

Rio de Janeiro's 500-year history

Rio de Janeiro is hosting South America's first Olympic Games, set against a stunning backdrop that has been attracting visitors for more than 500 years

Rio's famous Copacabana beach

Christ the Redeemer statue

■ **Jan 1, 1502:** Portuguese explorers arrive at Guanabara Bay, naming it Rio de Janeiro, or "January River"

■ **1565-67:** Founding of first Portuguese settlement in Rio. French attempt to gain foothold expelled

■ **16th-18th century**
More settlers arrive from Portugal, gradually mixing with indigenous people. Rio expands through sugar production and mining, requiring large slave population. City becomes capital of Brazil in 1763

View of Rio, c.1820



■ **1808:** Portuguese royal family resettles in Brazil due to Napoleonic Wars – transforming sleepy Rio into imperial capital

■ **1920s:** Rise of tourism sees Rio begin to flourish as popular, exotic holiday destination

■ **1960s-present**
Despite capital moving to Brasilia, and São Paulo becoming Brazil's largest city, Rio remains important centre for industry and culture. City faces challenges from urbanisation and growth of poor

*Above right: Rio's annual carnival.
Right: FIFA World Cup Brazil 2014*

