

TIPS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Common sense safety advice for FIA Congress delegates

Hundreds of thousands of tourists visit Brazil every year without a problem. Brazil is a beautiful, colourful country with welcoming, generous and cheerful people. It is a marvellous country, with lots of things to offer and enjoy. You should not be obsessed about your own security, but we do think some vigilance is essential for things to run smoothly. In order to make your FIA Congress experience a memorable one, we recommend you to take heed of the safety advice in this paper.

There are **safety issues in Brazil** that you should be aware of, especially in big cities such as São Paulo. Like all big cities, São Paulo has its fair share of crime. With a population of about 16 million, of which about 40% are poor, many people there struggle to make a living. Out of misery, some are ready to seize whatever opportunity presents itself to carry on to the next day.

The location selected for the FIA Congress is in a business district, outside the centre of the city. You are unlikely to encounter any difficulties in the immediate surroundings. However, should you wish to take advantage of your stay to explore the city, it is as well to be prepared. Much of this could well apply to other big suburban areas in the world. If you take precautions, use common sense and are aware of your behaviour and surroundings, you will most likely have a great time there without any hassle.

Before you leave

Before you head off for Brazil, remember to make a few colour photocopies of your most important documents. If you need a visa for Brazil, also make a photocopy of the visa.

Store your photocopies in several different places (suitcase, daypack, wallet etc.). You can also scan your documents and send them to your webmail account. You can print them out from anywhere you are in case of need.

Write down all important numbers (like passport, credit cards cards, driving licence, emergency numbers, insurance, consulates, etc.). Put the list in a safe place and also send it to your webmail account.

Before you arrive in São Paulo, try to locate your hotel online or on a physical map of the city. Locate and familiarize yourself with key points of interest in the city and research ways to get around.

At airports

Airports in many countries around the world, like train stations with international connections, are an ideal place for petty crime. Visitors are tired, disoriented and unfamiliar with their immediate surroundings. Also they often are in a good mood, excited about things to come and perhaps overly confident. Take some time, once you have claimed your suitcase, to focus on your next moves before you access the arrival hall.

Conceal laptops inside bags that do not look like computer bags upon your arrival or departure. In business-oriented airports, like Congonhas in São Paulo, laptop stealing is frequent. Scouts may wait at exits and phone ahead to thieves on motorbikes, who will then pull alongside your taxi once it is stuck in traffic.

There is a **regular bus service** from the airport connecting directly to the WTC complex to which the hotel is attached. It is cheap, reliable and safe and might very well be your preferred option. Journey time is approximately 1:50 hours, depending on traffic. The "Airport Bus Service" ticket offices can be found on both Terminal 1 and Terminal 2. All major credit cards are accepted there. Look out for the "Airport Bus Service" logo. Their 42-seat buses are red and blue and your final destination is "São Paulo BrookWTC". Once you know your arrival date and time, be sure to check your departure time online on www.netviagem.com.br. You can also choose your seat and pre-purchase your ticket online. As these busses make several stops, be sure to exit at BrookWTC.

Should you opt for a **taxi**, beware of **hawkers** enticing you to use their taxis as you leave the arrival hall. They will offer you to carry your luggage and, before you know it, they will hold it in their hands and it will be difficult for you to then turn to other options. Look for **clearly marked signs/desks guiding you to the licensed taxi ranks**. In case of doubt, look for the information counter and ask for advice. There is only one resident taxi company in the airport (called Guarucoop - www.guarucoop.com.br). Their cars are white and blue and payment for your ride is processed at the booking desk, **inside** the airport. Alternatively, you may check online, where you will find different sites that will allow you to book a taxi before you arrive. Brazil Airport Transfers (www.brazilairporttransfers.com) is a reputable company that allows you to book and pay for your taxi prior to arriving at the airport. However, feel free to do your own research and use the company you feel is best.

On your way back, remember to allow **plenty of time to arrive at the airport** for your flight. Traffic in São Paulo can be very heavy, particularly during rush hour.

Be streetwise

Walking in the streets of São Paulo requires some level of precaution.

Avoid all external signs of wealth. Do not wear expensive jewellery, watches or clothes. Leave mobile phones, iPads, cameras, laptops, credit cards, wads of cash, passports and other valuables in a safe place. If you don't absolutely, positively need them, **do not take them with you**. If you really do, use a downmarket or local supermarket plastic bag to carry them. A cheap, prepaid cell phone may be a good option if you need to carry one with you.

Only take along as much **cash as you will need for the day** and spread it between different pockets and preferably not in a wallet that may attract the attention of pickpockets. However, always carry some cash with you if you walk the streets – about R\$200 – as this will satisfy anyone seeking an easy hit. For identification purposes, a colour photocopy of the biographic page of your passport should be enough.

Try to blend in as much as possible. Dress casual, like a local. Simple things like hiking boots and carrying a water bottle will easily give you away. A jeans-and-sneakers combo will help you stay under the radar. Drink fluids on the spot.

Don't attract attention by speaking English or other foreign languages **loudly**. Do not travel alone, if possible, nor in a large crowd that may draw attention. Ask at the hotel reception if it is safe to walk through the streets that you plan to go, as in a few cases side streets off main walkways are not so safe in downtown areas. Stick to busy and well-lit streets: avoid walking in deserted streets and avoid the shantytowns (favelas) that are unpredictably dangerous areas. Be reasonably wary of people approaching you to **ask for information**, especially at night. If at all possible, avoid walking about after dark. Look both sides of the street before crossing: pedestrians do not have the right of way.

Walk like you know where you are headed. Study the area map of where you are going and plot your route before heading out, but don't stand in the middle of the sidewalk consulting your map or guidebook - duck into a coffee shop or lunch counter if you need to confirm your coordinates. Wide-eyed tourists can easily become prime targets if they are not careful. In case you get lost and do not have a map with you, stay on the main streets with plenty of other pedestrians and traffic.

The most common forms of crime affecting tourists are pickpocketing and street mugging. **In any situation, be ready to hand over any valuables you may carry if you are threatened. Do not attempt to resist aggressors** who might be armed and under the influence of drugs. Move slowly and cooperate with their requests. Do not look them in the eyes.

Getting around in São Paulo

São Paulo has an immense and complex **public transport system**. Buses are crowded during rush hours and can be targeted by pickpockets. Be vigilant when using public transport, especially during rush hour. São Paulo **metro** is cheap, rather safe and fast. However, the number of available lines is limited and you should always watch your valuables, especially phones stored in pockets or backpacks. Move your backpack to the front if you carry one.

When moving between neighbourhoods in São Paulo, **taxis** are often faster than buses and inexpensive. Also, they **tend to be safer for tourists than buses**. Flagging or hailing a taxi off the street is **not recommended** and may be hazardous, as some of them may not be registered. Taxi drivers in São Paulo often do not have change, so carry enough small bills with you to pay for your ride.

Only use **licensed** taxis. You can pick up a licensed taxi from the many recognised taxi ranks around São Paulo. Your taxi should be **metered** – if your driver doesn't turn the meter on, be sure to mention it. Licensed taxis have a big photo-ID facing the passenger. If you have a smart phone, the **99Taxis app** is efficient, safe and convenient. You only need to press a button on your smartphone to call a taxi. When a taxi is nearby, it will accept your call and you will be provided with the name, mobile phone, license plate and model of the taxi, as well as with the estimated time of arrival of your driver and approximate fare. You then can leave your secure location when that exact taxi pulls up.

If you decide to **rent** a car, be aware that traffic can become pretty chaotic, especially at peak hours. **Carjacking** is a significant threat in Brazil. When approaching your car, have the keys ready to make it easier to get into the car. We recommend driving with **all doors locked and windows up and take extra care at traffic lights**. In three or more lanes of traffic, consider using the middle lanes.

Do not ever put valuables, cameras, laptop cases, GPS, cell phone, etc. in plain view or on the front passenger seat and store anything with value **discretely** in the trunk **before** your start your journey.

Take particular care if approached while sitting in a car or at traffic lights, especially at night. **Thieves on motorcycles** are rather common. They are known to look into cars at traffic lights, smashing windows for quick hit and runs. **Do not open your window if a motorcyclist asks for directions**.

Money

Do not use unattended ATMs. **Prefer ATMs inside shopping malls, gas stations or banks**, where security is often on duty, and avoid withdrawing money after dark. Before entering an ATM facility, make a quick scan of the surroundings. If anything or anyone looks suspicious, move on to another place.

Avoid drawing large sums of money from an ATM.

Bank and credit card fraud is common, including card cloning from ATMs. Keep sight of your card at all times and do not use an ATM if you notice anything suspicious.

Civil unrest / Political tensions

There has been some political unrest in Brazil of late with many street demonstrations. Demonstrations could occur at any time and may become violent. You should obviously stay clear of all demonstrations and protests and follow the instruction of local authorities.

Health recommendations

Visit your health professional at least 6 weeks before your trip to Brazil to check whether you need any vaccinations, boosters or other preventive measures.

Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation.

You should be up to date on routine vaccinations while traveling to any destination. Other vaccines may also be required for your travel, depending on your plans whilst in Brazil.

Routine vaccines: Make sure you are up-to-date on routine vaccines before every trip. These include the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine and polio vaccine.

Hepatitis A: You can get hepatitis A through contaminated food or water in Brazil, regardless of where you are eating or staying. This vaccine is recommended for most travellers, including those with "standard" itineraries and accommodations.

Vaccinations against **Typhoid** (transmission via contaminated food or water) and **Hepatitis B** (transmission via contact with blood and other body fluids) can also be considered.

Brazil is listed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as endemic for **Yellow Fever** (transmitted via infected mosquito bites). Nevertheless, yellow fever vaccine is not required for people travelling to São Paulo.

Malaria is present in parts of the country but São Paulo is not considered at risk.

Bugs, especially **mosquitoes**, can carry a number of diseases in Brazil, including Dengue and Zika. You can reduce your risk by covering exposed skin by wearing long, loose-fitting, light-coloured clothing; using an insect repellent at all times and staying in air-conditioned rooms.

Eat & drink safety

Drink only beverages from sealed bottles or cans. Avoid ice unless made from bottles/disinfected water. Avoid raw food, including raw vegetables unless they can be washed thoroughly. If doubtful, avoid cooked food served at room temperature. Remember the golden rule of thumb: "Boil it, Cook it, Peel it, or Forget it". Cocktails and other drinks served at renowned bars, lounges or restaurants are generally OK.

Talk with your doctor about taking prescription or over-the-counter drugs with you on your trip, in case you get sick.

Enjoy Congress!

FIA has organised many regional meetings in Brazil over the years and all have gone smoothly and without incident. These guidelines are intended to help you to prepare and be vigilant, but not to cause undue alarm. The FIA Secretariat and our host union SATED SP will be fully available to help you with any concerns. We are sure that Congress 2016 will be a memorable one, with the special warmth, colour and charm of Brazil. We look forward to welcoming to you Sao Paulo!