



WINTER CHARTER SPECIAL

Brazilian Beauties Can Be Yours

NEW OPTIONS FOR CHARTERING PUT THE
SPECTACULAR COSTA VERDE JUST OFF YOUR BOW

Story and
Photos by
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GABI LEADS THE WAY TO PRAIA LOPES MENDES, CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BEACHES IN THE WORLD (LEFT); THE STURDY AND COMFORTABLE MOTORYACHT SAN MARINO WAS THE PERFECT BASE FOR OUR EXPLORATIONS OF BRAZIL'S STUNNING COSTA VERDE, SOUTH OF RIO DE JANEIRO (ABOVE).

I must confess: The story you're about to read is very biased. Asking me to write about Brazil is like asking Juliet to write about Romeo, Hinckley to write about Foster, Narcissus to write about himself ... I am utterly besotted by the fifth largest nation in the world and have been since I was 5. A poster of Rio de Janeiro adorned my bedroom wall, with the famous Christ the Redeemer statue in the foreground and the glorious beaches and lush morros of the city spread at its feet. I spent long hours staring at that image and developed an odd fixation, a kind of obsessive-compulsive determination that I would one day stand in that spot and touch that statue.

Be careful what you hang in your child's bedroom. Flash forward about a decade and I am a Rotary International exchange student, finishing a high-school year of study in Brazil. I go to Rio, but the only thing I don't do while I'm there is touch the statue: My visit precedes Pope John Paul II's, and Christo is surrounded by scaffolding, being cleaned in preparation. And you know what that means. I'll just have to come back — and so I have, again and again and again — at least once every few years, sometimes twice in the same year. My love affair with Brazil is no fling; it's one that has deepened with familiarity. My trips have not always been to Rio — I have branched out a bit — but they are always about the beach and the sea.

The colonial town of Paraty long ago became a favorite stop

for me. About 125 miles (though at least a three hour drive) south of Rio, the road to Paraty runs along a curvy coastline, winding up and down the mountains and above a giant bay of deep-green water that's spotted with islands. I've never marveled at that view without also wishing I could explore it all by boat, but until very recently, the only way to do that was to pile onto a tourist schooner for a day trip.

As Brazil's economy continues to grow, the wealthy have looked for new ways to spend, and a nascent charter market has sprung up. Imagine my delight when I picked up a brochure for yacht charters in Brazil at last year's Antigua Charter Yacht Show. It was a dream come true.

A few months later, after a flight to Rio and a car ride to Paraty, I walked down the dock with my partner Karyn and dear friend Erika to greet Carlo Bartolini. Tall and thin, with mournful eyes and a rare but joyous smile, Carlo is a Brazilian with an Italian mother and a father of German descent. We dinghied with all our luggage a short way out to where *San Marino*, the 65-foot trawler designed by David Napier and built at the Bertram yard in Miami, Florida, in 1994 (refit in 2009), was anchored. Carlo's lovely girlfriend, Gabi, waited on the stern to greet us and help with the luggage.

Within minutes, we were under way, motoring through jade-green seas that flashed like a mirror in the hot midday sun. We had two choices, Carlo explained: lunch at a very popular place that was fairly close but fancy and expensive, or travel another half-hour beyond that to a place he knew that was quite small, and not necessarily open, but very special. We chose the latter, of course, and hit the jackpot. In the sparsely populated hills above Saco de Mamanguá was a very humble home. Before it, perched on a large rock overlooking the bay, was a cabana with three plastic tables and assorted chairs. From the ceilings hung gaily painted wooden trawlers. This was Bar do Zizinho, named for the old fisherman with a couple-days' gray stubble and dressed in shorts, flip-flops and a worn T-shirt, who came out and asked us what we'd like to eat. We asked what he had and he ran through a list of assorted fresh fishes. The whole sea bass that we chose as our entrée, grilled, would take a while, so we ordered fresh shrimp to eat while we waited. A steady flow of *cerveja*, nestled in the plastic insulators that keep it *estupidamente gelado*, kept coming as we sat looking out over paradise, eating the sweetest, freshest shrimp I've ever tasted and getting to know each other. By the time the huge whole fish arrived, we were so full of shrimp and beer and that blissed-out vacation feeling that we could hardly eat more than a forkful or two.

Back at the boat, we all went for a swim off the stern in the warm but still refreshing bay, then motored on to our anchorage, feeling sublimely content. *San Marino* was the perfect boat for us. The cockpit was roomy, with a wet bar and stowage. The salon was finished in lots of warm mahogany, with a dining area forward and an L-settee. Large square ports opened to allow the breeze in, and closed for periodic blasts of air conditioning. (We really didn't need it all the time.) Moving forward was a well-stocked galley to port and a day-head to starboard. The pilot-house was large, with two comfortable helm chairs and a built-in settee. There were two stairways to starboard: One lead to the bridgedeck, where lounge chairs and a dinghy shared space with the flybridge controls and a Bimini provided optional shade. The second went below, to a companionway with a queen en suite stateroom in the bow, a single en suite stateroom to starboard and a twin en suite stateroom to port. A laundry and freezer area to starboard were just before the watertight door to the amid-





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE, IT SEEMED EVERY SUNSET WAS GORGEOUS; THE COLONIAL TOWN OF PARATY IS A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE; SAN MARINO'S SALON IS SIMPLE BUT STYLISH; THESE TRAWLERS DECORATE A RESTAURANT AT MARINA DO FRADE, SOUTH OF ANGRA DOS REIS.



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LEEWARD HOUSE

Rent an anchor on the hills of Angra

In case you're thinking of extending your vacation in the region and want to get ashore, Roger and Celoni Pratt rent their beautiful five-bedroom house overlooking the Bay of Angra dos Reis. The house comes with daily maid service and meal preparation. Or you can use the Dutch oven to bake your local catch. An ice machine, separate freezer and refrigerator, clothes washer/dryer, satellite television, high-speed Internet and every other amenity is at your disposal. A 21-foot rigid inflatable with a 120-horsepower engine and captain is available to take you and five adults to island bars, restaurants, diving spots or the beaches of your choice. The problem is, you may not be able to pry yourself off their deck, which has a simply magnificent view. For more information, visit mediamasons.com/beachhouse.



LEEWARD HOUSE

ships engine room, which was separated by another watertight door from Carlo and Gabi's aft en suite stateroom, the original master. Another stairway from the salon also led to their stateroom. It was a great arrangement, I thought, and unusual in such a small yacht to have 4½ heads.

This yacht and this charter experience were very much about casual cruising with two great people who really knew the area. Both Carlo and Gabi were excellent cooks with a sophisticated sense of hospitality, more like wonderful hosts than a formal captain and first mate, though Carlo is an experienced skipper who'd crossed the Atlantic to cruise the Mediterranean on *San Marino*. Both Carlo and Gabi worked hard on the upkeep of the yacht, and *San Marino* ran flawlessly while we were aboard. Their knowledge of the cruising grounds in this area was impressive, and every day yielded another perfect spot.

With more than 360 islands in the bay waters between Paraty and Angra dos Reis to the north, you could spend your lifetime exploring these serene seas and stunning beaches. We anchored off Isla Cedro, swam in a blue lagoon and hiked across Ilha Grande to sunbathe and swim on Praia Lopes Mendes, widely considered one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. If you seek solitude and nature, you'll run out of time way before you run out of places to hang on the hook. If you must have a dash of the yachtie scene, there is Marina Porto do Frade in Angra dos



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT, TOURIST SCHOONERS AWAIT THEIR PASSENGERS; THE VIEW FROM RESTAURANTE REIS E MAGOS ON ILHA GRANDE; PASTELS ARE IRRESISTIBLE TREATS; MARINO DO FRADE OFFERS UPSCALE AMENITIES; CARLO AND GABI LOVE LIFE ABOARD.

Reis. Shoreside restaurants and boutique shopping, a golf course and upscale condominiums are all part of the burgeoning yacht scene that's developing along this coast.

A word to the wise: Brazil imposes a tax on charter yachts that can make it as expensive to charter here as it is in the Med and other luxury regions around the world. However, you will find a much less developed infrastructure, fewer fancy restaurants and marinas, almost no superyachts and a generally less-polished chartering experience. If that sounds discouraging, this may not be the right destination for you. But if you crave an unspoiled paradise, perfect days of sunshine and swimming, good but simple food and great company, you couldn't find a better charter experience than the one we had aboard *San Marino*. Then again, I may be biased. □

San Marino is available for a charter rate of \$17,500 plus expenses per week for five people, through Marcelo da Cruz, Interpoint Yachts, +55 11 8387-7651; interpoint.com.br.