

# Rio urges Carnival visitors to stick to urban areas

January 30 2018, by Mauricio Savarese

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In this Saturday, Jan. 27, 2018 photo, revelers in costume participate in the Banda de Ipanema carnival "bloco" parade in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Rio's health authorities are urging Carnival visitors to stick to celebrations in the city and avoid sightseeing at waterfalls and forests where yellow fever has been detected. (AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)

Brazilian health authorities are urging Carnival visitors to stick to celebrations in the city of Rio de Janeiro and avoid heading out of town

for sightseeing at waterfalls and forests where yellow fever has been detected.

Rio state Health Secretary Luiz Antonio Teixeira Junior said on Tuesday that there have been no recent urban cases of the disease and that the risk of contagion in touristic parts of Rio is "nearly zero."

"Visit our beaches, but avoid forests, bushes and waterfalls. That is where the mosquitoes that transmit the disease live," Teixeira Junior said in a press conference.

Brazil is vaccinating more than 20 million people against yellow fever in a massive campaign to control a budding outbreak, and the secretary said Rio state alone has vaccinated more than 8 million. The World Health Organization also suggests that visitors to Rio get vaccinated.

As of Tuesday, Brazil's Health Ministry has confirmed 213 cases across the country and 81 deaths in the current outbreak. That's fewer than the 468 cases and 147 deaths that had been confirmed during the same period in the last outbreak, which was unusually large.

Alfredo Lopes, the head of Rio's hotel association, said tourism agencies have expressed concern about the outbreak.

"There are many doubts because of yellow fever, but few cancelations for now. We don't know how many people would come, but later chose not to," Lopes said.

Rio state Tourism Secretary Nilo Felix said the disease won't have a meaningful impact during the high season for tourists. He expects 1.5 million visitors in the city in the next couple of weeks, about the same figure of 2017.

James Story, the U.S. consul general in Rio, said he hasn't heard of American concerns about yellow fever directly and believes the outbreak will not affect tourism in the coming weeks.

"Carnival is an international festival with people from all over. I am sure this time will be no different," he said.

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