

# RIO TOP TOUR - WELCOME TO THE SLUMS



Rio de Janeiro proves there is much more to the fabulous Brazilian city than Christ the Redeemer, the Loaf Mountain and Ipanema Beach. A pilot project was launched recently which lures visitors to Rio's slums.

Many of Rio de Janeiro's 6 million inhabitants live in over 1,000 slums. While tourists cannot wait to see the famous statue of Christ the Redeemer, take a picture of the glamorous Copacabana or Ipanema Beaches, and see the Loaf Mountain, the visits to local slums are minimal.

Drug-ridden slums, or favelas, never make it on the list of top ten favorite places to visit, unless an adrenalin seeker ventures there looking for a near-death experience. However, **Rio decided to turn the favela reputation into an advantage**. Several years ago, the Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva started a campaign against crime and drug trafficking in the slums and today, first results are visible. The Santa Marta shantytown is ready to welcome tourists.

The pilot project was recently officially launched as '**Rio Top Tour**' by the President himself. **Tourists will have the chance to explore the streets of Santa Marta, home to 5,000 people, guided by trained slum residents** whose life story is a hook in its own right; one of the highlights is also a visit to a samba school or even a street where Michael Jackson filmed one of his music videos. There will be opportunities to admire wonderful views over the city and also, to learn about the rough life in Rio slums.

The Olympics are approaching and the city hopes that by 2016, it will be even more successful in fighting crime and drug-trafficking in local slums. **Safety is crucial and improving the reputation will definitely help promote Rio** and offer a very diverse selection of tourist attractions. And the great advantage is that such projects will help thousands of people living in the slums get a better life.

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