

# TOP 10 RELIGIOUS TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN BRAZIL



According to data provided by the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism, on an annual basis 8.1 million domestic travels take place motivated by the faith of tourists and followers of major faith-related events. Tourism-review.com presents the most popular religious tourism destinations in Brazil.

## Temple of Solomon

Edified on a 35.000-square-meter area, which is the equivalent of five soccer fields, the Temple of Solomon in São Paulo is one of the most popular religious tourism destinations worldwide. It is a replica of the biblical construction of ancient Jerusalem and attracts the visitors due to its grandiosity. The construction cost R\$ 685 million. The seat of the Universal Church is in the neighborhood of Brás, São Paulo. Inaugurated in 2014, it is Brazil's largest temple, four times bigger than the National Shrine of Aparecida (SP). 40.000 square meters of stones were imported from Hebron, in the West Bank, for its construction. Within its area, there are 12 olive trees brought from Uruguay, to emulate the Mount of Olives.

## Natural Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida

In 1707, three men went fishing in the Paraíba River, in the Paraíba Valley (SP), in a time when fish was a rare commodity. When they got to the Port of Itaguassu, the first thing that their nets caught was the body of a neckless image. Immediately after, they caught its head and recognized it as being Our Lady of the Conception. When they retrieved the whole image from the water, what happened next was considered a miracle: the fishermen started to catch an astonishing amount of fish.

Since it appeared in such an enigmatic way, the image of Our Lady of Conception became known as Aparecida (Appeared, when translated literally from Portuguese), which then became the patroness of Brazil. Nearby, in the city that was also named Aparecida, a sanctuary was edified and today is of the greatest pilgrimage sites in Latin America.

The Basilica of Our Lady Aparecida is the world's second-largest Catholic temple, only behind St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican. Although the venue receives visitors throughout the year, the most important date is the celebration of the patron saint's day on October 12.

## Zu Lai Temple

Located in Cotia, part of São Paulo's metropolitan region, it is regarded as the largest Buddhist temple in Latin America and the second largest in the Americas. Having preserved the Atlantic Forest, the

construction occupies an area of 150.000 square meters. In addition to its natural beauty and spirituality, the temple has a cultural agenda that includes ceremonies and festivities throughout the year.

## **Círio de Nazaré**

Círio de Nazaré, which has been held annually in Belém do Pará for more than two centuries, is one of Brazil's largest and most beautiful Catholic processions and also one of the most prominent religious tourism events in the world. It annually receives millions of pilgrims, who then march on the streets of the state capital, in a striking tribute in honor of Our Lady of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus. During the procession, the carriage that transports the Virgin of Nazareth is followed by the faithful. Due to its magnitude, Círio de Belém was registered in 2004 by the National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute (Iphan) as part of the list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Círio also gathers other manifestations, such as the Transfer, the fluvial pilgrim and several other pilgrimages that take place in the Nazarene season.

## **Basilica of the Eternal Father**

The Divine Eternal Father Pilgrimage, which takes place every year on the first Sunday of July, receives an ever-increasing number of tourists and pilgrims who travel to the municipality of Trindade, in Goiás, to manifest their devotion to the Eternal Father. Since 1840, when a couple found a clay medallion with a depiction of the Holy Trinity crowning the Virgin Mary in the shore of the Córrego do Barro Preto River, the pilgrimage has continually established itself as one of the country's major religious feasts.

## **Sanctuary of St. Pauline**

Nova Trento, about 80 kilometers from Florianópolis, in Santa Catarina, started to attract a large number of visitors after Mother Paulina's canonization in 2002. An Italian immigrant, the devotee was an example of humbleness, dedication and persistence. After her death in 1942, at 77, several believers said that their wishes had been granted, something that was later acknowledged as miracles by the Catholic Church.

The main attraction is the Sanctuary of St. Pauline. In Colina da Madre, the place where the nun practiced her spiritual retreats, there is a replica of the house where she lived. Furthermore, pilgrims can visit the museums of Beatification and Canonization. The place establishes a juxtaposition between religion and ecotourism, in an area filled with hiking trails, waterfalls, ponds and gardens. Italian gastronomy is also another attraction.

## **Casa da Prece de Chico Xavier**

Religious tourism in Uberaba (MG) started in the 70s with the work of the medium Chico Xavier. Tourists look for Casa da Prece de Chico Xavier, but they also often want to visit the center of two other

mediums, as well as other towns in the region, in what is known as the Route of Spiritism. In Chácara Triângulo, a spiritism cult has been organizing meetings at 9 am every day, for more than one hundred years.

## **Lavagem do Bomfim**

Lavagem do Bomfim takes place in Salvador (BA), a ceremony that contributes to the harmony between the country's different religions. Catholics and followers of Candomblé get together on the second Thursday of January to pay tribute to the saints and orishas. The event gathers 1 million people to the sound of clapping, atabaques and chants of African origin.

## **Passion of Christ**

The Passion of Christ is a ceremony performed every year during the Holy Week in Nova Jerusalém, Pernambuco. 500 actors perform in 12 different stages, surrounded by a 3.5-kilometre wall. The faith-driven crowd walks between the scenes, travelling back to the era of Christ, reliving his journey and renewing their Christian beliefs for a couple of hours.

## **Statue of Father Cícero**

The statue, inaugurated in 1969, was built on the spot where the most controversial priest of the Brazilian clergy used to pray in Juazeiro do Norte. Since then, the interest around it increased so much that it receives 2,5 million pilgrims per year.

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