



## New Year's in Brazil

Among the countless festivities we have in Brazil, New Year's Eve in Rio is one of the most popular, second only to Carnival in popularity. It attracts people from all over the world, and Brazilians from all states.

New Year's Eve in Rio is celebrated all along the beaches, but especially in Copacabana, with over 2 million people every year. The other beaches and also the Rodrigo de Freitas Lake are other sceneries of the celebration in Rio. People come out to celebrate New Year's Eve and take part in the greatest demonstration of peace the world has ever seen.

Copacabana beach is where the biggest of the parties take place. Stages are erected along its length, where live shows take place during all night long.

The apartment buildings and hotels are a blaze of light as parties warm up for midnight, and people crowd the windows to watch the festivities below. Around 11pm people begin to leave home and join the throngs in the streets. The roads are closed and traffic is reduced almost to zero. The crowds surge towards the beach, united by happiness and hope for the coming year.

At midnight, the largest firework show in the world, lasting 18 minutes, illuminates the beauty of Copacabana Beach in various colors. Two million people, united by the incomparable spirit of Rio, greet each other, even if they are strangers. And the beach is lit up by thousands of candles as Christian and Afro-Brazilian religions mix and make their offerings and promises for the new year. Each one with their own private ritual.

If you come for New Year's Eve you must learn some of our local traditions.

The first one is that almost everyone wears white for the party, or at least light-colored clothes (avoiding black or dark clothes). Colored accessories may be added: red is good for romance, yellow for prosperity, green for good health, white for peace, and so on. Eating lentil at New Year's dinner or grapes at midnight are other traditions. A lot of people also bring flowers, and throw them into the sea before midnight. They are an offering to Yemanjá, the deity of the seas.

This is a party where everybody is welcome. Walk along the beach and you will run into socialites, working class people, transvestites, children, seniors, couples, teenagers, it seems that all tribes mingle in peace to welcome the new year.

It is undoubtedly the greatest open-air party in the world.

