

Episode 122: Return to Rio

Summary

Nick and Wendy return to the city of Rio de Janeiro, the last major destination on their trip in South America. They talk about Rio's staggering natural beauty, from the beaches to the mountains.

Transcript

Nick: Today Wendy and I are talking about the 'marvellous city', as it's known, where we've spent most of the last two weeks. And this is, of course, the city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, or Rio de Janeiro, as English speakers say it. And of course, this is a return to Rio for both of us. For me just two-and-a-half years since the last time I was here for the Olympic Games. For you, 23 years!

Wendy: You're making me sound old, Nick!

Nick: And so what was it like to return finally after all these years?

Wendy: Yeah, it was ... it was a little bit emotional. Part of me was afraid that Rio was not going to live up to¹ my memories of it, because I have very, very fond memories of it from when I was in Rio as a student, uhh, when I was just 19 and I did a study abroad program. And I completely fell in love with the city and fell in love with Brazil and with the language and I, you know, felt like there was this hidden Brazilian that was inside of me that was suddenly coming out. And, umm, you know, that I'd found somewhere where I really felt at home. But I was very young and I was very inexperienced, and not very well travelled, and so I think a part of that was just that I, umm, I was realising how much I loved to travel and I could've had that experience pretty much² anywhere, and it just happened to be in Brazil. So I was a bit worried that, you know, now that I've been to more than 100 countries, that it wouldn't be the same. But it was. I really felt a strong connection to Brazil when we first arrived, and then to Rio in particular when we finally made it there at the end of our trip.

Nick: And were there things that, after we arrived in Rio, that you remembered, or were there things that you'd forgotten about and your memory was jolted³, or what was it like from that point of view?

¹ live up to: be as good as it promised

² pretty much: almost, nearly, approximately

³ jolted: activated (in this case)

Wendy: You know, I don't think I saw very much of the city the first time I was there. I was living in Copacabana, uhh, and that's also where I studied. That's where my school was, and I was staying with a host family there. And I don't think I got out very much beyond Copacabana and Ipanema, which is the next beach over. I know that I did a couple of touristy things. I definitely remember going up to Corcovado to see the Christ the Redeemer statue. But most of it was new, new and yet familiar, you know, at the same time.

Nick: Right, so we had, unfortunately, at the beginning, about three days of rain, but then at the end we had six consecutive glorious days and so we were really lucky with that. Umm, as you mentioned, going up to Corcovado is one famous thing you can do in Rio, and that's one thing we did. We actually went to three different viewpoints. Umm, so the Christ the Redeemer statue, the Sugarloaf Mountain, and we also hiked up to, umm, the top of a peak, which is called the Dois Irmãos, which is 'Two Brothers' in Portuguese. So it's kind of this twin peak, and so we did that as well. So we got these amazing views over the city, over the beaches, over the mountains, from three different spots in the city. And so I thought that those were all really, really worthwhile.

Wendy: Yeah, uhh, Rio is a breathtaking city, especially when you see it from up above and you see how it's completely surrounded by the rainforest. It's really a city in the rainforest, uhh, and, you know, you have all of these hills, these forested hills that kind of pop out in different places in the middle of the city. And you have the coastline⁴, of course, and these beautiful long stretches of beach. So it really is spectacular, even though most of the buildings are quite modern, which is not really the style of architecture that we particularly like. We tend to like older, colonial buildings, and there are a few of those in the city centre. But, for the most part, it's, you know, big modern skyscrapers and things like that. Umm, but what makes it really special, I think, is not the architecture but the location, the setting of the city.

Nick: Yeah, definitely. I remember the first time I went up to Sugarloaf Mountain, when I was in Rio previously, that was when I first really, yeah, began to understand the layout of the city. And so you can see that you have these beaches, umm, Copacabana and then Ipanema and Leblon, which is the same beach that stretches further there, and then there's really only a few blocks, umm, or a few city blocks of land, back from those beaches. And those are all filled with high rises like you said, and that adds to the kind of glamour of that part of Rio. And then the mountains just start, and then you see, of course, the favelas, which are the slums of Rio, which are on the early (lower) slopes of those mountains. And you can just kind of see the different parts of the city, how it's separated by mountains, umm, and you can just kind of see how it all works. And so I thought that was really interesting.

⁴ coastline: the outline of a stretch of land where it meets the water

Last year we went to Cape Town, and you see the same kind of thing in Cape Town. And it's really remarkable to me how similar the two cities are in terms of their setting, with beaches and mountains, and then different suburbs or different areas of the city that are separated by the nature, and then that has created separation in terms of, umm, I don't know, income levels of those areas, or levels of development of those areas, and things like that as well.

Umm, and so you get three different views from these three places. From the Sugarloaf you see the bay, you see Copacabana, umm, and you see the mountains rising. From Corcovado, you see the Lagoa, which is the lagoon⁵ that's kind of in the middle of Rio as well, just back from Ipanema beach, uhh, and then you see over to Sugarloaf itself. And then from the Dois Irmãos, from the Two Brothers, uhh, you see everything. You see, umm, Ipanema beach, you're basically on top of Ipanema and Leblon beach, then you see the Lagoa from a different angle. And then if you look the other way, you see the Rocinha favela, which is the most famous of the favelas. And you're on top of that, so you can really just look down on it. And you can also see this other mountain which is called, uhh, the Pedra da Gávea, which means the Rock of the Topsail, which was named by Portuguese sailors in 1502. It was when they very first arrived in the area of Rio de Janeiro. Umm, they thought this rock looked like a kind of sail on their boats, and so that's why they named it, and it was apparently the first mountain in Brazil named in Portuguese. Umm, so we spent a lot of time at these lookouts, and that was incredible.

Wendy: Yeah, I think the Dois Irmãos was probably my favourite of the three lookouts, even though it's the least known. Pão de Açúcar, Sugarloaf Mountain, and Corcovado, where the Christ the Redeemer statue is - those are the two most famous icons⁶ in the city, I would say. Umm, and of course they do both have spectacular views. But one of the things that's great about Dois Irmãos is that you get to see both of those two icons when you're there, whereas of course when you're on top of Sugarloaf Mountain, you don't see the mountain itself in your view of the city. And we were the only people there, on Dois Irmãos. Uhh, we went up really early in the morning. I think we got started about seven or seven-thirty. And, uhh, we didn't see anyone, either on the climb up or coming down. And so that was a really special thing to have the spectacular view of the city all to ourselves.

Nick: Yeah, and I actually went up twice!

Wendy: Yes, you did!

Nick: I went up again in the afternoon because, umm, you really get a different angle, or there's different light. And so I thought it was worthwhile going up twice, so I did that. Umm, and the other thing, of course, is that you can't get up to the

⁵ lagoon: small lake

⁶ icons: famous or idolised things or people. See also: Episode 89.

Dois Irmãos with a cable car or a funicular⁷ or something that like, so that's why it's not as ... there aren't as many people who go up there, 'cause you have to hike it.

Wendy: Right, and you actually have to go through one of the favelas as well, through Vidigal, which, umm, the favelas tend to have a bad reputation, and so I'm sure that scares away a lot of people, who think that it's dangerous. Uhh, we will talk about that in an upcoming episode. We'll talk all about the favelas and our experience there. But I think that's another part of the reason why Dois Irmãos doesn't get as many visitors.

Nick: OK, and what were the other highlights for you, apart from the views?

Wendy: Umm, there were so many. I love the beaches, and that's a really strange thing for me to say because I don't really like beaches in general. I get bored going to the beach. But I do love hanging out on Copacabana and Ipanema. There's just so much happening there and it's right in the middle of the city, so you don't have to, like, you know ... the beach doesn't have to be the whole focus of your day. You can just go there, just for a half-hour or so and then you can come back to our place where we were staying, which was just a few blocks away from the beach. Umm, or you can go off and do other things. But there's so much happening. Uhh, you can see people playing volleyball, or sometimes playing a very Brazilian sport which is called *futevôlei*, and it's kind of a combination between soccer and volleyball. Uhh, so, and there's lots of people selling drinks and snacks. So we tended to go there for the sunset in the evening and we would have a caipirinha, which is a typically Brazilian cocktail, and, uhh, watch the sunset. So those are some really special memories that I have of both of my experiences in Rio - the first time and this time.

Nick: Yeah, the beach culture is just so infused⁸ into the entire culture of the city. It's not at all like going to a deserted beach on a beach holiday. It's a completely different experience. There's a lot of people, and there's supposed to be a lot of people.

Wendy: Right.

Nick: And that's part of the enjoyment. You just watch what's happening and just kind of soak it all up⁹ and enjoy it.

Wendy: Yeah, and on Sundays, they close off ... because there is a main road called the Avenida Atlântica, umm, that runs along the beach, but they close off, uhh, half of that road, the half that's closest to the beach, on Sundays. So then there's lots of people out walking and biking. And of course you can walk along the

⁷ funicular: a steep railway running on a cable

⁸ infused: instilled, part of

⁹ soak it all up: experience it, enjoy it. See also: Episodes 104 and 106.

beach, on the shore, as well. Uhh, but Sundays in particular make it a really nice outing.

Nick: Alright. So that's a few highlights of Rio. And next time, as you alluded to¹⁰, we'll talk about a different side of Rio, which are the favelas.

¹⁰ alluded to: mentioned, made reference to. See also: Episode 120.

Comprehension Questions

1. In general, what did Wendy do this time in Rio that she didn't do last time?
2. What two reasons did Wendy give for liking the Dois Irmãos viewpoint the best?
3. Why are the beaches in Rio different from a lot of other beaches?

Exercises

Use the words and expressions in the footnotes of the transcript to fill in the gaps.

1. New York City has many _____, including the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building and the Brooklyn Bridge.
2. Canada has more _____ than any other country in the world because it's so large and has sea on three sides.
3. If you go to Paris, apart from seeing sights like the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre etc, make sure you spend some time just walking around so you can _____.
4. As I _____ earlier, I don't think this plan is a good idea. A lot of things could go wrong.
5. She only just joined the team but she's _____ the best player they have already. She has a lot of skill and determination.
6. You can walk around the _____ in less than an hour, and then you can have a swim once you've finished!
7. I've been wanting to see this movie for ages. The reviews have been really good, so I hope it can _____ the hype!
8. Hilly cities like Lisbon or Salvador de Bahia often have some sort of _____ railway to help residents get to the top of the hills.
9. He had fallen asleep on the bus, but he was _____ awake when the bus had to brake suddenly to avoid an oncoming vehicle.
10. She likes drinking tea that's _____ with camomile flowers.

Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with a partner or in the [English in 10 Minutes Listeners group on Facebook](#):

1. Have you ever been to Rio de Janeiro? If so, what did you think of it? If not, would you like to go? Why or why not?
2. What do you think is the best way to reach a viewpoint - taking a cable car or train like Nick and Wendy did for Sugarloaf Mountain and Corcovado, or hiking like they did to reach the Dois Irmãos?
3. Which kind of beach do you prefer - a paradise beach with not many people, or a busy city beach with lots of activity like the beaches in Rio?

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. She explored more of the city. The first time, she stuck to Copacabana and Ipanema and didn't venture much further than that.
2. That they had the viewpoint all to themselves, and that could see more of Rio's icons from there.
3. Because there's so much activity happening on the beaches and they are a huge part of the city's culture.

Exercises

1. icons
2. coastline
3. soak it all up
4. alluded to
5. pretty much
6. lagoon
7. live up to
8. funicular
9. jolted
10. infused