

# Travellady Magazine <sup>TM</sup>

## Vivid Brazilian Colors, Sounds And Tastes In Romantic Seaside Paraty

By Larry Bridwell

The famous French artist, Henri Matisse, did much of his painting along the Mediterranean Sea and described the purpose of his art as “purity and serenity...a soothing calming influence on the mind, something like a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue.” Matisse would have appreciated the Brazilian seaside village of Paraty, a relaxing feast for the human senses, with soothing sounds, exquisite food, earthy wines and stunning island scenery.



The French sensibility of Paraty is reflected by the fact that 80% of the foreign visitors to Paraty, a three-hour drive south of Rio de Janeiro, are French.



Matisse’s paintings are most famous for the resplendence and immediacy of his color. Such vibrant color schemes are exemplified in the Hotel Pousada de Sandi, especially in its lobby and gardens. Even its guest rooms are highlighted with vivid bed spreads. The soothing sounds of Paraty come into the hotel via its open windows. With my room bathed in fresh sea air, I fell asleep to

exquisite harp and flute music played by street musicians. In the morning, I awoke to softly chirping birds.

Paraty also delights the sense of taste. Following the worldwide food sensation of nouvelle cuisine, for which France and California have developed strong reputations, there is now also Brazilian nouvelle cuisine, which features local fruits, vegetables and spices. At Restaurante Chaperiz, the mashed potatoes, rice, chicken parmigian and the local fish had a taste with light Brazilian



spices deliciously different from American or European cuisine. European wines are available, but the major Brazilian wines have benefited from recent agricultural investments and are quite good, yet inexpensive. A bottle of Miolo Branco (\$10) with its rustic oak taste experienced during the afternoon breeze created a multi-sensual experience. Later that evening at the Porto Restaurant, I had an exquisite Crème de Papaya dessert combining rich cream, delicious fruit, and a generous splash of Brazilian liqueur.



One of the advantages of visiting historic Brazilian resorts such as 16th-century Paraty, and the United Nations World Heritage sites of Ouro Preto and Salvador is that industrial modernization has not yet fully homogenized the charming peasant ambience. Paraty still has several working horse-driven carts. One sees people of all ages going about their daily routines, including boys playing soccer in the main square next to a historic church.

The resort dimension of Paraty is reflected in a colorful street booth that served tropical versions of the national alcoholic drink, capirina, mixed with mango, passion fruit, and papaya. Sophisticated stores provide quality clothes, paintings and folk art, and pedestrians amble casually over cobble-stone streets from which cars are forbidden.

In addition to normal seaside activities, Paraty has 228 annual religious and cultural events, including the two-year-old “Festa Literaria Internacional de Parati.” This worldwide festival of prominent writers was founded by British publisher Liz Calder who has a house overlooking the Paraty island. Seminar participants have included English language authors, Margaret Atwood, Martin Amis and Colm Toibin as well as Portuguese language authors Moacyr Scliar, Lygia



Fagundes and Jose Eduardo Agualusa.



Near Paraty are several islands easily reached by small boats. The owner of the boat I chose placed comfortable pads on the top of the roof, providing privacy as well as beautiful views of lush islands and forests. (The 90-minute ride costs \$20.)

Paraty offers a buffet of serene peasant experiences with modern artistic flair, but my most vivid memory is the soothing harp music played in the street at night. One evening, I heard a soft bossa nova, "Eu Sei Que Vou Te Amar," by poet Vinicius de Moraes, who wrote "Girl from Ipanema."

The words say: "I know I will love you for my whole life...And each time I say good-bye, I will love you desperately....And each poet of mine will tell you I will love you and each time I say good-bye, I will cry." The song captures Paraty's special evening romance.

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Images by Larry Bridwell; hotel room image by Hotel Pousada de Sandi.