

Penedo, Alagoas

Located in the northeastern state of Alagoas, 173 km from the state capital of Maceió, the historic town of Penedo is one of the colonial jewels of Brazil.

Founded by the Portuguese in 1613 near the mouth of the São Francisco River, Penedo was named after the rock on which it was built. The town had been occupied by the Portuguese (and briefly the Dutch) since the 16th and early 17th centuries.

Population - 59,968 (2005) with an area of 689 km²

<http://wikimapia.org/1298290/Penedo-Alagoas-Brasil>

Historically Penedo was an important crossing point and trading center of the São Francisco River, one of Brazil's largest and historically, most significant rivers. Affectionately called "Velho Chico" (Old Chico), the river is 2,700 kilometers long, flowing through five states of the Brazilian sertão: Minas Gerais, Bahia, Pernambuco, Sergipe, and Alagoas. This region is the subject of countless Brazilian books, stories, legends, and songs. Some decades ago, the town lost some of its earlier strategic importance when a road and rail bridge was finally built across the river at Propriá, around 30 kms upstream from Penedo.

Penedo has many important examples of Portuguese and Dutch colonial architecture as well as beautiful landscapes. Today the town is a quiet regional center which is well worth a visit to enjoy the architectural richness of its historic center which retains many houses, and public and religious buildings from its long and prosperous past.

Some of the most magnificent historic churches of Brazil can be seen here:

Catedral de Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos, Cathedral of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Penedo. (*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Black People's Rosary*)

Convento de São Francisco e Igreja de Nossa Senhora dos Anjos
(*Convent of Saint Francis and Church of Our Lady of the Angels*)

Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Corrente
(*Church of Our Lady of the Chains*)

The Nossa Senhora da Corrente Church was named with a reference to the "chains" of slavery. The owners, a family of abolitionists, would hide runaway slaves in a secret compartment until they could escape. This church is lavishly decorated with rare polychrome tiles and gold leaf

The Casa do Penedo (Town Museum), established in 1992, focuses on the preservation of the city's artistic and cultural patrimony. Here one can find objects reflecting five centuries of creativity by the residents of the São Francisco River Valley.

Inhabitants of Penedo are extremely friendly and proud of their heritage and will gladly tell visitors a variety of stories about the town.