



INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY AND MILITARY HISTORY OF BRAZIL

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ABOUT FOZ DO IGUAÇU

Foz do Iguaçu (*Iguazu or Iguassu River Mouth*) is a Brazilian town on the border of Iguaçu Falls. The city's population is approximately 300,000 inhabitants. It is located about 650 km west of the State of Paraná's capital, Curitiba.

The Iguaçu Falls, located on the river that separates Brazil from Argentina, consist of more than 250 individual waterfalls over 2.7 km. They were chosen as one of the “*New Natural Seven Wonders of the World*.”

The city is characterized by tourism and cultural diversity. There are about 80 nationalities living there, being the most representative from Italy, Portugal, Lebanon, China, Paraguay and Argentina. Foz do Iguaçu is integrated into a tri-national region, bordering the Argentine locality of Puerto Iguazú and the Paraguayan Ciudad del Este. The city's economy is based on tourism, with emphasis on trade and services.

Foz do Iguaçu is considered the 2nd most visited leisure destination by foreign tourists in Brazil, after Rio de Janeiro. In 2010, it received from the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism 10 awards for Best Practices and Competitiveness Index. It has been noted as a destination by various national and international media, being classified as one of the 14 most romantic destinations.

Foz do Iguaçu is home of the Itaipu Dam, the world's largest hydroelectric plant in power generation (being known that the Three Gorges Dam in China, in spite larger, does not produce full capacity during all year long). With 20 generator units and 14,000 MW of installed capacity, it provides approximately 15% of the energy consumed in Brazil and 86% in Paraguay.

The Landmarks of the Three Borders indicate, in their respective countries, the territories of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay.

The city has a low crime rate by Brazilian standards.

In 1549, a Spanish explorer, Cabeza de Vaca, found the falls while travelling down the river. Very impressed, he named them “Santa Maria Falls”. Later the name changed to Iguazu Falls, word derived from old name given to the river by the native Guarani Indians. *Iguazu* means “big water”.

A glimpse of the area and its history can be seen in “The Mission”, a 1986 British period drama film about the experiences of a Jesuit missionary in 18th-century South America. Directed by Roland Joffé and written by Robert Bolt, the film stars Robert de Niro, Jeremy Irons, Ray McAnally, Aidan Quinn, Cherie Lunghi, and Liam Neeson. Among other honors and awards, the film was nominated for seven Academy awards (oscar) in 1987, including best picture and best director, winning for best cinematography. The film has also been cited as one of the greatest religious films of all time, appearing in the Vatican film list’s “Religion” section and being number one on the Church Times’ Top 50 Religious Films list.

Until 1860, it was under the disputed lands between Brazil and Paraguay, but given the latter’s defeat in the the so-called War of the Triple Alliance (or Paraguayan War), the falls were finally recognized as part of the Brazilian territory.

In 1910, the colony’s status was upgraded to the position of *vila* (town or village), named “Vila Iguazu”, and, in 1914, to city. At that time, it was known as Foz do Iguassu, later changed to “Iguaçu”.

In 1916, Alberto Santos-Dumont, brazilian inventor of the airplane, visited the region and, impressed with the beauty of the region, suggested more attention of the government to the area and asked for the appropriation of the land where currently is the *Parque do Iguaçu* (Iguaçu Park). Until 1917, this region had an owner, Jezus Val. The State of Paraná appropriated the land in the next year, and, in 1939, the Parque Nacional do Iguaçu (“Iguaçu National Park”) was created.

Below are some views of the city, the waterfalls, its airport, the Landmarks of the Three Borders and the Itaipu hydroelectric plant.

January 27, 2026

Gen Marcio Tadeu Bettega **Bergo**
President - IGHMB

Views:

