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# Petrópolis–Teresópolis Hiking Guide

The Serra dos Órgãos traverse in Brazil, Bonfim to Teresópolis in 2 days

2027 season edition · updated October 2026

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# Welcome

At the end of April 2024 I hiked the Travessia Petrópolis-Teresópolis alone in Serra dos Órgãos National Park, Brazil. I started at the Bonfim entrance above Petrópolis late in the morning, climbed onto the granite ridge and pitched my tent at the Castelos do Açu camp. The next day I left in the dark at 4:17 a.m., watched the sunrise at the Portais de Hércules, crossed the high peaks past Pedra do Sino and walked down to the Teresópolis side. By my GPS it was 18.9 miles (30.4 km) and about 6,330 ft (1,930 m) of climbing in two days. It's the trip from my film Hiking Alone in Brazil.

Before the hike I spent a few days in Rio de Janeiro, where it was "way hotter than it was supposed to be," as I said in my live stream after the trip. On the traverse I saw few people: "The Brazil hike was extremely quiet."

**Good to know first (October 2026).** The traverse is open. An overnight trip needs an online booking, opened two months ahead, and a signed risk form. Both shelters are closed to overnight guests: you camp beside them in your own tent. Entry and camping are free for now; ICMBio plans a new operator from January 2027 (it picks one by November 30, 2026), and fees may follow. The park is closed on Mondays. See Is it open? and The rules.

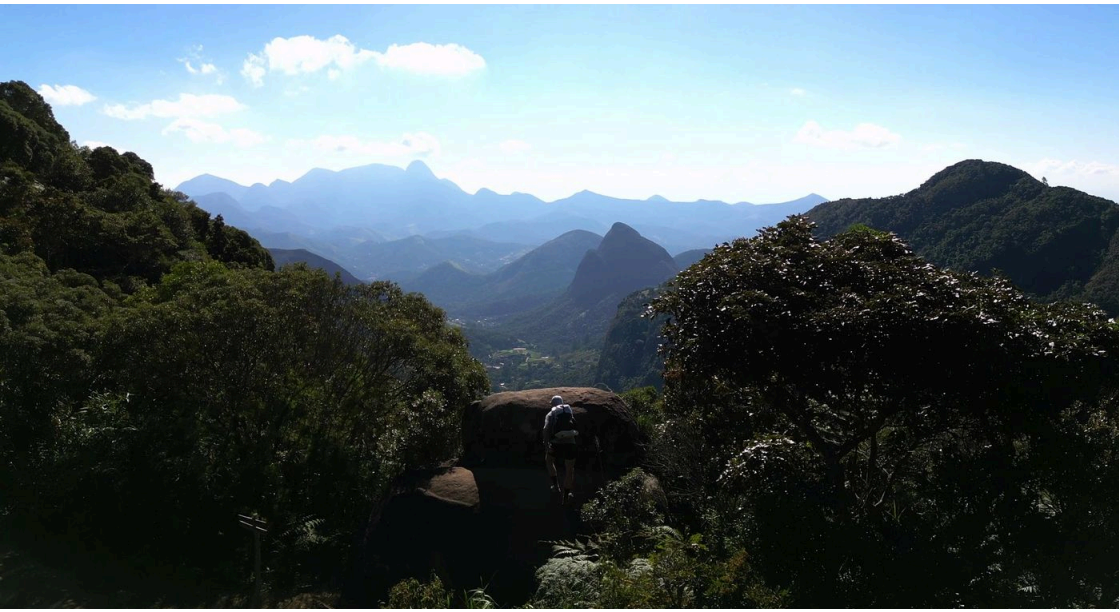
**What's inside**

- Where things stand in October 2026, straight answers, when to go, the booking and the rules, and getting there
- Both days: my notes, the route, where to turn back, maps with elevation profiles, and links to my film
- Other ways to do it, two Rio hikes, where I slept, food and water, costs, what I carried
- Weather, fog and safety, a page of checks before you go, and a printable trip sheet

### How to use it offline

Save this PDF to your phone's Files or Books app before you leave home. Load the GPX files and download offline maps in Rio: don't count on a phone signal on the ridge. Each day starts on a new page. The film links need a connection; everything else works in airplane mode.

When I say "I," it's my own trip. Rules and prices change, so they're dated, and the checks are collected on one page: Before you go, check these. Times are Brasília time (UTC-3). Heights are in feet, with metres in brackets.

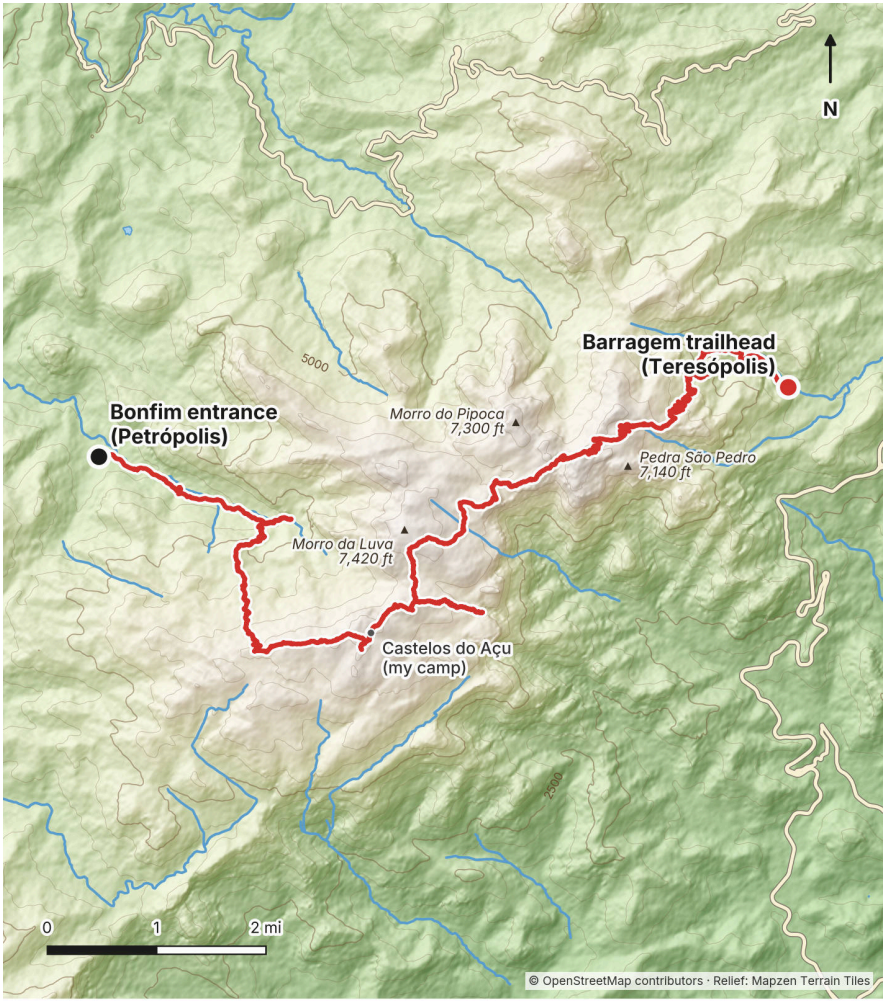


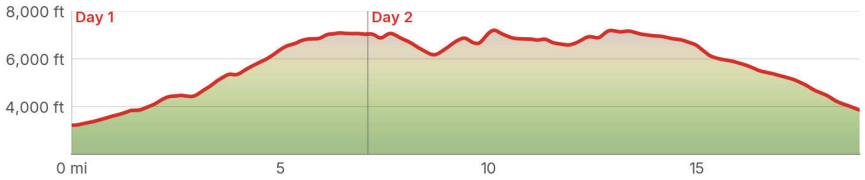
The view from an overlook rock, Day 1.

# At a glance

| QUICK FACTS | |
|---|---|
| Distance | 18.9 miles (30.4 km) over 2 days by my GPS. ICMBio, the park service: about 30 km |
| Climbing | About 6,330 ft (1,930 m) up and 5,690 ft (1,735 m) down, by my GPS |
| Days | 2 for me. ICMBio plans 3 and recommends 3 |
| Start | The Bonfim entrance (Sede Petrópolis), about 1,100 m by ICMBio |
| Finish | The Barragem trailhead on the Teresópolis side, 3,832 ft (1,168 m) by my GPS, about 2 miles of road above the park's main gate |
| High point | 7,241 ft (2,207 m) by my GPS, near Morro da Luva. The trail passes below Pedra do Sino, 2,275 m (ICMBio) |
| Terrain | Forest low down, then granite ridges, grass, boulders, iron rungs and scrambles |
| Camp | Your own tent, only at the camps beside the Açu shelter and Abrigo 4 |
| Water | Springs and streams at a few named points. Treat it |
| Rules (2026) | Online booking, a signed risk form (TCRN), free for now, closed Mondays |

| DAY | ROUTE | MILES (KM) | UP / DOWN (FT) | SLEEP |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Bonfim (Petrópolis) to Castelos do Açu | 7.1 (11.4) | 3,986 / 180 | Tent at the Castelos do Açu camp, 7,030 ft |
| 2 | Castelos do Açu to Teresópolis | 11.8 (19.0) | 2,341 / 5,513 | Off the mountain |




The Petrópolis-Teresópolis traverse in Serra dos Órgãos National Park: my route from Bonfim to the Teresópolis side. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

# Is it open? (October 2026)

Checked on the ICMBio pages for Parque Nacional da Serra dos Órgãos and its visitor rules (PROV 01/2025) on October 10, 2026.

**Open, with booking.** The park's booking page (updated October 1, 2026) says the Sede Petrópolis and the Travessia reopened after a fire started by a fallen balloon was put out. It doesn't give the date of the fire. I found no other closure notice.

**The shelters.** The Açu shelter (Abrigo Açu, at Castelos do Açu) is closed "for an indefinite time" after a windstorm left it structurally unsafe, and has no staff. Abrigo 4, at Pedra do Sino, is also closed to overnight guests. Abrigo 4 opens only as day support, 6 to 9 a.m. and 5 to 9 p.m., for its kitchen and dining room; ICMBio says there are no park staff and no support at all at Açu, so plan your first night with nothing there. You sleep in your own tent in the camp beside each shelter.

**A new operator, planned from January 2027.** ICMBio is choosing a non-profit partner to run visitor support and overnight stays on the traverse, including both shelters: proposals October 7 to November 9, 2026, final result November 30, operation from January 2027 for five years. The planning study suggests future charges (access R$30, camping R$25, a shelter bed R$80), but in October 2026 these were projections, not prices. Expect changes in 2027.

**Mondays.** The park is closed on Mondays, except when a national or Rio state holiday, or the eve of one, falls on that Monday.

**The season.** I found no seasonal closure. Hikers report June to August as the driest, clearest months (as reported). See When to go.

# Straight answers

**Do I need a permit?** For an overnight trip, yes: an online booking, plus a signed risk form (the TCRN) handed in at the entrance. A day hike needs no booking, only the form. Entry and camping were free in October 2026. See The rules.

**How hard is it?** Hard. It's steep and rocky, with scrambling: the park names the Elevador (iron rungs up a rock face) and the Cavalinho, "the most dangerous point." Fog makes the route easy to lose. If you haven't scrambled on rock with a pack, go with a guide or someone who knows the route.

**How far is it?** By my GPS, 18.9 miles (30.4 km): 7.1 on Day 1 and 11.8 on Day 2. ICMBio says about 30 km. My film's description says "about 20 miles."

**How many days?** Two for me. ICMBio plans three: Bonfim to Castelos do Açu, then to Pedra do Sino, then down to Teresópolis. See Other ways to do it.

**Which direction?** Petrópolis to Teresópolis, as I did and as the park describes it. I found no rule against the reverse.

**Do I need a guide?** ICMBio recommends one but doesn't require it; without one, someone in the group must know the route and the rules. One ICMBio page calls an experienced guide essential between Castelos do Açu and Pedra do Sino. I went alone, and I found no rule against that.

**Where do I sleep?** In your own tent, only at the two designated camps, beside the Açu shelter and beside Abrigo 4.

**Is there water?** At a few named points. Treat it. See Where I slept, food and water.

**Can I bring my dog?** No. The park's public-use rules don't allow domestic animals, except guide dogs.

**Is there a phone signal?** Don't count on one. Hikers report no reception at either trailhead (as reported).

# When to go

**My trip.** I hiked on Tuesday, April 30 and Wednesday, May 1, 2024, during a hot spell in Rio. It was warm enough that I left my sleeping bag at home. In my live stream I said, "I actually secretly didn't bring a sleeping bag because it was so hot," and then, "You should always have a sleeping bag because it could be colder than you think." Day 1 was sunny. Day 2 started clear for the sunrise, then the clouds rolled in and stayed for most of the day.

**The dry season.** Hikers report June to August, the Brazilian winter, as the driest and clearest months; others say May to August (as reported). I found no official season statement. ICMBio's hiker leaflet says temperatures in the high part of the park often approach 0 °C (32 °F).

**The wet season.** Summer, roughly November to March, is humid and stormy (as reported). Wet granite is slick, and fog is more likely. October is often cloudy (as reported).

**Busy days.** The camps take a fixed number of people a night (see The rules), and bookings open two months ahead. I went midweek, and the middle of the traverse was quiet. The Teresópolis end was busy with day hikers.

**Daylight.** In late April I reached the Açu camp at 5:26 p.m., around sunset, and started Day 2 in full darkness at 4:17 a.m.



Cloud over the ridge, Day 2.

# The rules

Checked on the ICMBio pages and the park's visitor protocol, PROV 01/2025, on October 10, 2026. My trip was in 2024, and the rules then may have been different.

**Where you are.** Parque Nacional da Serra dos Órgãos, run by ICMBio, Brazil's federal park service: sac.parnaso@icmbio.gov.br, (21) 97896-2463 (WhatsApp).

**Booking.** Required for any overnight trip on the traverse.

- Dates open two months ahead at midnight. The park's example: August 1 opens on June 1.
- One form covers up to 5 people. It's tied to one CPF (a Brazilian tax number) or passport and can't be transferred.
- No waiting list, no changes, no corrections. Sending the form doesn't guarantee a place.
- No camp starts on a Monday, except on national and Rio state holidays (and the eve of a holiday that falls on a Tuesday).
- Cancel at least 4 days ahead. A late cancellation or a no-show blocks you from booking for three months (not for bad weather).
- Each camp takes 70 people a night by the protocol; the booking page says 100. Book the day dates open.
- A day hike needs no booking (up to 120 a day).

**The risk form (TCRN).** The Termo de Conhecimento de Riscos e Normas, from the park's site or the gates, is filled in, signed and handed in at check-in. One adult signs for up to 5 people; a minor without a legal guardian needs a separate authorization. Signing out is required: the form must be checked out at the exit gate (the park's main gate and visitor center, not the Barragem trailhead), and the form says failing to do so brings a fine of at least R$500. In 2024 I had my paperwork printed, and at the gate they had me fill in the form again anyway.

**ID.** Bring your passport, or a CPF with a photo ID.

**Fees.** None in October 2026: the protocol says access to all entrances, parking, campsites and trails is free for now. The new operator may charge from January 2027.

**Hours.** Tuesday to Sunday and holidays. Entrances 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. (check-in in those hours), out by 5 p.m. Traverse access 7 to 10 a.m. for a day hike, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. for an overnight, but check-in (handing in the TCRN) closes at 4 p.m., so arrive by then. Day hikers should start down by 2 p.m.

**Camping.** Only beside Abrigo Açu (Castelos do Açu) and Abrigo 4 (Pedra do Sino). Not at Ajax, the Vale das Antas or the top of Pedra do Sino.

**What the shelters do now.** Both are closed for sleeping. The Açu shelter is closed completely, with no staff or support. At Abrigo 4, from 6 to 9 a.m. and 5 to 9 p.m. you can use the kitchen and dining room, but not the shelter's stove: bring your own. An outside bathroom is for changing and your waste kit.

**Waste.** A waste kit ("shit tube" or similar) is required overnight. No trash collection: carry everything out.

**Fires and glass.** No fires on the traverse (only at the park's lower campsites). No glass.

**Drones.** Restricted by the park's protocol (banned in the Travessia sector on weekends and holidays from May to September, with limits elsewhere). This guide doesn't cover flying one.

**Rescue.** The park says it isn't responsible for rescue. Call the fire brigade (Corpo de Bombeiros) on 193.

# Getting there

**From Rio to Petrópolis.** Única Fácil buses run from Rio's Rodoviária Novo Rio, about 1 hour 10 to 1 hour 20 minutes, at least hourly, about R$47 (as reported). Most arrive at the Leonel Brizola bus station, a bit out of the center (as reported). I found no direct bus from either Rio airport.

**From Petrópolis to Bonfim.** A city bus to the Terminal de Corrêas, then line 611 (Bonfim) or 616 (Pinheiral), which stop about 0.6 mile (1 km) from the entrance; R$5.90 a ride in 2026 (as reported). A taxi or Uber is simpler.

**How I did it.** I took Ubers. From my hotel in Rio I went to the center, where I bought stove fuel and snacks at a hiking store, then to a hotel near the airport where I'd booked my last night and left a duffel bag. Then another Uber drove me all the way up to Bonfim. "I think this was an hour and a half maybe," I said in my live stream. At the end of the dirt road I ate scrambled eggs at a small restaurant near the entrance. It wasn't open yet, but they cooked for me anyway.



Walking through the entrance building at Bonfim, Day 1.

**Back from Teresópolis.** Hikers report about 2 miles (3.2 km) of road from the trailhead at the dam (the Barragem) down to the park's main gate: walk, or take a taxi or Uber. City buses MS200, MS201 and 04A run from near the entrance to the bus station. Viação Teresópolis goes to Rio's Novo Rio station roughly hourly, about 2 hours, about R$46; buses to Petrópolis take about 1 hour 10 to 1 hour 30 minutes, R$21 to R$30. An Uber to Ipanema is about US$50. (All as reported.)

**How I got back.** Near the end I met a park ranger who drove me into town. That was luck. Plan your own ride.

**Driving.** The traverse is one-way and I found no shuttle between the entrances. Leave the car in Petrópolis or Rio and come back by bus.



Onto the open ridge, Day 1.



DAY 1

# Bonfim to Castelos do Açu

| DISTANCE | CLIMBING | DESCENT | TIME I TOOK |
|---|---|---|---|
| **7.1 mi** (11.4 km) | **3,986 ft** (1,215 m) | **180 ft** (55 m) | **5 hours 49 minutes** (11:37 a.m. to 5:26 p.m.), about 4.5 of them moving |

HIGH POINT

7,101 ft (2,164 m) by my GPS, near Morro Açu, about 6.4 miles in

ON THE WAY

the Gruta do Presidente and Véu da Noiva waterfall, Pedra do Queijo, Ajax, the Isabeloca, the Chapadão

SLEEP

my tent at the Castelos do Açu camp, 7,030 ft (2,143 m)

WATER

streams in the forest and the Ajax spring; treat it

## My day

I walked through the entrance at Bonfim on Tuesday, April 30, 2024 and started at 11:37 a.m. by my GPS. The first hour was forest: dense, uphill and hot. In my live stream I said I was "sweating profusely" and "not seeing anyone else on trail."



The trail into the forest, Day 1.

Then I reached the water. My longest stop of the day was there, 23 minutes at mile 2.4 (1:05 to 1:28 p.m.), near the Gruta do Presidente and the Véu da Noiva waterfall. "This water was so nice," I said.



Stepping across a stream, Day 1.



A pool in the forest, with peaks above, Day 1.

I had the whole afternoon for a short day, so I took my time. Somewhere on the way up I filtered water from a stream into my bottle. Above the forest the trail climbs steep rock and grass with views back over the hills. I passed the Ajax spring at about mile 4.6. On the open ridge the wind picked up: "by the time I hit this ridge, it got pretty windy."



A trail post on bare rock, Day 1.

Near the top the trail winds between huge granite boulders. I shouted to hear the echo. "These rocks were so cool," I said. The light was golden when I reached the Açu shelter, at about mile 6.5 and 4:43 p.m. I looked around the camp for a while and stopped for the day at 5:26 p.m., 7.1 miles from Bonfim, as the sun went down.



Granite boulders on the ridge, Day 1.



Sunset, flowers and peaks, Day 1.

The camp is a small clearing beside the shelter. There were maybe three or four groups, and we were close together. I said hello to a few pairs and pitched my tent on the flattest spot left: "I was definitely on a slope." I looked into the shelter's kitchen, where a Brazilian flag hangs, and went to bed around eight. "I could hear snoring and talking the whole night."



The Açu shelter at sunset, by my camp, Day 1.

## The route

**The Bonfim entrance (Sede Petrópolis).** About 1,100 m by ICMBio. Check in here. My track starts at 3,213 ft (979 m).

**Through the forest.** ICMBio's times: about 40 minutes to the Gruta do Presidente and the Véu da Noiva waterfall, about 50 more to Pedra do Queijo, a viewpoint, and about 40 more to the Ajax spring (no camping). By my GPS the Véu da Noiva is at about mile 2.6 and Ajax at about mile 4.6. Fill up at Ajax: it's the last water the park lists before the Açu camp.

**The Isabeloca and the Chapadão.** ICMBio calls the Isabeloca a steep, eroded stretch. Then comes the Chapadão, and the ridge over rock and grass to Castelos do Açu.

**Castelos do Açu.** The granite towers and boulders around the Açu shelter. ICMBio gives Pedra do Açu as 7,365 ft (2,245 m), the highest point of Petrópolis; OSM marks Morro Açu here at 2,216 m. My tent was about 150 m from the shelter, at 7,030 ft (2,143 m) by my GPS. ICMBio gives just over 7 km and about 6 hours for this day; my GPS measured 11.4 km.

## Where to turn back

Ajax. If you're slow, short of water or the weather is turning, decide here: you can't camp at Ajax, and above it the trail gets steeper and more exposed. The way off is back down to Bonfim.

## Watch this day

Day 1, Bonfim to Castelos do Açu (from 1:12)







Day 1 map and elevation profile. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.



The spires in the morning haze, Day 2.

DAY 2

Contents

# Castelos do Açu to Teresópolis

| DISTANCE | CLIMBING | DESCENT | TIME I TOOK |
|---|---|---|---|
| **11.8 mi** (19.0 km) | **2,341 ft** (714 m) | **5,513 ft** (1,680 m) | **10 hours 24 minutes** (4:17 a.m. to 2:41 p.m.), about 7 of them moving |

HIGH POINT

7,241 ft (2,207 m) by my GPS, near Morro da Luva, 3.1 miles from camp

ON THE WAY

Morro do Marco, the Portais de Hércules, the Vale da Luva, the Elevador, the Dinossauro, the Cavalinho, Pedra do Sino, Abrigo 4

SLEEP

off the mountain

WATER

the Vale da Luva stream, the Cachoeirinha, the Vale das Antas; treat it

## My day

I was up at four on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. I made coffee in the tent by headlamp, with local Brazilian coffee in small single-cup bags, then took the tent down. I left at 4:17 a.m. Other headlamps were moving in the fog.



Coffee in the tent before dawn, Day 2.

Walking in the dark was hard: steep, rocky drops, plants wet with dew, slippery rock. "I definitely got lost," I said in my live stream. I zigzagged off the trail and had to double back. When the sky got light I could see city lights far below and find the way again.

The Portais de Hércules are a short side trip off the main trail, about 1.5 miles from camp. I passed a group of four who had left earlier, got to the viewpoint first, and they arrived while I was making coffee. I stayed a long time: by my GPS from 5:53 to 7:06 a.m. The sun came up behind the peaks. "I don't usually get up early for sunrise stuff, but this was definitely worth it."



Sunrise at the Portais de Hércules, Day 2.

Back on the main trail I went down into the Vale da Luva and filled my bottle from a small stream, funnelling the water with a leaf. I reached my high point of the day, 7,241 ft, near Morro da Luva at 8:35 a.m. Then the clouds rolled in, "a lot more clouds than I expected," and came and went for the rest of the day. I was sick by then, in my nose and throat.



Into the misty forest, Day 2.



Toward a rock tower in cloud, Day 2.

Then came the iron rungs up a rock face. "No photo ever does it justice," I said, "but legit some rock climbing moments on this trail." I was exhausted at the top of it. The trail keeps climbing and scrambling over granite, and "you're getting hit with these wet, sharp leaves all the time."



A granite dome above the trail, Day 2.

My track passes about 100 m from the top of Pedra do Sino at 11:11 a.m. I didn't go to the summit. I stopped at Abrigo 4, mile 6.6, from 11:43 a.m. to 12:09 p.m. and ate a pouch meal on the porch. A tent was pitched beside the hut.




Abrigo 4, with a tent pitched beside it, Day 2.

From Abrigo 4 it's downhill all the way. I'd thought about a side section for the views, but took the main trail down. Lower down there were "a ton of day hikers coming up from the city." I put on some music and walked fast. I reached the Barragem trailhead, the gate at the top of the Sino trail on the Teresópolis side, at 2:41 p.m. by my GPS. A park ranger I met near the end gave me a ride into town. In my live stream I called it a tough day: "lack of sleep, being sick."




The gate at the Barragem trailhead, the Teresópolis end of the trail, Day 2.

## The route

**Morro do Marco.** About 0.5 mile from the Açu camp, at 7,087 ft (2,160 m) by OSM. ICMBio gives about 30 minutes. Between the camp and the Portais is where I lost the trail in the dark: go slowly and check the GPX.

**The Portais de Hércules.** A variant off the main route (ICMBio) to a viewpoint at the spires, 6,299 ft (1,920 m) by OSM, about 1.5 miles from camp by my GPS.

**The Vale da Luva and Morro da Luva.** About 30 minutes down into the Vale da Luva, cloud forest with a stream, then about 30 minutes up Morro da Luva, 7,425 ft (2,263 m) by OSM, and 30 more to the Cachoeirinha, with water (ICMBio's times). My track crosses a spring at about mile 2.7 and reaches its high point at mile 3.05.

**The Elevador.** Iron rungs set in a rock face. ICMBio says to keep your balance with a heavy pack. Keep three points of contact, and go one person at a time.

**The Dinossauro and the Vale das Antas.** About 40 minutes to Morro do Dinossauro, then about 40 minutes down into the Vale das Antas, with water all year and no camping (ICMBio). Hikers also name the Mergulho, a squeeze between boulders where some use a rope (as reported).

**The Dorso da Baleia and the Cavalinho.** ICMBio calls the Cavalinho "the most dangerous point" of the traverse. ICMBio says a rope is mandatory here, and its hiker leaflet says ropes may be needed at the Mergulho and the Cavalinho. Hikers describe a boulder where packs are passed up by hand. Carry a rope, or go with a guide who has one, and take it slowly.

**Pedra do Sino and Abrigo 4.** Pedra do Sino is 7,464 ft (2,275 m) by ICMBio, the highest point of the Serra dos Órgãos; some sources give 2,263 m. A summit trail leads up to it; my track passes about 100 m from the top, at 7,121 ft (2,170 m). Abrigo 4 and its camp are just below. From the Açu camp to Abrigo 4 my GPS measured 6.6 miles (10.7 km); ICMBio gives about 7 hours.

**Down to Teresópolis.** From Abrigo 4 the trail is a long descent, much of it on switchbacks: past the ruins of Abrigo 3 (a lookout), the remains of Abrigo 2 and the Véu da Noiva de Teresópolis, a waterfall of about 16 m (ICMBio), which my track passes at about mile 10.5. My GPS measured 5.2 miles (8.4 km) from Abrigo 4 to the end of my track at 3,832 ft (1,168 m). ICMBio gives 11 km and about 4 hours from Pedra do Sino to the Teresópolis side.

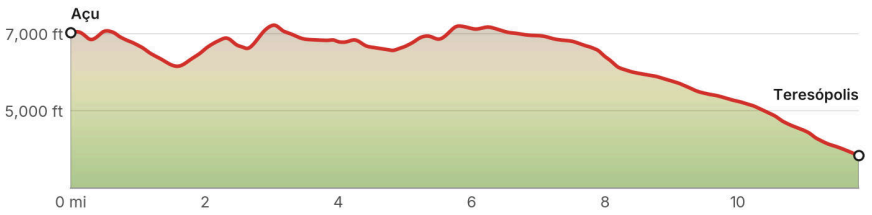
## Where to turn back

Before you drop into the Vale da Luva. If the fog is down, the wind is strong or anyone is struggling, go back to the Açu camp and down to Bonfim: past the Vale da Luva the way off is forward, over the Elevador and the Cavalinho. If you're slow, stop at the Abrigo 4 camp (with a booking) rather than walking down in the dark.

## Watch this day

Day 2, Castelos do Açu to Teresópolis (from 5:47) · Sunrise at the Portais de Hércules (from 7:43) · The iron rungs (from 9:42)




Day 2 map and elevation profile. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

# Other ways to do it

## Three days, the official way

ICMBio's plan, with its own times:

| DAY | FROM, TO | PARK'S ESTIMATE | BY MY GPS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Bonfim to Castelos do Açu | just over 7 km, about 6 hours | 7.1 mi (11.4 km) |
| 2 | Castelos do Açu to Pedra do Sino (Abrigo 4 camp) | about 7 hours | 6.6 mi (10.7 km) |
| 3 | Pedra do Sino to Teresópolis | 11 km, about 4 hours, mostly downhill | 5.2 mi (8.4 km) |

It needs a booking at both camps, and it leaves time to walk up Pedra do Sino. Unless you're fast and know the route, do it this way.

## Two days, my way

A night at Castelos do Açu means a long second day: I took 10 hours 24 minutes, starting in the dark. Some hikers instead walk to the Abrigo 4 camp on Day 1 and down on Day 2 (as reported). Either way, one day is long.

## Teresópolis to Petrópolis

I found no rule against it. Reversed, my track would climb about 5,690 ft instead of 6,330, starting with the long climb to Pedra do Sino. Check with the park.

## Day hikes

No booking, only the risk form; start by 10 a.m. and start down by 2 p.m. Pedra do Sino from Teresópolis is the trail I came down, up and back. Castelos do Açu from Bonfim is my Day 1 up and back: about 13 miles (21 km) to the shelter and back, and about 4,200 ft (1,270 m) of climbing.

## With a guide

ICMBio lists the credentialed condutores (local guides) for the traverse. Guides registered with CADASTUR or the mountain guides' association (ABGM) don't need their own booking; their clients do. Older reports put a guide at R$200 to R$400 a person (as reported). Ask for a quote.

# Before or after: two Rio hikes

I spent a few days in Rio first, staying in Urca, below Sugarloaf. "I chose it because it was quiet and safe," I said in my live stream. I walked, biked and took Ubers. "Rio is way cooler than I anticipated, especially because of these rocks." Both hikes below are in the city, and both are short.

## Pedra da Gávea

The huge granite headland in Tijuca National Park, above the sea. I hiked it on Sunday, April 28, 2024.

| DISTANCE | CLIMBING | TIME I TOOK |
|---|---|---|
| **5.3 mi** (8.5 km), round trip | **2,949 ft** (899 m) | **3 hours 44 minutes** (9:41 a.m. to 1:25 p.m.) |

It was a heat wave, on a jungle trail, and I saw monkeys eating jackfruit. I took an Uber to a café near the start and went back after for the "air conditioning, coffee, an amazing breakfast." In my live stream I said, "Anyone in Rio, I think should do this."

**The Carrasqueira.** Near the top is the Carrasqueira, a smooth, steep rock face of about 40 m that needs hands and feet. Hikers report that most accidents on the mountain happen there, and that people use ropes and harnesses and climb it one at a time (as reported). In 2024 I saw guides offering people belays down it. If you've never climbed rock, hire a guide with a rope or stop below it, and don't try it wet.

**The facts (as reported).** The trail starts on Estrada do Sorimã. Hikers report no authorization needed, hours of about 8 a.m. to 5 or 6 p.m. with no start after 2 p.m., and an unclear fee. I couldn't confirm these on the Tijuca National Park pages: check before you go, and start early.

## Sugarloaf (Pão de Açúcar) via Morro da Urca

I walked this on Monday, April 29, 2024, from Urca.

| DISTANCE | CLIMBING | TIME I TOOK |
|---|---|---|
| **3.5 mi** (5.6 km) | **659 ft** (201 m) | **1 hour 50 minutes** (3:29 to 5:19 p.m.) |

My track's 659 ft of climbing fits Morro da Urca, the lower hill below Sugarloaf. Fog rolled in right when I got up there. I had ice cream and saw a marmoset. "Much nicer hiking up than taking the cable car in my opinion."

**The facts (as reported).** The Morro da Urca trail leaves from the Pista Cláudio Coutinho, a shore path below Sugarloaf: about 1.5 km and 25 to 40 minutes up, free, gate open about 8:30 or 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the top a hiker's cable car ticket takes you up to Sugarloaf and back, or down. The cable car runs 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. (Parque Bondinho); a full ticket for a foreign adult was from about R$205 in 2026. Avoid the trail after rain.

## Rio safety

From the UK government's travel advice for Brazil: robberies are common, especially on buses and of phones, mostly from 4 to 9 p.m.; avoid all favelas, even if your GPS routes you through one; use official taxi and ride apps; and flash floods and landslides are common near Rio's mountains. Read your own government's advice too.

# Where I slept, food and water

## Where I slept

| NIGHT | WHERE | HEIGHT |
|---|---|---|
| Before | Rio de Janeiro (I took an Uber up to Bonfim in the morning) | |
| 1 | My tent at the Castelos do Açu camp, beside the Açu shelter | 7,030 ft (2,143 m) |
| 2 | Off the mountain; my last night was at a hotel near Rio's airport | |

**The Açu camp.** A small, sloping clearing beside the shelter, crowded for how few people were on the trail. In my live stream I said, "I should have just found a different area to sleep." The rules allow camping only in the designated camp, so get there early for a flat spot, and bring earplugs.

**The Abrigo 4 camp.** Beside Abrigo 4, below Pedra do Sino. I ate lunch on the hut's porch.

**The shelters.** Closed for sleeping in October 2026. The 2027 partner may open beds and bivouac places (planned: 12 and 18 a shelter). Don't count on it until the booking page says so.

**The night before.** Hikers suggest Petrópolis (as reported). Guesthouses near Bonfim, in Corrêas and in Teresópolis list about R$250 to R$650 a night (as reported, undated).

## Food and water

**Food.** Bring everything: nothing is sold on the trail in 2026. On the trip I had scrambled eggs at the restaurant near the entrance, coffee in the tent and at the Portais, and a pouch meal at Abrigo 4.

**Stove fuel.** You can't fly with gas canisters. I bought mine at a hiking store in central Rio. I couldn't confirm a shop selling them in Petrópolis or Teresópolis: buy fuel in Rio.

**Water.** The park lists Ajax (a spring), the Vale da Luva stream, the Cachoeirinha and the Vale das Antas (all year). Hikers also report a sink at each camp, and say some sources can run dry (as reported). On Day 1 I filtered water from a stream; on Day 2 I filled my bottle from a stream in the Vale da Luva. ICMBio says to treat all water: filter it, use tablets, or boil it 1 to 3 minutes, longer above 2,000 m.

# Petrópolis and Teresópolis

**Petrópolis.** A mountain town about 1 hour 10 minutes by bus from Rio (as reported). The traverse starts above it, in Bonfim. Most buses from Rio stop at the Leonel Brizola bus station, out of the center (as reported). I didn't stop in town: my Uber drove straight to the trailhead.

**Teresópolis.** The town at the end. The park's visitor center and main gate are on this side, about 2 miles of road below the Barragem trailhead: sign out your risk form there. Buses go back to Rio and to Petrópolis from the bus station (see Getting there). The ranger drove me into town, where I got some food and left.

**Guesthouses.** Near Bonfim and Corrêas, and near the park in Teresópolis; about R$250 to R$650 a night (as reported, undated).

# What it costs

I didn't keep a list of what I spent in 2024, and I don't have a record of any fee at the gate.

**For your budget (October 2026), two days from Rio by bus, one person.** Rough US dollars at about R$5 to US$1 (Banco Central do Brasil, R$4.99 on October 9, 2026).

| ITEM | R$ | ABOUT US$ |
|---|---|---|
| Bus, Rio to Petrópolis (as reported) | 47 | 9 |
| Two city buses, Petrópolis to Bonfim (R$5.90 each, as reported) | 12 | 2 |
| Park entry and camping (ICMBio, October 2026) | 0 | 0 |
| City bus, Teresópolis (as reported) | 6 | 1 |
| Bus, Teresópolis to Rio (as reported) | 46 | 9 |
| Stove fuel, one canister (a rough allowance) | 40 | 8 |
| Food for 2 days (a rough allowance) | 120 | 24 |
| A night in Petrópolis before (as reported, undated) | 250 to 650 | 50 to 130 |
| **Total** | **about 520 to 920** | **about 100 to 180** |

**Extras.** A guide, about R$200 to R$400 a person in older reports (as reported); a taxi or Uber instead of the city buses; a cable car ticket at Sugarloaf, from about R$205 (as reported). From January 2027 the new operator may charge access and camping fees: the planning study suggested R$30 and R$25 (October 2026, not prices yet).

# What I carried

From my film, my live stream and the film's description. I have no full gear list for this trip.

- **Pack:** a 35-liter pack
- **Shelter:** a one-person tent
- **Sleeping bag:** none. It was hot and I left it home. Don't copy that: "it could be colder than you think"
- **Stove:** a Jetboil, with fuel bought in Rio, and local coffee in single-cup bags
- **Water:** a water filter and a bottle
- **Clothes:** a hooded sun shirt, and for the first time on a hike, a normal hoodie
- **Light:** a headlamp, for the 4:17 a.m. start
- **Camera:** my camera and a tripod
- **Navigation:** Strava, which recorded both days

**What this traverse needs:**

- Your booking, the signed TCRN and your passport
- A tent and a sleeping bag: winter nights can approach freezing
- A stove, fuel, utensils, a waste kit and water treatment
- A rope for the Cavalinho (ICMBio says one is mandatory there), unless your guide carries one
- A headlamp, rain gear and a warm layer
- Shoes with good grip on wet granite
- The GPX files, offline maps, a backup battery and a satellite messenger
- Earplugs for the camp

# Weather, fog and safety

**Emergencies.** Call 193 for the Corpo de Bombeiros (fire brigade). The park says it isn't responsible for rescue. Park contact: sac.parnaso@icmbio.gov.br, (21) 97896-2463 (WhatsApp).

**Fog.** The ridge is often in cloud, and ICMBio says hikers often get lost here, mostly on foggy days: on Day 1 the trail is faint in places on the Chapadão, and on Day 2 the rocky descent from Morro da Luva toward the Cachoeirinha is poorly marked. On Day 2 the clouds came and went all day. Follow the trail markers, check the GPX track often, and if you can't see the next marker, stop and look before you go on.

**The dark.** I got lost after leaving the Açu camp at 4:17 a.m. If you start early for the Portais sunrise, study the first mile on your GPX, go slowly, and when you lose the trail, go back to where you last had it.

**The scrambles.** ICMBio names the Elevador (iron rungs) and the Cavalinho ("the most dangerous point", where it says a rope is mandatory); its leaflet adds the Mergulho. Keep three points of contact, pass packs up by hand where you need to, and go one at a time. Wet granite is slick, even with morning dew: wait out rain if you can.

**Storms.** The ridge is exposed, and the wet summer is stormy (as reported). If a storm builds, get off the high ground.

**Cold.** ICMBio says temperatures up high often approach freezing. Bring a sleeping bag even if Rio is hot.

**Long days.** On a two-day plan, Day 2 is long, with the hardest scrambling in the middle. Carry a headlamp.

# Using the GPX files

My own GPS recordings, with all timestamps removed.

| FILE | WHAT IT IS |
|---|---|
| petropolis-teresopolis-day-1-bonfim-to-castelos-do-acu.gpx | Day 1: the Bonfim entrance to my camp at Castelos do Açu, 7.1 mi |
| petropolis-teresopolis-day-2-castelos-do-acu-to-teresopolis.gpx | Day 2: Castelos do Açu, the Portais de Hércules, past Pedra do Sino and Abrigo 4 to the Teresópolis side, 11.8 mi |
| petropolis-teresopolis-full-route.gpx | Both days in one file, with waypoints for Bonfim, my camp, the Portais de Hércules, Pedra do Sino, my Day 2 high point and the Teresópolis end |

The tracks show where I went, including where I wandered off the trail in the dark between my camp and the Portais on Day 2 and the side trip to the Portais de Hércules. Follow the trail on the ground. The heights are from my recordings.

**AllTrails:** on alltrails.com, create a new map and use Import (offline maps need a paid plan). **Gaia GPS:** open the file on your phone and choose Gaia GPS, or Import on gaiagps.com. **Garmin:** Garmin Connect on the web, Training, Courses, Import, then send it to your watch. **Organic Maps** (free): download the offline map for Rio de Janeiro state, then open the GPX file with it.

# Before you go, check these

These change every year. Everything else in this guide stays the same.

**Is it open?**

- The park's booking page (agendamento para camping) on the ICMBio site, for closures and the shelters
- Who runs the overnight services from January 2027, and what they charge

**Booking and rules**

- The day your dates open, two months ahead at midnight
- The TCRN risk form, printed and signed
- Fees: free in October 2026, possibly not in 2027
- The reverse direction, if that's your plan

**Getting there**

- Bus times and fares: Única Fácil (Rio to Petrópolis), the city buses to Bonfim, Viação Teresópolis (back to Rio)
- Your ride from the Teresópolis side

**Your stuff**

- Stove fuel from Rio, a tent, a sleeping bag, a waste kit and water treatment

# One-page trip sheet

| DAY | MI (KM) | FROM, TO | SLEEP | NOTES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 7.1 (11.4) | Bonfim to Castelos do Açu | Tent, Açu camp, 7,030 ft | Véu da Noiva about mi 2.6, Ajax spring about mi 4.6 (last listed water), Açu shelter about mi 6.5 |
| 2 | 11.8 (19.0) | Castelos do Açu to Teresópolis | Off the mountain | Morro do Marco mi 0.5, Portais de Hércules mi 1.5, high point 7,241 ft mi 3.05, Elevador, Cavalinho, Pedra do Sino about mi 5.7, Abrigo 4 mi 6.6 |
| **Total** | **18.9 (30.4)** | | | **About 6,330 ft up, 5,690 ft down** |

Miles and climbing are from my GPS. ICMBio gives about 30 km and plans 3 days: nights at the Açu and Sino camps.

**Places:** Bonfim entrance (Sede Petrópolis), about 1,100 m · Pedra do Açu, 2,245 m (ICMBio) · Castelos do Açu camp · Portais de Hércules · Morro da Luva · Elevador (iron rungs) · Cavalinho, "the most dangerous point" · Pedra do Sino, 2,275 m (ICMBio) · Abrigo 4 camp · Teresópolis side

**Status (October 2026):** open with booking; shelters closed for sleeping, camp beside them; free entry and camping; new operator planned from January 2027. Closed Mondays.

**Rules:** online booking two months ahead (up to 5 a form); signed TCRN at the entrance, signed out at the exit gate; a rope for the Cavalinho; passport or CPF; camp only at Açu and Sino; waste kit; no fires; no glass.

**Hours:** entrances and check-in 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., out by 5 p.m.; overnight access to the traverse 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. after check-in.

**Water:** Ajax, Vale da Luva, Cachoeirinha, Vale das Antas. Treat it.

**Emergency:** 193 (Corpo de Bombeiros). Park: sac.parnaso@icmbio.gov.br, (21) 97896-2463 (WhatsApp). Don't count on a phone signal.

# About this guide

**Petrópolis-Teresópolis Hiking Guide: The Serra dos Órgãos traverse in Brazil, Bonfim to Teresópolis in 2 days**, by Kraig Adams. 2027 season edition, updated October 2026.

I hiked it alone on April 30 and May 1, 2024, and I made a film about it: Hiking Alone in Brazil. Everything in first person comes from that trip: the film and its description, my GPS recordings and my live stream after the trip. Rules, access and safety facts were checked on October 10, 2026, and anything that changes yearly is dated. My film's description says I spent the night at Abrigo 4; my GPS shows I camped at Castelos do Açu and passed Abrigo 4 the next day, and this guide follows the GPS.

**Updates and contact.** If something has changed, or you spot a mistake, email me at kraig@kraigadams.com.

**No affiliate links.** There are none in this guide, and nobody paid for a mention in it.

**Safety.** This traverse has real risks: scrambles with exposure, iron rungs, fog that hides the trail, wet granite, storms and no phone signal. This guide describes my trip, not current conditions. Check conditions before you go, and turn back when they aren't right. You're responsible for your own safety.

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**Credits.** Photos are frames from my film; the cover is my film's YouTube thumbnail. GPX files are my own recordings. Maps © OpenStreetMap contributors, openstreetmap.org/copyright (ODbL). Relief: Mapzen Terrain Tiles. Facts from ICMBio (Parque Nacional da Serra dos Órgãos), Parque Bondinho, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and the businesses named.