

FACTSHEET

Brazil – General Prison Information

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The aim of this factsheet is to provide an insight into the conditions of Brazilian prisons. This factsheet is intended for guidance only, and is not designed to be a comprehensive guide to all prisons in Brazil. If you require any further information or clarification on a particular prison, please contact the prison administration directly.

Contents

1	Prison conditions.....	1
2	Food and drink.....	1
3	Health and hygiene.....	1
4	Opportunities for work.....	2
5	Money.....	2
6	Visits.....	2
7	Letters and parcels.....	2
8	Education and training.....	3

1 Prison conditions

Conditions vary from prison to prison, but are generally poor, one of the main problems being overcrowding. Sanitation is extremely poor and prisoners have to pay for mattresses and bedding when they first arrive.

Due to the scarcity of resources, everything in a prison can be sold e.g. a vacancy in a better cell or pavilion, access to a doctor, a phone-call, or transfer to another prison.

2 Food and drink

The food is often inadequate and foreign prisoners have to supplement their diet by buying food from within the prison. Rice and beans are provided in tin-foil bowls, plus rolls of bread and, in some prisons, an orange. Milk is never provided, so prisoners sometimes suffer from calcium deficiency.

3 Health and hygiene

Most British prisoners in Brazil complain of health problems caused both by their current environment and also by previous ailments which poor nutrition and lack of sanitation have exacerbated. Common complaints include bronchial problems and skin disorders. In addition, poor sanitary conditions are responsible for numerous bacterial and parasitic maladies and respiratory infections, skin rashes, digestive problems and venereal diseases have also been reported in high volume.

4 Opportunities for work

Paid work opportunities for foreign prisoners are limited due to the language barrier and the great demand for the few jobs available. Not all prisons can offer paid employment. However, many foreign prisoners work in unpaid jobs to simply keep themselves occupied. Since remission is dependent on days worked, those prisoners who do not find work may stay in prison longer than those who do work.

5 Money

The safest way to send money to a prisoner is through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The money must be sent as a Postal Order, Bankers draft, bank cheque or cash to the desk officer for Brazil, at the Consular Division of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. The Consul in Brazil will be notified of the money deposit and will arrange for the inmate to receive the money in local currency. It is difficult to judge how long this process will take, although it is usually no longer than three weeks. This is a cheap and safe way to send money.

6 Visits

In general, a prisoner has the right to at least one visit per week. Theoretically, consular staff can visit at any time. For visits from a person who has travelled a long distance, a more flexible visiting arrangement is generally possible. Visits differ from prison to prison and one must enquire beforehand what the arrangements are. In general, it is a good idea to request the help of the Embassy or Consulate local to the prison.

Visits usually take place in a confined space under supervision. Sometimes a visit may be granted to a prisoner without supervision. This is applicable to married or co-habiting couples. In Brazil, male prisoners have the right to regular "intimate" visits from their partner. This right does not apply to female prisoners. Such visits must be requested well in advance.

When a prisoner is on remand, visits are usually allowed only from family. Agreement must be given by the prison authorities and, in some cases, by the judicial authority in charge of the case.

Sentenced prisoners are entitled to regular visits as determined by the local prison rules. Permission must be requested from the Governor of the prisons and the relationship with the prisoner must be shown.

7 Letters and parcels

Prisoners may send and receive letters and have the right to correspond in their own language. The prison can check the contents of letters and have them translated into Portuguese; this can result in delays.

In general, parcels may be received. In order to prevent parcels being withheld, it is important to check with the prison authorities about any restrictions. Parcels are always opened and not everything sent will arrive with the prisoner. Sending parcels is also very expensive. It is therefore often better to transfer money which the

prisoner can use to buy what they need (although some products are not available in Brazil and will need to be sent).

Books sent by the family are usually allowed. Subscriptions to magazines and newspapers are also allowed.

In general, prisoners are allowed some limited access to telephone calls.

8 Education and training

In some cases, it is possible for the prisoner to pursue a correspondence course. Study must be carried out in the prisoner's own time and it is not always possible to take an exam in the prison.

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If you spot any errors or inaccuracies in this factsheet please let us know by emailing info@prisonersabroad.org.uk. Thank you.

If you require this leaflet in a large print format, please contact us. Our details are below.

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