

📍 EXPERIENCE · SANTO AMARO → ATINS · 5 DAYS, 3 ON FOOT

Crossing the *Lençóis*

Three days on foot across Brazil's white-sand sea.

No vehicle is allowed where this trek goes. You walk out of Santo Amaro by headlamp, swim in lagoons without names or footprints, sleep in hammocks with the families of two oases marooned in the sand, and top a final crest to find the Atlantic waiting.

Walk the route



DAY 1 · BY 4X4

Santo Amaro

DAY 2 · 14 KM ON FOOT

Queimada dos Britos

DAY 3 · 9 KM ON FOOT

Baixa Grande

DAY 4 · 17 KM ON FOOT

Atins

Everyone photographs the Lençóis. Almost nobody crosses them.

The Lençóis Maranhenses are usually seen in half-day bites: a 4×4 to a famous lagoon, photos, back by dark. But the park is 155,000 hectares, UNESCO-listed, and its interior is closed to every engine ever built. The only way through is the oldest one. Brazilians call the walk the travessia, and it is one of the great treks of South America hiding in plain sight.

We run it privately, in five unhurried days: three on foot from Santo Amaro to Atins, roughly forty kilometers of dune and lagoon, with the nights in the care of the two native families' oases that have survived in the middle of the sand for a century. Your luggage travels the easy way round. You do not.

40 km

ON FOOT ACROSS THE SAND SEA, DUNE CREST TO ATLANTIC

0

ROADS, ENGINES OR CROWDS WHERE THE TREK GOES

2

OASIS NIGHTS IN HAMMOCKS WITH THE FAMILIES WHO LIVE THERE

155,000

HECTARES OF DUNES AND LAGOONS, UNESCO-LISTED SINCE 2024

The keepers of the interior

Two inhabited oases survive inside the dune field, and the crossing sleeps in both. Staying with their families is not a detour from the experience. It is the experience, and your nights put income directly into the communities that keep the interior alive.



NIGHT OF DAY 2

Queimada dos Britos

The larger of the two oases, founded almost a century ago by Manoel Brito, who walked into the dunes to escape the great drought and never left. Around two hundred of his descendants still live here between the palms, off goats, fishing and, lately, hosting walkers.

II



NIGHT OF DAY 3

Baixa Grande

The smaller, quieter neighbor, a dozen or so families around a low freshwater plain. Hammocks strung under a shared roof, dinner cooked over the fire, a couple of hours of solar-powered light, and then the loudest silence you have ever heard.

III



DAYS 2 TO 4

The lagoons between

Off the 4×4 circuits, the lagoons have no boardwalks and mostly no names. You crest a dune, one appears, and it is yours: warm rainwater filtered through miles of white sand, often with not one other footprint on its shore.

Five days, forty kilometers, one sea

A sample rhythm, not a timetable. Every departure is private, and the stages flex around your legs, your dates and the state of the lagoons.



1 DAY 1 · SANTO AMARO · BY 4X4

The approach

The town where the road gives up

A private 4×4 collects you in São Luís and drives east, and for the last hour the asphalt simply surrenders to sand track. Santo Amaro is the quiet gateway of the Lençóis, a small town pressed against the south-western edge of the dune field, and the reason so few travelers come this way is exactly why you are: the crossing starts where the crowds do not.

In the late afternoon you get a first taste of what you signed up for. A short walk out of town puts you on the opening dunes of the park, and a swim in a lagoon like Gaivota rinses off the road. Watch the sun set over a horizon made entirely of sand, eat well, and sleep early. From tomorrow, the alarm clocks are set by the desert.

Private 4×4 from São Luís

First dunes at sunset

Early night before the crossing

🏠 OVERNIGHT · A simple, welcoming pousada in Santo Amaro

🌊 THE SWIM · A first lagoon at the edge of the dune field



2 DAY 2 · QUEIMADA DOS BRITOS · 14 KM ON FOOT

Into the sand sea

Headlamps, sunrise, and an island of palms

The day starts at half past three with strong coffee in the dark. Then headlamps on, and you walk out of town into a world with no roads, no engines and no lights, just a guide who was born here reading dunes the way other people read street signs. Walking before dawn is not a stunt: the sand is cool underfoot, the air is soft, and when the sun comes up you are already deep inside the park, standing on a crest as the whole sand sea turns pink around you.

The kilometers pass in a rhythm of dune, lagoon, swim, repeat. By late morning a smudge of green appears on the horizon and slowly becomes Queimada dos Britos, the improbable oasis where Manoel Brito settled a century ago and where some two hundred of his descendants still live. The afternoon is yours to spend the oasis way: a hammock in the shade, goats wandering home across the sand, and a slow climb to a high dune for a sunset with not another soul in sight.

Pre-dawn headlamp start

Sunrise from a dune crest

Lagoon swims on route

The Brito family oasis

🛖 OVERNIGHT · Hammocks at a native family homestead in the oasis

🌊 THE SWIM · Whichever lagoon is fullest, chosen by your guide on the day

🍴 ON THE TABLE · Home cooking by your hosts: fish or free-range chicken, rice, beans



Oasis to oasis

The short stage, and the loudest silence

Today is the crossing at its most generous: a shorter walk between the two inhabited oases of the park, with time to waste gloriously on the way. The dunes here fold around lagoon after lagoon that no vehicle can reach, which means every single one is empty. Swim in three, or five, or lose count. Your guide has a favorite and will not tell you its name, mostly because it does not have one.

Baixa Grande is smaller than its neighbor, a dozen or so families around a low green plain, and the welcome is correspondingly personal. Dinner happens as the generator hums out its couple of evening hours, and then the desert plays its final card. There is no light pollution here in any direction for dozens of kilometers, and the Milky Way comes down so close and so bright you will understand why nobody in the oasis bothers with a planetarium word for it. They just call it the sky.

Empty, unnamed lagoons

The smaller oasis

Dinner with your host family

The Milky Way at full volume

 OVERNIGHT · Hammocks with a native family in Baixa Grande

 THE SWIM · As many unnamed lagoons as you have time for

 ON THE TABLE · Dinner cooked over fire, eaten under a straw roof



4 DAY 4 · ATINS · 17 KM ON FOOT

The long walk to the sea

The last crest, and the Atlantic behind it

The longest stage starts earliest, three in the morning, and it is the one you will tell people about. Hours of walking by headlamp with the stars wheeling overhead, sunrise met somewhere in the middle of the sand sea, and then a long morning of dunes slowly flattening toward the coast. And at some point it happens: you top one more crest exactly like a hundred before it, and there is the Atlantic, and you understand in your legs what crossing the Lençóis actually means.

The dune field lets you out at Canto do Atins, a scatter of beach kitchens famous across Brazil for one dish, and lunch is non-negotiable: grilled prawns the size of your hand, earned like few lunches ever are. The afternoon rolls you gently back into the world in Atins, a fishing village with streets of sand where the Preguiças river meets the ocean. A real bed, a real shower, and the deep, smug sleep of someone who walked here.

3 AM start under stars

The crest where the sea appears

Legendary prawns at Canto do Atins

- 🏠 OVERNIGHT · A barefoot pousada in Atins
- 🌊 THE SWIM · The Atlantic, finally, at the end of the walk
- 🍴 ON THE TABLE · The famous grilled prawns of Canto do Atins



5 DAY 5 · BARREIRINHAS · BY RIVERBOAT

Down the Preguiças

The river carries you back

After three days of carrying yourself, the last leg is pure grace: a boat down the Rio Preguiças, the river doing all the work. The water loops between mangrove and dune, small monkeys heckle the stop at Vassouras, and at Mandacaru you can climb the lighthouse's 160 steps for one last look at the whole improbable thing you just walked across, white to the horizon, with the sea stitched along its edge.

The boat lands you in Barreirinhas, where a private car waits for the run back to São Luís and your flight onward. Or, and we say this with love for your calendar, the road east from here is the Rota das Emoções, and travelers with a week to spare have been known to keep going. Either way, the Lençóis are no longer a place you saw. They are a place you crossed.

Riverboat down the Preguiças

Mandacaru lighthouse

Private transfer to São Luís

Or continue east to Jericoacoara

 **OVERNIGHT** · Home, or onward: Atins connects straight into the Rota das Emoções

 **THE SWIM** · The Preguiças, tea-calm, from the boat stops

O RELÓGIO DO CAMINHANTE

The walker's clock

A trekking day in the Lençóis does not run on your usual hours. It runs on the desert's, and the desert's are better.

03:30

Coffee in the dark

The kettle is the only sound in the oasis. You drink strong coffee under more stars than you knew existed.

04:15

Headlamps on

A small line of lights sets out across cool sand. Your guide navigates by dune shapes the way you use street names.

06:00

Sunrise from a crescent

The sand sea turns gray, then pink, then blinding white. That's why the day started at half three.

What travels with you



A guide born in these dunes

Your crossing is led by a native local guide who grew up walking these routes, alongside guiding in English. Nobody navigates 155,000 hectares of shifting sand from a book.



Every night, both worlds

Pousadas in Santo Amaro and Atins at the ends, and two nights in hammocks with the oasis families in between, blankets and all. Rustic where it should be, comfortable where it can be.



Luggage the easy way round

You walk with a small daypack. Your main luggage travels around the park by 4x4 and boat and is waiting in Atins when you arrive. The desert asks enough of you already.



Every meal in the sand

From the first Santo Amaro dinner to the celebration prawns at Canto do Atins, including everything your host families cook in the oases. Water and trail snacks on every walking day.



Both ends of the trek

Private 4x4 from São Luís to Santo Amaro, the riverboat down the Preguiças, and the private transfer back to São Luís. Park permissions and fees handled.



Insurance and a safety net

Personal travel insurance for the route, and a team that lives in Brazil and answers the phone, before, during and after. There is no signal in the park; there is a plan instead.

Not included: flights, drinks beyond water on the trail, and personal extras. No hidden lines, ever.

Honest answers first

How fit do I need to be?

+

When should we go?

+

What are the oasis nights actually like?

+

What do I carry, and what happens to my luggage?

+

Is this for children or for less active travelers?

+

Can we extend it, shorten it, or keep traveling?

+

WHAT REMAINS

Sossego

Portuguese has a word for what three days of sand, stars and silence do to a person: sossego, a quiet so deep and unhurried that no clock survives contact with it. You will notice it on the flight home, when the noise of the world comes back and, for once, does not stick.

Around forty kilometers on foot, two oasis nights in a hammock, one sea earned the hard way. Tell us your dates and how you like to walk. We will shape the crossing around you, send your luggage the easy way round, and have the prawns waiting at the far side.

Crossing the Lençóis on the map

The Lençóis Maranhenses sit on Brazil's northeast coast in Maranhão state, reached by road from São Luís. The crossing runs inland from the gateway town of Santo Amaro to the fishing village of Atins, where the Rio Preguiças meets the Atlantic.

REGION

Lençóis Maranhenses, Maranhão

BEST SEASON

Jun–Sep, fullest lagoons and driest days

KNOWN FOR

Multi-day dune trekking, native oasis stays

IDEAL FOR

Fit walkers wanting a real trek



[View the Northeast on the interactive map](#) →

Best: August

5 days. Outside the best window it can still run, but the reasons to go are weaker; ask us before booking flights.

See what else is in season →

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

JUL

AUG

SEP

OCT

NOV

DEC

Best — The one or two peak months

Good — A real recommendation

Trade-offs — Workable, with a catch

Click a month to see everything in season across Brazil then.

CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

Where to go next

The places we most love to combine with crossing the Lençóis, woven into one private, tailor-made journey.

Lençóis Maranhenses

📍 Maranhão, Brazil

A field of white dunes that fills with rainwater, and then empties.

The Amazon

📍 Amazonas, Brazil

One strange city on the river, and the forest behind it.

Rio de Janeiro

📍 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The Marvelous City, Privately

FREE · 29 PAGES

FREE GUIDE

Beginner's Guide to Brazil

A free 29-page guide to everything a first-time visitor should know before landing: visas, safety, money, getting around, where to go, and what to eat.

The guide lands in your inbox right away. After that it's about one email a month: seasonal timing notes, places worth knowing about, and nothing else. Unsubscribe in one click.

START PLANNING

Thinking about crossing the Lençóis?

Send a rough idea and you'll hear back within one business day. From one person, who lives in Brazil, and who will tell you honestly whether we're the right fit.