

FAQ's

1. Discuss the concept of the planning of Brasilia.

Brasília was planned and developed by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer in 1956 in order to move the capital from Rio de Janeiro to a more central location. The city's design divides it into numbered blocks as well as sectors for specified activities, such as the Hotel Sector, the Banking Sector and the Embassy Sector. The layout of the residential and administrative districts (often compared to the shape of a bird in flight) to the symmetry of the buildings themselves – should be in harmony with the city's overall design. The official buildings, in particular, are innovative and imaginative. Laid out along a monumental east-west axis, crossed by a north-south axis curved to follow the topography as a transportation thoroughfare, Brasilia is a definitive example of 20th century modernist urbanism.

2. What are the characteristics of plan of the city of Brasilia?

The city brought together ideas of grand administrative centers and public spaces with new ideas of urban living as promoted by Le Corbusier in six storey housing blocks (quadras) supported on pylons which allowed the landscape to flow beneath and around them. The city's planning is noteworthy for the remarkable congruence of Lucio Costa's urban design (the 'Plano Piloto') and Oscar Niemeyer's architectural creations, most powerfully reflected in the intersection between the monumental and thoroughfare axes, which stands as the determining factor of the city's urban scheme and underscores the representative character of Three Powers Square and the Esplanade of the Ministries, also manifest in the geometry of the National Congress and in the new approach to urban living embodied in the Neighborhood Units and their corresponding Superblocks.

3. What was the criteria based on which UNESCO recognized Brasilia as a World Heritage Site?

Brasilia is a singular artistic achievement, a prime creation of the human genius, representing, on an urban scale, the living expression of the principles and ideals advanced by the Modernist Movement and effectively embodied in the Tropics through the urban and architectural planning of Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer. The Brazilian experience is notable for the grandiosity of the project, one which not only brought to a definitive close a particular historical epoch, but which was closely tied to an ambitious development strategy and to a process of national self-affirmation before the world.

Brasilia is a unique example of urban planning brought to fruition in the 20th century, an expression of the urban principles of the Modernist Movement as set out in the 1943 Athens Charter, in Le Corbusier's 1946 treatise *How to Conceive Urbanism*, and in the architectural designs of Oscar Niemeyer, including the buildings of the three powers (Presidential Palace, Supreme Court and Congress with its twin high rise buildings flanked by the cupola of the Senate building and by the inverted one of the House of Representatives), and the Cathedral with its 16 paraboloids 40 metres in height, the Pantheon of Juscelino Kubitschek and the National Theatre.

4. How is the authenticity of the urban fabric guaranteed in Brasilia?

The authenticity of Brasilia is guaranteed through maintenance of its architecture, urban design, and landscapes, all of which represent a new approach to urban living, reaffirmed by Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer on the basis of the Modernist Movement's principles for 20th century architecture and urbanism.

The primary attributes of the Pilot Project (Plano Piloto) which converge to attribute universal and outstanding value to Brasilia include: the intersection of two axes and the hierarchical distribution of the road system, the division of the city into sectors with their respective characteristics and end uses, the network of open and green spaces, the Esplanade of the Ministries and representative structures that make up the Monumental Axis the superblocks organized on the basis of neighbourhood units, and, lastly, Oscar Niemeyer's architectural designs of the key representative buildings.

These attributes are best understood on the basis of the four scales identified by Lucio Costa at the time of Brasilia's designation as a heritage site and preserved as the guiding benchmarks of the Pilot Project (Plano Piloto)'s original design: a monumental scale, which confers on Brasilia its status as a capital city in which the nation's administrative functions are performed; a residential scale, which embodies a new approach to living, centered on the Thoroughfare Axis along which the Neighborhood Units are distributed and divided into a North and South Wing; a social scale, situated at the intersection of the two axes – Monumental and Thoroughfare – where the bank, hotel, business, and service sectors converge to form the city's central section; and a bucolic scale, which permeates the other three and is composed of large open and green spaces that provide the city with its unique city-park aspect