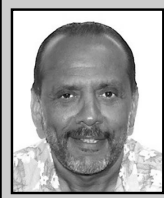


The Beautiful Game



Travel With John Daye

Carnaval has come and gone and the winning school in Rio was Vila Isabel, with Soy Loco por Ti America. The Volvo Ocean Race, with a Brazilian team under champion sailor Torben Grael, has also moved from Rio past Fernando de Noronha to the United States.

The rains of March were not that heavy this year and now autumn has come to most of Brazil, a beautiful period with a special kind of light. The Pantanal is now flooded and the rivers in the Amazon are swollen. But the rains will stop soon.

The Manaus Opera Festival has started earlier this year and will run till the end of May. The program features Othello (Verdi), Werther (Massenet), Gianni Schicchi (Puccini), La Gioconda (Ponchielli) and Fosca (by the Brazilian composer Gomes).

Soon all eyes in Brazil will be glued to the television as the World Cup kicks off on June 9th.

Brazil plays in Group F and kicks off on June 13th against Croatia. The final will be on July 9th in Berlin. In Brazil whole streets will be decorated and Brazil goals and wins will be celebrated in style. Nurturing superstitions and analyzing statistics are also part of the anticipation: some say Brazil never wins when they are favorites and Latin American teams don't win on European soil.

Seven Rivers

Araguaia, Guaporé, Verde, Grande, Miranda, Ribeira e Ibicuri are the seven rivers that were chosen for the continuation of the innovative Brasil das Águas (Waters of Brazil) project, which is sponsored by Petrobras and supported by the Brazilian Government through ANA (National Water Agency).

During 2003 and 2004, the husband-and-wife team Gérard and Margi Moss covered more than 120,000 km² to create a unique map of the quality of Brazil's waters. Using a hydroplane, new technology and meticulous planning and with the support of a team of scientists, they collected water samples in 1,160 locations in 350 rivers and lakes in Brazil.

The results showed both the bad news and the good news: polluted rivers that need urgent investments in sewage treatment infrastructure and recomposition of their gallery forests and beautiful turquoise waters flowing through oceans of green forest.

The second phase of the project will focus on more than just collection and analysis of water samples and photographs. The Brasil das Águas team will use the information to work with riverine populations and discuss ways of recuperating what has been degraded, preserving what is still pristine and also looking at economic alternatives such as sustainable tourism.

The first river to will be the Araguaia, the mighty River of the Macaws, which has its sources in the Serra de Caiapó in the Cerrado of Goiás and meanders some 2000 kms through Cerrado and Amazon Rainforest until it joins the Tocantins River near Marabá. The river is still undammed and is known for its abundance of fish, beautiful nature and potential for ecotourism. In the dry season (from May to September) beautiful white sandy beaches appear. Two National Parks are part of its route: Emas (close to the source) and Araguaia (in the middle protecting the Bananal Island). The river also passes through Indian Territory (Karajá, Kraho, and Xerente).

On May 11th, the expedition will start to do the first stretch from the source to Luiz Alves, just before the Bananal Island.

Brazil accounts for the world's largest freshwater reserves with 12% of the total. A large part of this can be found in the Amazonian region

Tiradentes, Martyr of Independence

On April 21st Brazil celebrated the execution of the Toothpuller ("Tiradentes") or Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, a Brazilian revolutionary, which took place more than 200 years ago.

Tiradentes was born in 1746 in what was then called São José del Rei (not to be confused by São João del Rei), one of the richest gold mining regions of Minas Gerais. He was orphaned at the age of 11 and raised by a surgeon. Never part of the local aristocracy, he was a jack of all trades: a second lieutenant in the local militia, a miner, traveling



Flora Laelia crispa - RJ

salesman and a dentist.

Tiradentes, who traveled on the gold routes (Estrada Real) to Rio, saw both poverty and the huge amounts of gold leaving the country. In Rio, he also met intellectuals who had been to Europe and introduced him to the ideas of Rousseau, Locke and other libertarians, translated about the American Declaration of Independence and compared Britain's Industrial Revolution to Brazil's Colonial Poverty.

In the last quarter of the 18th century, the mines of Minas becoming less productive, but the Portuguese Empire needed the riches of its colony to fuel its economy and to finance the Napoleonic Wars. Taxes were raised and the local elites were not happy, dreams of independence gathered force and a movement was born called the Inconfidencia Mineira. They - the Inconfidentes - dreamed of an independent country with Vila Rica (Ouro Preto) as its capital, universities, and industries. Their flag would say "Libertas quae sera tamen" (liberty, even if tardy). They went to France to meet with Jefferson and French entrepreneurs about possible support for Brazilian Independence. Tiradentes was one of the most outspoken of the group, which had more ideas than actual resources to make things happen.

They planned their action (basically a call for independence to which they expected automatic support from the population) for February 1789 (before the French Revolution), but were ignominiously betrayed by one of their group, the heavily indebted Joaquim Silvério dos Reis. Tiradentes fled to Rio, but was discovered. Eighty-four people were arrested, twenty-four people were found guilty and eleven received the death penalty. But Tiradentes, who was the most enthusiastic and poorest of the group and confessed, was the only one executed by hanging after a three year trial. To set an example, his body was then decapitated and quartered and the parts put on display, his blood was used to confirm the order of execution, his house burnt, his goods confiscated and his two children declared infamous.

Sixteen years later, the Portuguese Court fled Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro to escape the Napoleonic troops. In 1822, Pedro, the crown prince who stayed in Brazil after his father returned, declared Brazil Independent. His son Pedro II oversaw a golden age for the short-lived Brazil Empire, in which part of the dreams of the Inconfidentes (like industrialization and universities) were realized.

In 1889, one hundred years after the Inconfidencia Mineira, Brazil became a republic and the anniversary of Tiradentes execution became a national holiday. São Jose del Rei, one of the most beautiful colonial towns on the historic Estrada Real and a magnet for artists and intellectuals is now called Tiradentes.

The Lost Lan

Orchids have always had a special effect on people. Confucius compared the pleasure of seeing good friends to the pleasure of entering a room full of "lan" or fragrant orchids.

Orchids are the jewels of untouched nature and it is easy to become fascinated by the sheer diversity, ingenuity and beauty of orchid flowers and the interesting "lifestyles" and haunts of these plants.

Theophrastus, a disciple of Aristotle and the "father" of botany and ecology, was the first to use the word "Orchis"

(testicle in Greek). Though orchids are cosmopolitans, occurring in all parts of the world except the Arctic's and deserts, they are at their most spectacular and diverse in the tropics: with brilliant colours or muted tones, showy or delicate, with intricate architecture and luring their pollinators (bats, birds and insects) with fragrances, traps, landing platforms and enticing shapes. Their minuscule seeds are like dust and will only germinate in a symbiotic relationship with the right fungus.

When the 18th and 19th century explorers started collecting in the tropics, they were soon enchanted by the orchids they found. In 1818, a box was sent from Rio de Janeiro to the UK by William Swainson. The box contained orchids as a packing material. One of these, new to science was brought to flower and later named as *Cattleya labiata*. The Victorians were astounded by this showy flower, never seen before. This plant, perhaps more than any other species, was responsible for the orchid craze that followed. Orchids became a hot item and orchid hunters swarmed out to find more.

Orchid hunting was a destructive activity. Plants were ripped of trees (which were often cut down), half of the specimens died in transport and most of the rest died later as the gardeners did not know how to take care of them.

Of course, many major orchid companies for fifty years sent their best collectors to Rio to find more *Cattleya labiata*, but although they found related species, they couldn't find the original one. Swainson, who was also a bird collector and illustrator, did not tell anyone (perhaps he didn't remember) where exactly he found it and later moved to New Zealand. During the same period coffee plantations razed the rainforests of Rio de Janeiro and botanists despaired that the last *Cattleyas labiata* were going up in flames.

Of course, if anyone had read Swainson's accounts of his travels in Brazil, they might have looked in completely different place, namely 2000 km to the north of Rio in the caatinga region of Northeastern Brazil, where the sun-loving orchid grows between altitudes of 500 and 1000 meters either as an epiphyte on tropical trees or on windy rocky outcrops. By chance a collector for French entomologist Moreau, knowing he was an orchid lover, also sent him 50 plants of a large orchid. A visiting botanist, who passed by when the orchid was in bloom with large lavender pink flowers, confirmed them as the lost orchid. Seventy-one years had passed since Swainson sent his box from Rio and *Cattleya labiata* is now known as the Queen of Northeastern Brazil.

Thanks to the efforts of collectors and botanists the Kew World Checklist of Orchids today includes about 24,000 accepted species. But still every year another 200-300 species are found. And then there are more than a 100 thousand cultivated hybrids. All orchid species are protected for the purposes of international commerce under CITES as potentially threatened or endangered in their natural habitat. Brazil has about 2,500 species. Many of them from the Atlantic Rainforest.

Organics Brasil

Organic production in Brazil continues to grow. According to statistics collected by IFOAM (2006), Brazil was ranked sixth in area of organically farmed land with

Continued on following page

Travel

Continued from previous page

nearly 900 thousand hectares in 2004 (up from 275 thousand in 2001), accounting for 3% of the world total of 31 million ha. If "wild" production (extractive use of wilderness areas - fruits, seeds/nuts etc) is included another 20 million ha should be added to this total and Brazil moves into second place behind Australia.

North America and Europe still account for 97% of the organic consumer market and are the major export markets for many countries. Brazil exports about 75% of its produce. Soy, sugar coffee and fruits figure prominently, but the list also includes mate, cachaça and oils. One of them is the oil extracted from the babaçu palm seeds, by woman cooperatives from Maranhão, which becomes a key ingredient for natural cosmetics and improves family income.

Brazil also has a big domestic market and organics are getting more popular every year. Vegetables and fruits are readily sold in supermarkets, street fairs and through networked buyers. On supermarket shelves you will also find organic coffees, juices, honey, cereals, beans, meats & poultry, eggs, shrimp, cachaça and wine.

About 90% of the nearly 20 thousand producers in Brazil are small holders and organic production is seen as a way to stimulate better returns. Brazil last year introduced Pro-Organico, an interministerial program, which aims to promote the adoption of organic agriculture through research, information exchange, training, financial incentives and certification. APEX (which also supports the Brazil Sustainable Tourism Program) in partnership with the southern state of Paraná, has now launched Organics Brasil to more actively promote Brazilian produce abroad.

Organic food production reduces environmental impacts and also reduces risks of pesticide contamination for agricultural workers and consumers. Some studies also show that organic food is also healthier (better mineral content and vitamin C) and tastier, though this is still disputed.

That modern large scale food production does not offer the same quality as in the past was revealed by a recent study by the UK Food Commission. Using the statistics of food production and the mineral content of milk, cheese and meat between 1930 and 2002 found losses of 50% or more for iron and significant decreases of 10% (meat) - 20% (dairy) for magnesium, and astounding losses (60%-meat, 90% - dairy) for copper. A similar study done the year before on fruits and vegetables showed typical mineral losses of 20%.

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