

After visiting Iguazu Falls we flew to St Paulo. The plan was then to cycle to Rio for the Olympics.



The first thing to do was buy two bikes. Language difficulties created problems for us as we kept being directed towards motorbike shops. Eventually we purchased two mountain bikes in a supermarket for about £100 each and bought some basic tools for fixing. We left Guarujá at 13.00 approximately 2 hours later than we had planned. The cycle would take 6 ½ hours with additional time needed to cross on the Ferry at Bartioga.



The route was generally flat following the beautiful coastline, jungle to our left and beautiful sandy beaches. Light would go at about 18.00pm and we were hopeful of some dusk after that, what we hadn't realised is that in the tropics the light goes almost immediately. The road was fairly quiet with a metre and ½ at the edge for John and I to comfortably ride two abreast. Due to shortage of time we pushed ahead on the flat sections and I sat in John's wheel. We fed out of pockets on the move and only stopped to buy water. Pitch black came and we still had two hours to ride and a massive climb ahead of 750m. There were no street lights. In the pitch black we were aware of how vulnerable we were.



There was very little traffic with the exception of great big logger trucks, we could hear them ascending behind us so as they got close we dismounted and pulled well clear of the road. We stayed in a modest motel.

Our second day took us to the small Paradise Island of Isla Bella. A journey of 3 hours covering just 32km with 587m of climbing. The ferry was a little basic but served its purpose. Ilha Bella is the largest island along Brazil's coast. We stayed in a small hotel with front doors opening on to the beach. The afternoon was spent walking the forest trails and enjoying the beautiful waterfalls.



The following morning we left on the 8.30 ferry taking us back to San Sebastian on the mainland, from here we planned to ride for 5 ½ hours a distance of 85.2 km with 494m of climbing. It was essential that we took today steady as John had developed a bad cold and was suffering a little as he had forgotten to pack his cycle shorts. This section of our ride was a lot more hospitable with lots of kiosks selling cold drinks. We stopped for lunch, a rare treat and enjoyed deep fried fish, beer and fresh juice. We stayed in a modest pousada (B & B).

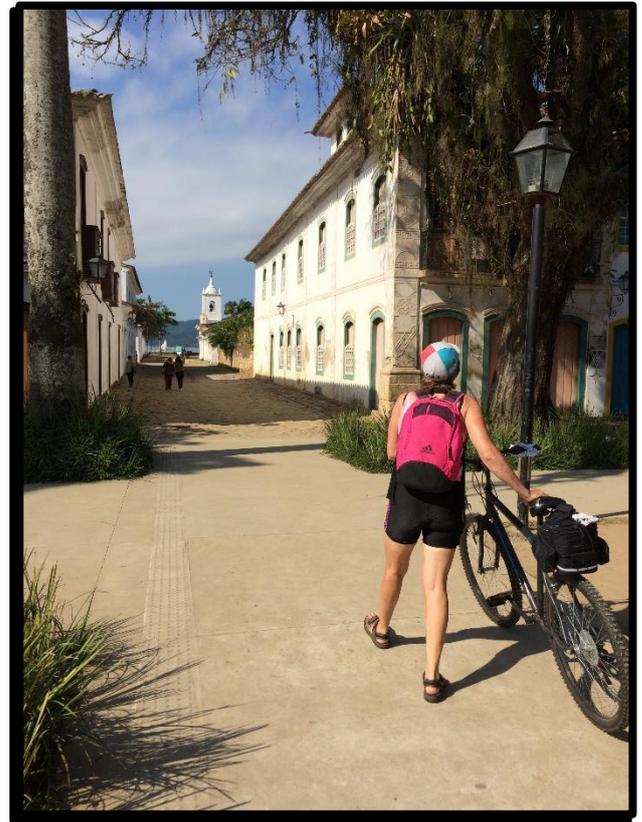
Day 4 started badly due to the road surface which was cycle tracks in mud along a busy industrial town.



Eventually this gave way to our previous views of rainforest and beaches. We had 44km to cover with climbs of 568m. Towards the end of the route we dropped down to the small village of Pisinquaba. A remarkable place. We stayed in the only hotel which is a colonial house hidden into the hillside. The views of the bay are stunning. The hotel had several canoes which they were happy for us to use to explore the bay. It was a little decadent staying here and not our usual style but I felt it was an ethical choice as this hotel supported the local village in sourcing both its labour and produce locally.



Having cycled down we had to make the journey back up and continue on to Paraty 37k down the coast. Paraty is a Portuguese colonial centre has cobbled streets and 17th- and 18th-century buildings dating to its time as a port during the Brazilian Gold Rush. Among its architectural landmarks is the waterfront Capela de Santa Rita, a whitewashed church built in 1722.



Above is a picture of one of the main streets in Paraty, the church in the distance.



We stayed in a beautiful B & B. Here I am having my breakfast overlooking the sea. This pousada like so many in this area is so very cheap. I did all the bookings using booking .com and until this point in the trip nothing had gone wrong!

Day 7 Was a long yet beautiful ride a distance of 132km with a lot of climbing in total 1,436m. After an early start we arrived at the accommodation at 18.30. The concierge on the gate asked for details which we supplied. It became obvious that there were problems. The accommodation was not ready or they had cancelled our booking. We were asked to go and

eat whilst the room was prepared. At 10.00 pm we were given the keys to the apartment. It was totally empty. It comprised of two bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom. I removed the curtains from the spare room so that we would have some bedding. The following morning we took the boat to Ilha Grande.

Ilha Grande is ringed by beaches, covered by Atlantic forest and crossed by winding trails.



There are no cars allowed on the island. This essentially was our rest day which we spent walking the trails and staring up at the canopy above to marvel at the jumping monkeys.



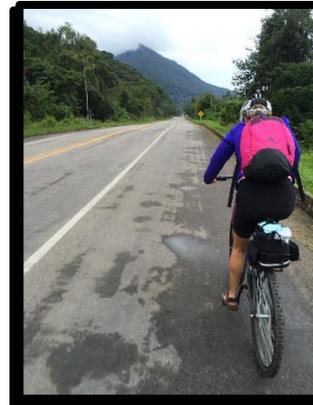
They are called "Howler monkeys" and as the name suggest even if they can't be seen they can be heard.

On our final day we caught the ferry early to begin our journey into Rio. This must never be attempted. All went well until it went dark. We were studying the map by the side of the road when a cyclist came to help us. Unbeknown to us we were on the Time trial course for the Olympics. This cyclist was concerned that we may get lost so he cycled with us for about 10k until he put us back on the route. At this point he said we must just keep going. 10.00pm that evening we arrived in Rio.

Iguazu Falls



The road and a view of my luggage



With my daughters on Copacabana

