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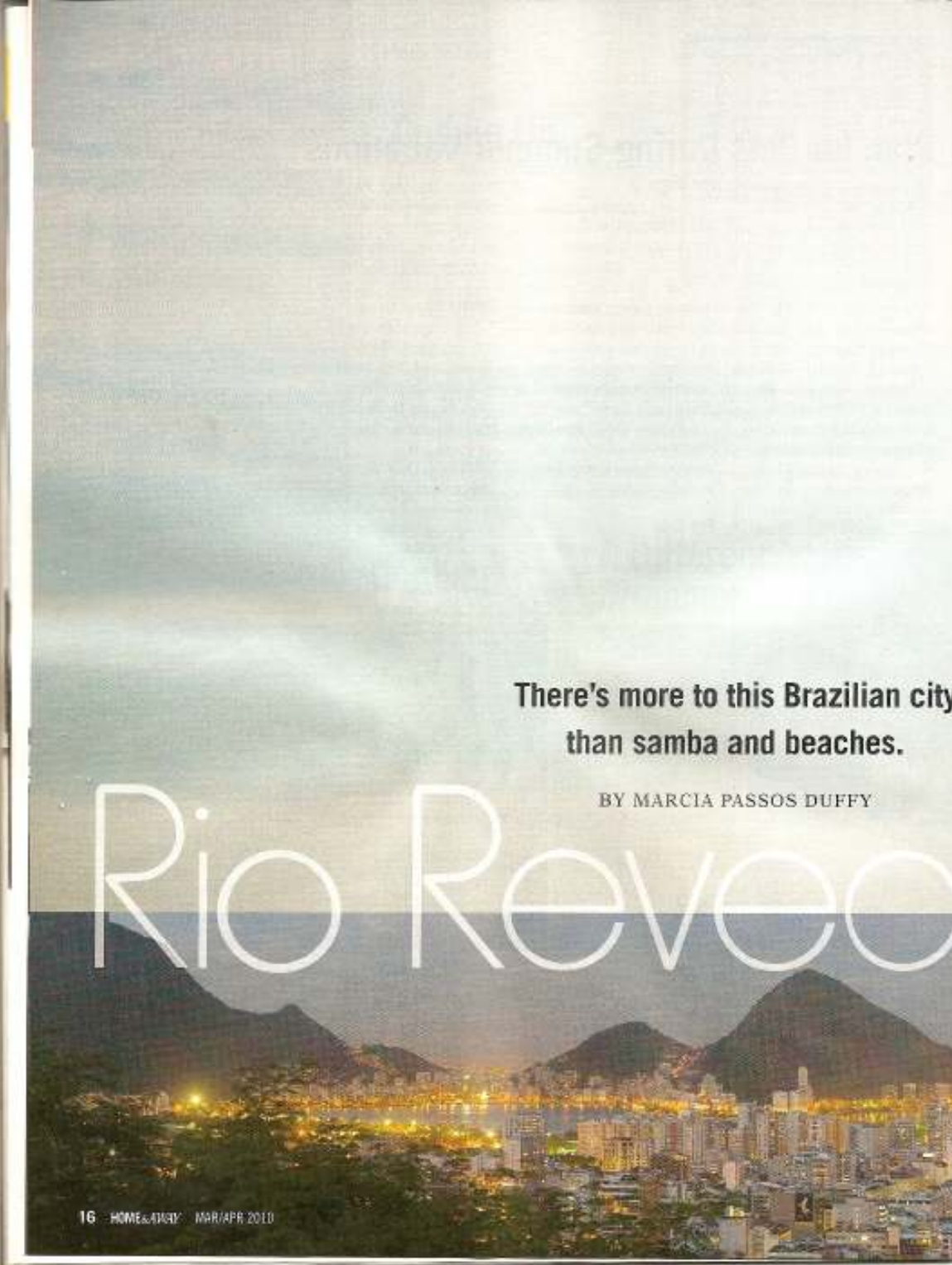
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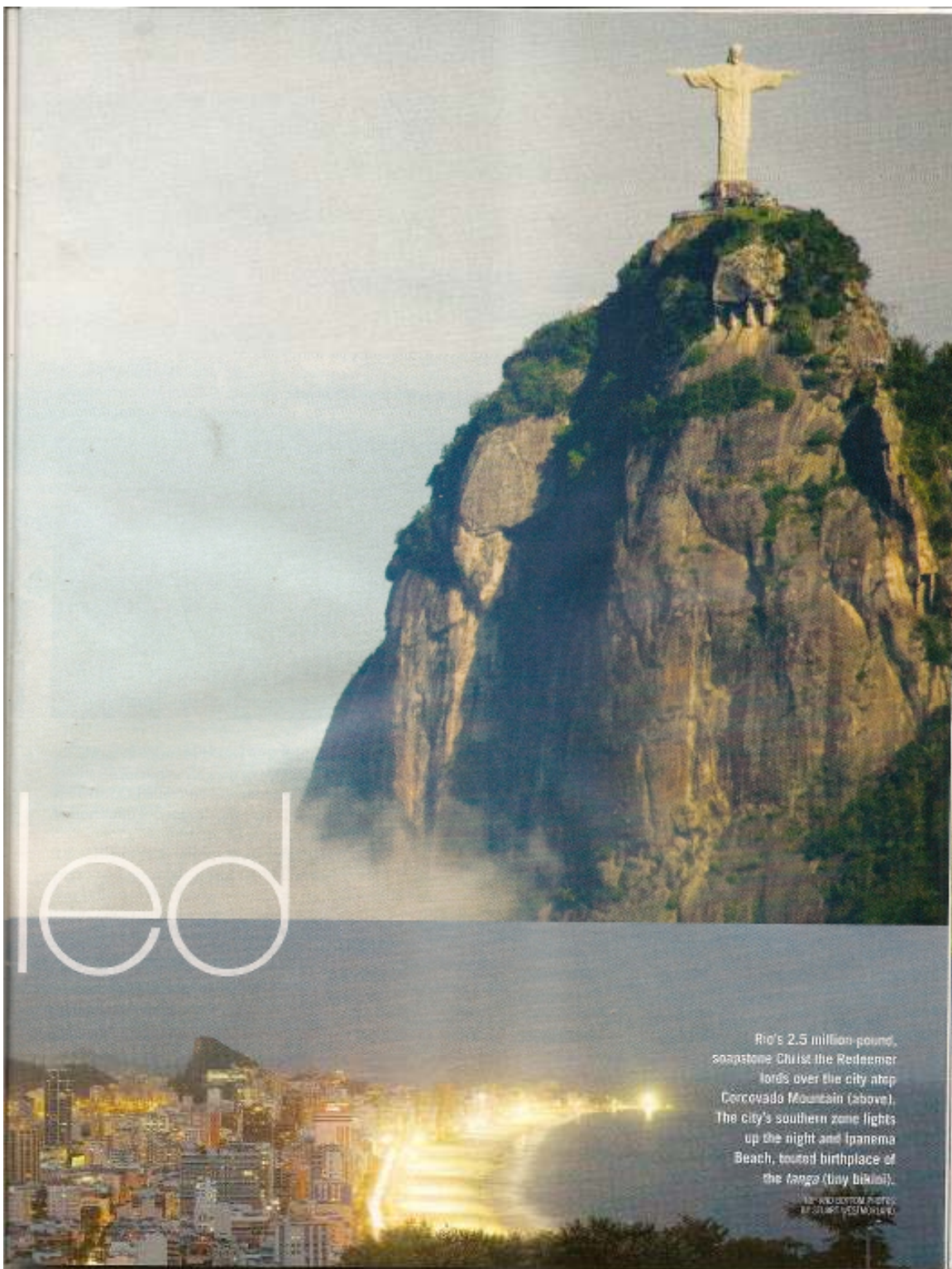
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There's more to this Brazilian city
than samba and beaches.

BY MARCIA PASSOS DUFFY

Rio Revealed



Rio's 2.5 million-pound, soapstone Christ the Redeemer lords over the city atop Corcovado Mountain (above). The city's southern zone lights up the night and Ipanema Beach, tatted birthplace of the tango (tiny bikini).

BY ANDREW HARRIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW HARRIS

This city of more than 10 million cariocas (denizens of Rio de Janeiro) is not known for waxing nostalgic about the past. Instead, this Brazilian city is renowned for its flamboyant Carnival, the picturesque landmark Christ the Redeemer, Copacabana's and Ipanema's famous white-sand beaches, and most recently, as the first South American city chosen to host the Olympic Games, to be held here in 2016.

But Rio is much more than samba and beaches.

It is also home to stunningly beautiful historical architecture—from well-preserved Baroque-style churches to presidential and royal palaces to intact colonial districts. The city's deep Catholic roots; its legacy of the Portuguese monarchy, which ruled the country from 1530



Bicyclists enjoy the wide, smooth ride beside Copacabana Beach's Burle Marx-designed mosaic sidewalks (above). The Candelária Church (below) was built by Spaniard Antonio Martins Palma and his wife in thanks for salvation from a shipwreck.



to 1822; and the late 17th-century gold-rush era in the neighboring state of Minas Gerais has left Rio with some of the most extraordinary historical structures in South America.

It is notable that so much historical architecture remains standing at all here. Fits and starts of construction due to economic booms and busts—and the ubiquitous wrecking ball—have left little of the original Rio intact. But there are still plenty of historical gems to be found tucked away along old downtown streets.

Houses of Higher Powers

In this predominately Catholic country, it is not surprising that many of its old churches, monasteries and cathedrals are not only in excellent condition but are still used regularly for Mass. Most Catholic churches have ornately decorated interiors with large, elaborate and expressive statues of saints.

The first historical landmark visitors see when landing at Rio's Galeão International Airport is a church: Nossa Senhora da Penha de França, built in 1635 and impressively perched on top of a 226-foot-high crag of rock. After a long flight to Rio, visitors may want to view the

church from afar until well rested in order to tackle the 382 steps cut into the face of the cliff to the top.

In the center of Rio's downtown (called Centro) are several churches within walking distance of one another. The first is the Convento de Santo Antônio, a monastery completed in 1780. With sections that date to 1615, it is one of Rio's oldest buildings. Inside there are fine examples of Baroque art, including wood carvings and murals. Next door is the large but unassuming 1739 Church of São Francisco da Penitência. But visitors shouldn't let the ordinary facade fool them: The interior is rich in ornate gold leaf and priceless Baroque wood carvings and sculptures by 18th-century Brazilian artists.

Those who walk north along Avenida Rio Branco and take a right at Rua 7 de Setembro will come across a side-by-side Carmelite church and convent, Nossa Senhora do Carmo. It served as the imperial chapel for 19th-century Portuguese and Brazilian royal families.

Farther north is the Candelária Church, a 17th-century church with a floor plan in the shape of a cross. Like others of this era, the building is opulent, lined with marble and featuring elaborate bronze doors; its entire history is painted on murals that line the walls.

Escadaria Selarón, made of more than 2,000 blue, green and yellow tiles to reflect the Brazilian flag's colors, was created by Chilean-born Jorge Selarón. Currently 250 steps, it straddles both the Lapa and Santa Teresa neighborhoods but is a work in progress.



Even further north is a Benedictine cloister, the São Bento Monastery, which was constructed from 1617 to 1669; it has since undergone extensive renovations. It also features an austere facade, but inside are intricate gold engravings. Guests should plan a visit on Sunday when Gregorian chants can be heard.

A Palatial Legacy

The Portuguese monarchy left Rio for Portugal in 1821, leaving behind Prince Dom Pedro I to rule the colony. A year later, the prince rebelled against orders to return to Portugal and declared Brazil—in a bloodless coup—independent from Portugal. He became the first Emperor of Brazil.

The Paço Imperial, located downtown, was the headquarters for Brazil's viceroys until its independence from Portugal. A 1980s' restoration of the two-story, 1743 colonial building transformed it into a cultural center with a hall, library, restaurant, shops and a movie theater.

In Rio's Glória neighborhood, just south of downtown, is an elaborate villa (once owned by a German baron) that was transformed into a presidential palace. Palácio do Catete was the home of 18 Brazilian presi-

dents until the seat of government was transferred to Brasília in 1960. The palace also houses the Museu da República, which features many permanent exhibits, including presidential memorabilia and a view of the bedroom where President Getúlio Vargas committed suicide in 1954 after the military threatened to overthrow the Brazilian government.

A tour of Rio's historical sites should include a stop at the eclectic and artsy Santa Teresa district. This neighborhood of cobblestoned streets, art galleries, restaurants and antique shops has a colonial European feel.

Explorers should take a *bondinho*, or trolley car, over the Arcos da Lapa (a stone arch aqueduct) to the neighborhood. While in Santa Teresa, a don't-miss stop is the tiny Museu do Bonde, which displays historical items such as original clocks and bells from Rio's streetcars, as well as a full-size replica of a streetcar that was once drawn by donkeys.

Vestiges of High Society

The 223-room Copacabana Palace Hotel exemplifies the Belle Époque era, which lasted until the early 20th century. Located across the street from mosaic sidewalks



lining Copacabana Beach, the hotel has been the meeting place for royalty, political leaders, and film, music and sports celebrities since it opened in 1923. It was also the backdrop for a variety of films, including the 1933 movie *Flying Down to Rio*, starring Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire.

The hotel has undergone an extensive yet tasteful refurbishment, including a new method of illuminating the facade, a pool renovation and most recently, a golden dance floor at the Lounge Bar.

Another landmark typical of Rio's high-society life of that era is the Confeitaria Colombo in downtown Rio. The two-story, ornately decorated coffee house, which opened for customers in 1894, still serves high tea at 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Lastly, visitors shouldn't miss a trip to Rio's Municipal Theatre, modeled after the Paris Opera House. Opened in 1909, it hosts dance performances and concerts. The interior features marble, mosaics, chandeliers and murals.

Visitors to Rio de Janeiro should enjoy all the city is famous for—from its spectacular samba clubs to mosaic-lined beaches. But a trip to the Cidade Maravilhosa, or the Marvelous City, isn't complete without a trip to memorable sites where vestiges of Rio's opulent and rich history can be savored.

Planning Your Trip

While Rio is an indescribably beautiful city, it is also infamous for its high crime rate. The best way to stay safe is to stay alert; don't walk the streets (or the beach) alone at night; don't take valuables in public at any time (that includes watches and jewelry); and be discreet when using money in public. At night, stay away from public transportation; use taxis. It is also not advised to wander into any of Rio's favelas (shantytowns) throughout the city; to see favela neighborhoods up close, book a tour with a well-respected tour operator such as Favela-Tour; www.favelatour.com.br.

For more information, visit www.riodejaneiro-turismo.com.br and www.braziltour.com. For travel-planning assistance, visit your local AAA Travel agent or AAA.com/travel.

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