

# LIFE'S A BEACH in Brazil

**ABBIE WOOD** from *In the Saddle* enjoys some of the world's most exhilarating and spectacular coastal riding in Bahia, Brazil.

The Bahia beach ride winds along miles of deserted sand.

THE LITERATURE ABOUT BAHIA DESCRIBED BRIGHT TURQUOISE WATERS, LONG SANDY BEACHES, A WARM CLIMATE AND A LANDSCAPE OF INCREDIBLE NATURAL BEAUTY.



Abbie Wood (first rider from left) looks forward to a wonderful riding experience.

If the only things you associate with Brazil are football, carnivals and the forthcoming 2016 Olympic Games, then you're missing out on so much that this vibrant and magical land has to offer. Brazil is a wonderfully diverse and colourful country, but it is probably best known for the vibrant city of Rio de Janeiro and the excitement and bustle of Carnival. When I first heard about Bahia, the literature described bright turquoise waters, long sandy beaches, a warm climate and a landscape of incredible natural beauty. It sounded like the perfect exotic getaway, and I was keen to find out.

Bahia is in the north-east of Brazil, the climate is generally between 23°C and 30°C and it stays hot all year round, but over on the southern coast where I was due to ride it can get cooler in the winter months with temperatures dropping to around 17°C. This makes for perfect riding weather and delivers a refreshing sea breeze no matter how hot the days get.

## ON THE BEACH

While the main base is the luxurious Pousada do Outeiro, the Bahia beach ride takes you on a journey, giving you the chance to stay at beautiful guesthouses in Trancoso and Caraiva along the way. Pousada do Outeiro is on the cliffs above Espelho Beach and is the perfect place to relax, unwind and take in the beautiful setting. With hammocks to swing in, a large pool to cool off in and the Outeiro Clubhouse to explore it makes the perfect base.



Riding through a tropical paradise.



Guest room at Pousada do Outeiro.

Waking up early on my first morning in Bahia, I gazed out of the window as the sun came up. Just beyond my deck was a small path that snaked down to an incredible beach. A little tired from my overnight flight, I decided that an early morning swim in the hotel pool would blow the cobwebs away. Then it was off to the central dining area for a breakfast feast of fresh mangoes, ripe bananas and bright orange papayas. There was yoghurt, muesli, cheese, ham, cakes, quiches and scrambled eggs and I got my first taste of tapioca – in Bahia they fry the tapioca into a sort of pancake and stuff it with cheese, or banana or coconut. It was utterly delicious and the perfect feast to set me up for the day.

Next it was off to meet our horses – there was sweet tempered Batman, dependable Raymundo



Bahia's miles of unspoilt beaches make it a paradise for riders.



The track snakes through a rainforest.

and proud-looking Peba to name but a few. After a safety briefing and assessment ride around the spectacular polo field we set off on our first ride. We cantered through cattle pasture, winding our way along narrow rainforest paths and passed through a small town. From the little bars and restaurants that line the dusty streets we heard a cheerful chorus of 'oi' and on returning the greeting, we were rewarded with enthusiastic waves and huge face-splitting smiles. The welcome in Bahia was overwhelming and I felt very lucky.

#### A DAY IN PARADISE

Our first full day journey involved a trek from Pousada do Outeiro to Trancoso. After starting the day with another delicious breakfast we wound our way through forest trails and spent the morning exploring the undulating terrain. After a picnic lunch we negotiated a small river and then stumbled across a deserted beach for some wonderful canters along the surf.

Pousada Mar a Vista, in Trancoso, was our stopping place for the night. This guesthouse was full of Bahia charm and gave us a sense of

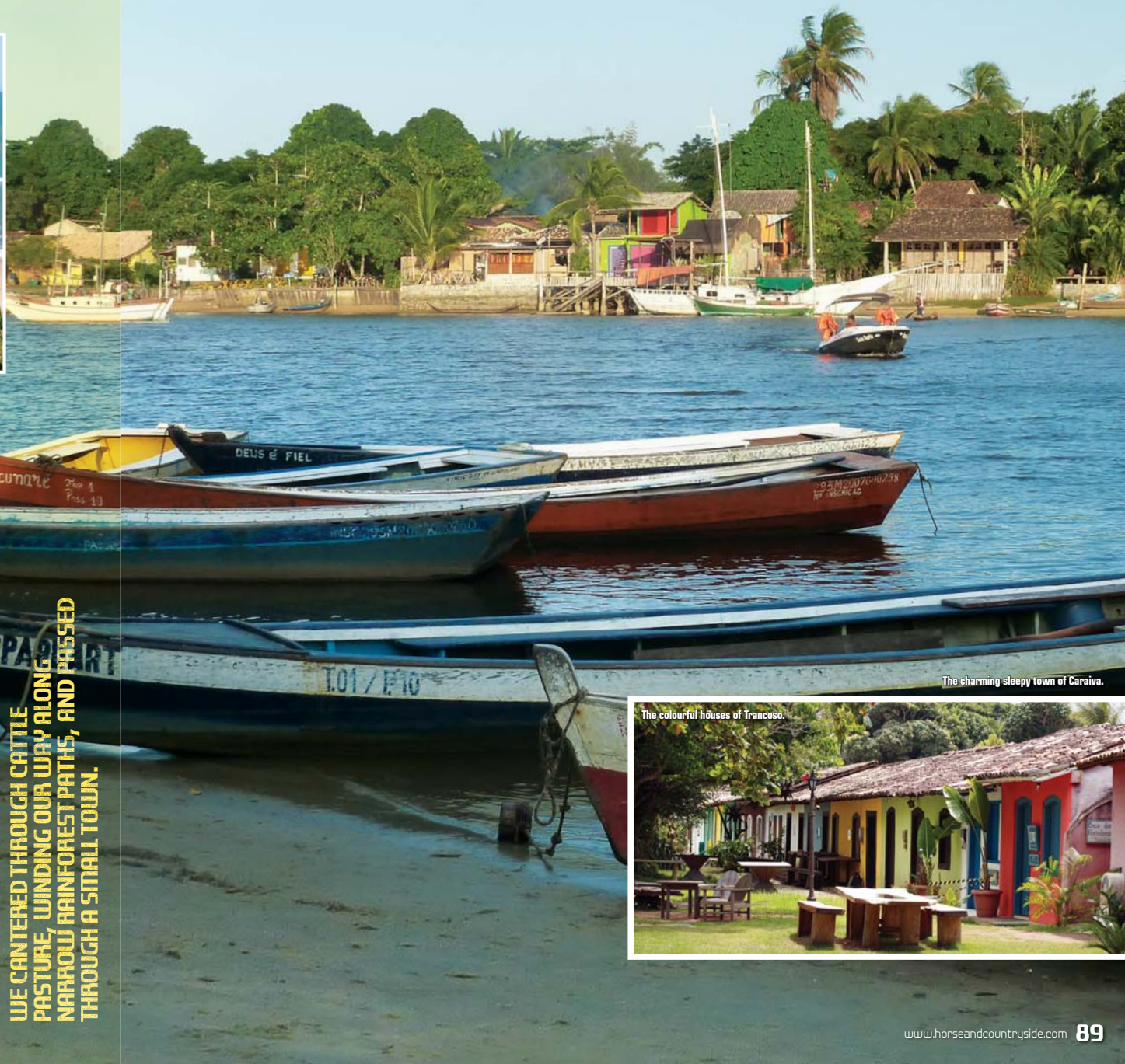
the local heritage and style, with spectacular sea views. Trancoso is a village of incredible beauty and one of the earliest settlements founded by the Portuguese in 1586. This bijou village lies at the top of a grassy cliff and below it we saw the most magnificent beaches stretching for miles before our eyes. It was truly captivating and at night the trees were lit by hundreds of lanterns which made it even more magical.

Next, we rode to Caraiva which took us along the beach and across a buffalo farm back towards Pousada do Outeiro, where we stopped for lunch, and out along cliff paths and golden sandy beaches to New Caraiva. There, we were greeted by a water taxi to paddle across the Rio Caraiva to the village itself. There was a very tropical feel to this village with so many colourful houses and sights to view and the native people were friendly and hospitable.

We stayed two nights at Cores do Mar in Caraiva in a colourful beach-front guesthouse set in lovely gardens. Caraiva has only recently had mains electricity installed, hence why it provides the perfect place to relax and unwind with minimal modern-day distractions. The taxi-cabs are pulled by donkeys, which made for an unusual sight.

After a comfortable night in Caraiva we spent a day riding around the local area before embarking on our journey back to Pousada do Outeiro the following day, full of wonderful memories and a little sad to be saying goodbye to this wonderful exotic world.

WE CANTERED THROUGH CATTLE PASTURE, WINDING OUR WAY ALONG NARROW RAINFOREST PATHS, AND PASSED THROUGH A SMALL TOWN.



The charming sleepy town of Caraiva.

The colourful houses of Trancoso.





Horse and rider cool off with a splash in the sea.

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EXCEPTIONAL AND FELT AS  
THOUGH THEY WERE MADE JUST FOR LOVELY  
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The fresh catch of the day is carried ashore.



Riders enjoy a tranquil sunset ride along the shore.

Riding along the water's edge.

## RIDING HIGH

I really enjoyed all of the horses that I rode. Many of them were polo ponies from Pousada do Outiero's Polo Club which meant they were easy to ride, willing and forward-going but with good brakes, which was great for the canters along the never-ending beaches. The pace varied from tranquil walks through beautiful forest trails and in the deeper sand, to some awe-inspiring canters where the pace allowed.

The beaches were truly exceptional and felt as though they were made just for lovely long canters. For most of the time we did not see another soul – and when we did get close to civilization the horses were so well mannered that they did not twitch an ear at beach umbrellas, windsurfers or barking Chihuahuas. You do need to be a competent rider to join in this trip, capable at all paces and confident enough to try a different style of riding. There's a wide variety of terrain to explore, from wide sandy beaches, mangrove forests, rainforests to cliff paths so you should be happy to put

your trust in your steed – which I felt fully confident to do.

By the end of my stay we had cantered along endless sun-drenched beaches and paused to drink coconut water straight from the husk. We had ridden through a beautiful water buffalo farm, swum the horses across a river and waded through mangrove forests. Our guides had plucked sea urchins from the clear blue waters and dug out crabs buried deep in the sand. Encouraged by their enthusiasm we tried bright yellow cashew fruit and stewed manioc juice (which curiously tastes like pears). We rode through the dusk as the fireflies danced in the long grass to our left and right. We met indigenous tribes and tried their traditional methods of cooking, joined in forró (a traditional Brazilian dance) at a bustling bar and floated downriver on a boat watching the rainforest slip slowly by.

What a wonderful, colourful and energetic part of the world Bahia is. I'm already looking forward to going back there.

If you want to experience the buzz and beauty of Brazil by horseback, visit [inthesaddle.com](http://inthesaddle.com) for more information or call 01299 272 997.