the Atlantic Rainforest are:

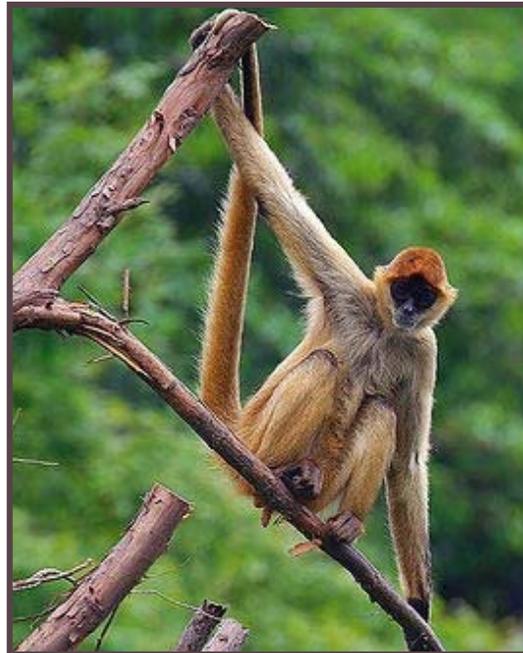
- *Tropical moist broadleaf forest* — found on coastal plains and characterized by a dense population of tall trees and a sparser layer of smaller trees and shrubs. No large area of this forest remains.
- *Tropical semi-deciduous forest* — found further inland
- *The lower montane forest* — found 800m above sea level and characterized by a thinner canopy with dense undergrowth and great biological diversity.

Mangrove forests found in bays, estuaries and lagoons and the xeromorphic coastal dune forests called the "Restinga" are also found within the Atlantic Rainforest and are severely threatened.

## Biodiversity

In the state of Minas Geras alone — as state slightly smaller than Texas — there are 750 bird species, only 60 fewer than found in all of North America. An extraordinary number of the species are endemic to the region, found nowhere else in the world. Of all the trees, 54% are endemic, as are 64% of the palms and 74% of the bromeliads. Among the fauna species, 80% of the primates are endemic and 40% of all mammals, butterflies, reptiles, amphibians and birds.

This enormous biological richness is severely threatened. The Brazilian Environmental Protection Institute published figures in 2003 that show how 38 of the 60 endangered mammal species in Brazil are found in the Atlantic Rainforest. All of the 16 endangered amphibian species are found here, as well as 118 of the 160 bird species, and 13 of the 20 endangered reptile species. The Atlantic Rainforest is also home to 21 species and subspecies of monkeys, of which 14 are endangered. Several of these endemic species are on the edge of extinction. The Woolly Spider Monkey, resident in the Serra do Brigadeiro, is the New World's largest primate and is one of the most threatened species.



## Destruction of the Rainforest

Even though the Amazon Rainforest's destruction is much more highly publicized, the Atlantic Rainforest is actually more threatened. Over 93% of natural forest has disappeared. Due to this destruction, nearly 70% of all vertebrate species classified as endangered in Brazil are found in the Atlantic Rainforest.

It is widely believed that tropical forests restore their full biodiversity in 500 years. Yet, due to the increasing rate of deforestation, the Atlantic Rainforest does not have 500 years to regenerate. Despite the 1988 declaration of the Rainforest as a national heritage — a declaration that prohibited any further cutting — more than 500,000 hectares of forest were destroyed from 1990-1995.

When the forest is cleared, the land rapidly loses fertility. The soil is not incredibly rich or fertile; rather, it's quite the opposite. Deforestation kills microorganisms that provide the forest with nutrients and minerals it needs to survive. As these microorganisms continue to die, the poverty of the soil is apparent, and its fertility is lost within 20 years or less.

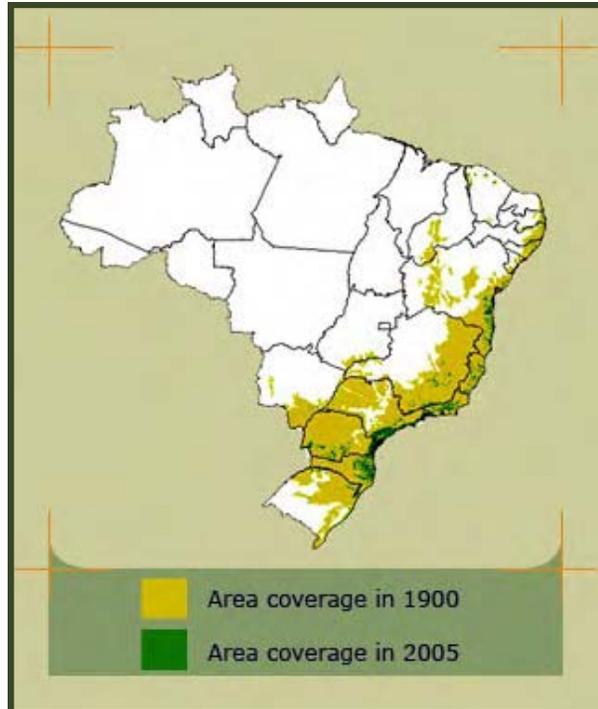
And to this problem and unstable Brazilian economy. A sharp decline in the economy in the 1980s was caused by a hard-hitting oil crisis at a very inconvenient time; Brazil had to repay large bank loans issued to the military government and could not recover from yet another financial blow. Brazilian farmers were pressured to overexploit their resources, and hillsides were intensely farmed for coffee. After the soil had already been much depleted, coffee lands were converted to cow pastures. Left unprotected from heavy rainfall, the over-grazed topsoil began to wash away, causing for serious erosion damage. With the topsoil gone, the land was useless. Farmers then began to clear more trees to find more land to inevitably destroy.

## Forest Fragmentation

Deforestation has left the Atlantic Rainforest of Minas Gerais dangerously fragmented, with few large patches of contiguous forest surviving. Instead of the vast swathe of forest left in the Amazon Rainforest, the forests of Minas Gerais resemble a mosaic of forest patches. The Serra do Brigadeiro State Park, with its 15000 hectares next to Iracambi, is therefore one of the largest fragments in the State. Fragments outside the park have an average 100 hectares of contiguous forest.

From the theory of island biogeography, Iracambi knows that the smaller the fragments of forest, the fewer species will be able to survive. Even though some scientists do not agree that there is a universal size/species relationship, it can be assumed that this rule applies in the relatively homogenous forest fragments of Minas Gerais.

Iracambi believes that — as a consequence of species loss — we must learn to work with fragmented forests and do what we can to ensure that such fragmentation is stopped. For this reason, our first priority in biodiversity conservation is preventing habitat loss and increasing fragment size through the establishment of biological corridors.



## Credit Cards

It's probably a good idea to take a Visa credit/debit card. Most developing countries don't accept American Express or may charge an additional fee to use it. ATMs usually provide a better exchange rate to obtain cash than do money bureaus. It's probably worth calling your bank to make sure you can use your card during your stay in Brazil. Also, be sure to inform your credit card company that you will be traveling overseas, providing specific dates and locations to ensure that your service continues while you're abroad.

You should exchange money as soon as you arrive in Brazil because it will not be possible to do so in Muriae or at Iracambi. You can change money at the airport (exchange kiosks are located outside the Customs terminal). Avoid the Banco do Brasil — it's a rip-off. In Rio de Janeiro, there are "casas de cambio" for money exchanges, but they are not open on weekends.

There are ATM machines in the nearest towns to Iracambi, Rosario da Limeira (30 minutes away) and Muriae (90 minutes away), and trips can be taken to town for money withdrawals. If you have any problems with your cash card initially at any of the banks, you can always take money out on a Visa card. Just remember to watch the interest rates as they do change from bank to bank.

Make sure you have PIN numbers for all credit cards you'll be bringing to Brazil. If you cannot find them once here, it will take up to 10 business days to receive the information from your banking company. Also, make sure that your credit cards are not set to expire during your stay in Brazil.



## Vaccinations

It is important that you get vaccinated against the following:

- Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid, Yellow Fever, Diphtheria, and Polio

Your doctor may also suggest Hepatitis B and Rabies. Iracambi is not located in a malaria area, but if you plan to travel to other parts of Brazil that are, you will need a suitable prophylactic. Ask your healthcare specialist before leaving for more information.

## Visas

Visas are required of many nationalities (i.e. Australia, Canada and the US), and usually last up to 90 days with possible extensions. If you are from the UK, you do not need a Visa. Since you will only be in Brazil for a month or slightly more, you will need to enter the country on a **tourist visa**; the tourist visa will allow you to stay for a maximum of six months if the extension is granted. **Under no circumstances are you to apply for a volunteer visa.**

You will need to put an address on the arrival slip upon arrival in Brazil. Please use Iracambi's address:

Fazenda Iracambi Caixa Postal No. 1, Rosário da Limeira 36978-000 Minas Gerais, Brazil

## Travel Insurance

Iracambi doesn't cover you for travel and health insurance. Please take measures to cover yourself prior to departure. It may be possible to extend your existing health insurance for overseas travel. Contact your healthcare provider for more details.

## Passport

Ensure that you have a **minimum** of six months' validity left on your passport as some countries do not let you enter with less. Also, make sure you have enough empty pages on your passport; if you do not, make sure you obtain extra pages so you can apply for visas before departure.

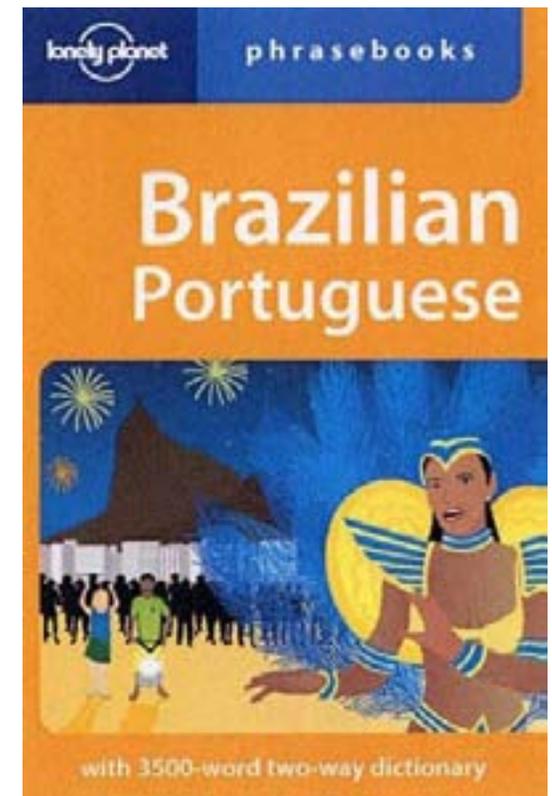
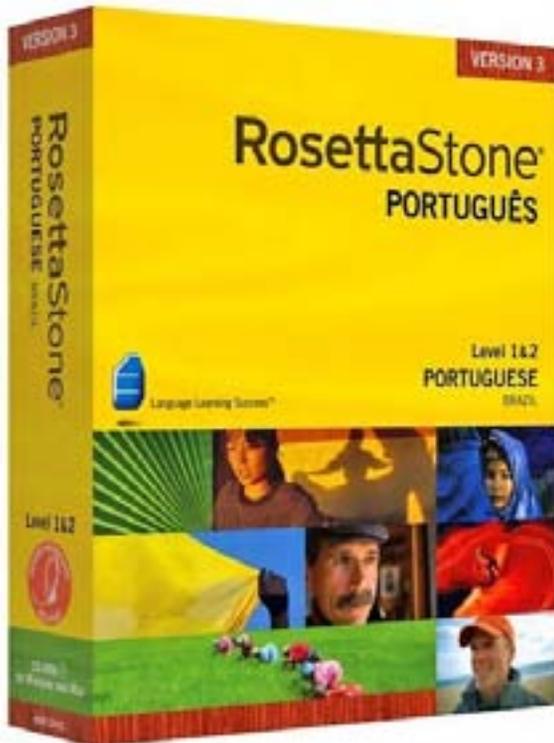
## Portuguese

It is highly recommended that you learn basic Portuguese before coming to Iracambi. If you are interested in community-based research work, comprehension of the language is required. Even if you're not working with community members, knowing the language will enrich your experience in Brazil.

### Tips

- Sign up for a little Portuguese phrase everyday: <http://www.bitesizedlanguages.com>
- Another good site: <http://www.easyportuguese.com>
- You can also teach yourself Portuguese at home or while commuting on you MP3 device. Rosetta Stone comes highly recommended: <http://www.rosettastone.com>
- There are many language books available that will help you learn Portuguese:

- [Teach Yourself Brazilian Portuguese](#)
- [The Lonely Planet Phrasebook](#)



## From Rio de Janeiro

Rio is the closer of the two cities, and you will be able to make it to Iracambi if you arrive to Rio before noon.

- After making it through customs at Rio, head straight for one of the three taxi stands outside of the terminal. Purchase a R\$60.00 ticket to the rodoviaria (bus station).
- Once at the rodoviaria, go upstairs and go left to the **Rio Doce** booth and ask for “uma passage para Muriaé” (Moo-RE-I-A). This will cost approximately R\$54.00 and should take between 5-6 hours. Muriaé is not the last stop, so pay attention to each bus stop!
- Once in Muriaé, go into the bus terminal and take a right to get to the ticket booths. Go to **nova horizonte** and purchase a ticket for Rosário da Limeira, about R\$8.00. This trip will last 1-2 hours and is the last bus-ride of your journey. The last bus leaves at 6:00 p.m. every day.
- Upon arriving in Limeira, find one of the taxis that are usually parked around the square. If there are no taxis available, someone at the bar should be happy to give you a ride to Iracambi. Ask the driver to take you to Centro, which will be the second entrance you pass, not the first one with the gate. This cab should cost no more than R\$50.00

## From São Paulo

- From the airport, you can take either a taxi or the shuttle, but beware that a shuttle may be difficult with too much luggage. Go to the rodoviaria. At the right side of the terminal with the ticket booths, go to the Itapemirim booth. Buy a ticket to Muriaé. Take note that Muriaé is NOT the last stop. The last bus is at 10:00 p.m.
- Follow the directions above once in Muriaé.

## Iracambi Lifestyle

Volunteering at Iracambi will likely provide you with a lifestyle different from what you're used to. You're stay here will introduce you to people of many different nationalities, backgrounds, skills, ages and interests. And you'll become quite acquainted with a few bugs and wild animals along the way.

Your experience at Iracambi is what you make of it. Work here is usually completed independently, require self-drive and creativity of each volunteer. If you are not used to being self-sufficient, this might not be the best place for you. While volunteers are allowed to help Iracambi with existing work, they are encouraged to take responsibility of their own projects, utilizing the help of fellow volunteers. Together, the volunteers will need to find a mutually agreeable way to run both work and home life.

The Research Center is located on a working farm, including large areas of native forest as well as tree crops. There are rivers to swim in, mountains to climb, forest trails to hike, fruits to pick, and a welcoming local community to explore. Between discovering the areas many secrets and swapping stories with fellow volunteers, you'll be certain to never have a dull moment in your day-to-day life.

### Housing

You will be assigned a room in the Center upon arrival, unless the Center is full or you have paid to stay in a nearby smaller casinha. You will be living with fellow volunteers and will most likely be required to share a room with someone of the same sex.

The Center consists of six houses, each in traditional and simple design, much like the houses that local people live in. The Center is the biggest of the volunteer houses, with four bedrooms, each sleeping two people. It also has a living room, library, and two bathrooms. The other volunteer houses have two bedrooms, one bathroom, and a living room, sleeping four people.

The houses are well-maintained and have electricity 24 hours a day. Most of the time, the houses also have hot water, barring an easily-fixed clog in the water source.

## Food

The food at Iracambi is provided by Dona Carminha's Sabor da Serra catering service. Breakfast usually consists of toast, cheese and coffee. Lunch and dinner are typical Brazilian fare: rice, beans, potatoes, squash and salad. Drinks, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, are also available for separate purchase by Carminha.

Being a vegetarian at Iracambi is quite simple and easy. Meat or chicken is served a few times a week at most, and there are always alternative dishes available.

Food is brought from the local communities to ensure that it is as fresh and organic as possible.

## Climate and Clothing

The weather during the summer months (November to March) can be up to 35 degrees Celsius (95° F) during the day with a tendency for heavy rainfall and storms at night. Temperatures do drop in the evening, but still remain relatively warm. Since this is the wet season, plan to bring waterproof clothing and footwear if your stay is during the summer months. Fast-drying clothing is also highly recommended as clothing will be frequently damp.

Winter months (April-October) are cooler, daytime temperatures averaging 20 degrees Celsius (68° F) and down to 6 degrees at nighttime (40° F). During the day, it tends to be rather dry, though occasional showers and storms do occur. If planning to stay during the winter months, warmer clothing for the evening is highly recommended.



## General Safety

Anyone traveling throughout Brazil or spending time in the cities should be aware of the risks. Taking precaution to stay safe is extremely important. In cities, never flash cash or expensive objects (cameras, iPods, laptops). Avoid wearing watches or jewelry and keep as little money on you as possible. Don't walk the streets while talking on your mobile cellular device. Women should also be cautious when carrying purses and handbags, as they are easy targets for theft. Be observant and vigilant, always taking note of your surroundings and listening to your gut. See how the locals are acting and try your best to blend in.

## Infections and Disease

All tropical locations have an abundance of insects, parasites and diseases; Iracambi is no exception. Most of the insects in Brazil do not carry diseases but are still a nuisance. Ticks are common between July and August but do not carry Lyme disease. Burrowing fleas, called Jiggers, are very common in early November/December.

Brazil's Wandering Spider, named the most venomous spider in 2007, is a very common spider species at Iracambi, seen mostly at night wandering the forest floor. These spiders are often seen in the houses and bathrooms at Iracambi, so be cautious when walking at night and always wear shoes. Researching this species before departure is highly recommended to acquaint yourself with its patterns and appearance.

Venomous snakes also live in the environment and care should be taken to avoid any type of snake. If bitten, venom kits are stored at Iracambi for immediate use. Researching the types of poisonous snakes in the area is also advisable.

Like any developing country, Brazil is a high-risk area for HIV/AIDS. Make sure to take the necessary precautions before engaging in any sexual activity or handling another's blood.

## Medical Health

Make sure to familiarize yourself with the international medical coverage your country has provided and that you know how to make a claim if necessary. Though Iracambi takes precautions to ensure the safety of each volunteer, please keep in mind that you will be living in an isolated area. For this reason, we unfortunately cannot accept volunteers with chronic medical conditions or volunteers that may need emergency assistance.

## The Water

Iracambi receives water directly from streams in the surrounding mountains and is very clean. Many volunteers drink water directly from the tap, but Iracambi does provide filtered water as well. Most have little to no problems with the water, but it may take a few days for your stomach to adjust.

## Communication

Mail is delivered once a week to our box in Limeira. Letters to and from Europe generally take around two weeks to arrive, while packages take up to seven weeks. From the United States, letters take about 10 days to arrive, and packages take usually five weeks.

It is important to stay in contact with friends and family during your stay at Iracambi. Since your laptop can be linked with Iracambi's Internet connection, be sure give your loved ones your email address and Skype name before departing.

Iracambi does not allow volunteers to have personal visitors during their stay here.



## Daily Routine

Volunteers generally wake up for breakfast around 8:00 a.m. each morning, beginning work after eating. Until noon, when lunch is served, they work on various projects throughout the area. Work then continues after lunch until about 5:00 p.m., and dinner is served between 7:00-8:00.

Depending on your project(s), you will be spending most of your time in the forest, nursery, neighboring hills, rivers, or the laboratories. You should always try to be back at the Center in times for each meal.

Most evenings at Iracambi are spent socializing, reading, watching movies, playing cards, catching up with loved ones back home, or resting. There are many community parties in the area, and volunteers are always welcome to dance and drink with the local inhabitants. Depending on the availability of transportation, volunteers may have to walk to and from these events.

Weekends can be used for exploration, traveling, swimming, hiking or simply relaxing.

Come with an open mind, and take this experience as it comes. Be open to new experiences and adventures. If things aren't going as planned, take the afternoon off to take a walk along the trails to clear your head. If you need to, go to bed early or take a nap because pretty much anything here can wear you out — especially in the beginning. Watch your energy levels and pay attention to your body; don't feel embarrassed if you need to rest up for a bit.



# Payment

## Minimum Stay

For researchers, the minimum stay is one month, giving you enough time to get a feel for the place. Volunteers can stay less if they like, but we urge them to stay at least a month; this will allow volunteers to be able to make a real, lasting contribution to Iracambi.

## Fees

If planning to stay in the Center the fees are as follows:

- ☐ R\$1300 for the first month
- ☐ R\$1250 for the second month
- ☐ R\$1200 for the third and subsequent months
- ☐ If you wish to stay in one of the semi-private cottages, a R\$200 fee will be added to each month's cost

The fees include food, accommodation and Internet access. Beyond your personal expenditures — food at grocery stores, beverages, and travel payments — there are no additional payments necessary while at Iracambi. Payments to Iracambi can be made as follows:

- ☐ Direct transfer to the Iracambi bank account in the United States. Email us for details.

☐ With a credit card, using Paypal or Kagi, on webpage the Iracambi website under “Donations.”

<http://www.iracambi.com/english/donate/html>

# What to Bring

- Sleeping bag — highly recommended for the winter months
- Towel(s)
- Flashlight/headlamp
- Insect repellent
- Shorts
- Swimwear
- Rainproof outdoor gear (jacket, galoshes) — wet season especially
- Hiking boots
- A laptop
- Antihistamine
- Personal toiletries
- iPod/MP3 device
- Books/E-reader
- Marshmallows for roasting — cannot be bought in Limeira

- Electricity is 110 volts 60 cycles, except in the North and Northeast, where it is 220 volts.
- Laundry soap will be provided by Iracambi q

## Packing List

- Mosquito net/canopy
- Durable water bottle
- Sunscreen
- Antiseptic cream/lotion
- Long cotton pants — jeans are not recommended
- Jacket or fleece
- Terrain sandals and/or sneakers
- Durable clothing — clothing can get muddy and will be hand-washed
- Camera
- Converters/adapters
- Alarm clock
- DVDs for nights in
- Snacks — for traveling and in between meals
- Software or materials needed for your personal projects

# Contact Us

## Mailing Address

Fazenda Iracambi Caixa Postal No. 1  
Rosario da Limeira, 36878-000  
Minas Gerais, Brazil

## Phone

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## Fax

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## Skype ID

Iracambi

## Email

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