

A brief encounter, Latin-style

You can book your passion by the hour at the Brazilian motels where kitsch meets convenience. **Sue Chester** and boyfriend check in

The cab driver didn't bat an eyelid when we told him our destination. Meanwhile the boyfriend was in high spirits, humming 'feeling hot, hot, hot' as we sped along the Avenida Niemeyer past the glittering, turquoise ocean on a baking Rio day.

There was a queue of people at the entrance to the hotel, waiting patiently in the afternoon heat. At last it was our turn and after some awkward Portuguese we picked our suite; or should I say the boyfriend did, seduced by the name High Tech.

After paying the cabbie (who I could have sworn was now smirking) we scampered up our own, private stairwell bursting with curiosity.

Rushing past the cosy dining area we scurried out onto the terrace, where there was a small swimming pool complete with waterfall and sunloungers with a spectacular view of the Cagarras Islands. A king-sized bed faced the sea ostentatiously. The sheets were decorated with a pattern showing couples in various positions romping across the stretch-cotton.

To the British, motels may conjure images of anonymous low-rise buildings overlooking the motorway, where truck-drivers and travelling salesmen feast on all-day breakfasts in the adjacent Little Chef. But the Brazilian motel is another proposition entirely. Frequented mainly by couples in search of some privacy, they are kitsch temples to Latino passion, where rooms are usually booked by the hour. Or, in the case of the Vips motel, where we had just checked in, by the eight-hour stint - leading my boyfriend to ask dryly whether Viagra and glucose tablets were provided in the mini-bar.

So instead of a dirty weekend, you can have an action-packed, highly accessorised dirty few hours. And all without pretence, guilt or hassle. The receptionist at the drive-in booth knows what you're there for. You leave your passport, call the waiter to leave the bill in the anteroom when you're done (none of the staff ever see you), collect your passport on exit and Bob's your uncle.

Our suite had a glut of mostly hot and wet equipment; jacuzzi, steam room, sauna, black-tiled shower... and a chrome and black leather chair that looked worryingly like something you might see in a gynaecologist's surgery.

True to its 'high-tech' label, there were also four small TV screens plus one enormous one with a video camera, which got the boyfriend highly animated. I don't know which was more horrifying: the thought of my cellulite being zoomed in on, or that I might be upstaged by Brazilian footy broadcast across multiple screens.

So why is it that these handy institutions have become so popular in Brazil? Sergio Lino, managing director of the Lumini Motel in Sao Paulo, says: 'Motels started in the mid-1970s, when Brazil was a very closed society in this respect. You had to present your



Guilt-free pleasures in Brazil's motels, above. Right, from top: Vip's, Lumini and Le Baron.

marriage certificate if you checked into a hotel and, if in any doubt, the "sex police" were called in. So a lot of people ended up doing it in cars or on the street, which was not very safe.'

Over the past three decades motels have become an accepted part of Brazilian society, with something on offer for all budgets, ranging from get-the-job-done one-stars to five-star luxury love nests. Naturally, they are the perfect location for clandestine liaisons, but they are equally popular with girlfriends and boyfriends who want some privacy (unmarried Brazilians tend to stay in the parental home well into their 20s or 30s), or married couples who go to escape the daily routine or to celebrate an anniversary.

Consequently, motel owners have had to change their style to appeal to long-term couples; especially at the top of the range, where the decor is deliberately understated and sophisticated: 'We wanted a design and concept that wasn't like the old, nightclub-style motels,' says Lino. 'It's all much more stylish, not screaming "motel" with red flashing lights, gilt and mirrors everywhere.' Mainstream enough for some of George Bush Senior's delegation to stay at the Maxim motel for the 1992 Earth Summit, when Rio's hotels were booked out (I wonder what they thought the sex chairs were for), as will various athletes coming for this year's Pan Am Games.

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Some of the top-end motel suites lend themselves to show-biz parties; Lenny Kravitz booked Vip's two-storey Millennium suite (complete with two pools and BBQ) for a 400-guest launch party for one of his CDs. Ronaldo has also hosted a big shindig there.

Meanwhile, back in the High Tech suite, we shimmied on the dancefloor (it



Getty, Sue Chester

LOVE IN THE AFTERNOON

RIO DE JANEIRO

■ **Vip's Motel**
All suites have a spectacular sea view. Try High Tech, New Vip's 15, Sol or Millennium. From R\$85 to R\$550 (£20-£132). Av Niemeyer, 418, Leblon (00 55 213322 5868; www.vipsmotel.com.br)

■ **Maxim**
Run amok in the Maxim suite, overlooking a pool with waterfall. R\$60-R\$400. Av Nuta James, 877, Barra da Tijuca (00 55 21 2494 2323; www.guiademoteis.com.br and type 'Maxim' in the search box)

SAO PAULO

■ **Lumini Motel**
Extremely classy decor with fabulous service. R\$120-R\$390. Rua Dr Rubens Meireles, 477, Barra Funda (00 55 11 2197 0666; www.luminimotel.com.br)

■ **Vip's Motel**
Romp around Brazil's biggest motel bed (3m x 3m). R\$49-R\$498. Rua Maria Olinda 70, Jordanopolis (00 55 11 4332 6088; www.vips.com.br)

SALVADOR

■ **Motel Del Rey**
Spread out in the immense mansion suites Apollo, Aphrodite or Venus, or play Fred and Wilma in the Blue Cave. R\$59-R\$288. Rua Catarina Fogaca 998, Jardim Armacao (00 55 71 3461 9220; www.moteldelrey.com.br)

FLORIANOPOLIS

■ **Nantai Motel**
Attempt the sex machine in Sexy or wallow in Ocidente's ofuro bath. R\$65-R\$250. Rodovia SC 405, Campeche, Florianopolis (on the island) (00 55 48 3337 6320; www.nantaimotel.com.br)

SAO LUIS

■ **Motel Le Baron**
Includes wacky themed rooms; Pit Stop is complete with vintage car or chase your prince/princess round your own palace in the Taj Mahal. R\$42-R\$220. Av General Artur Carvalho, 61, Turu (00 55 98 3248 03268; www.meulebaron.com.br)

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