



# KNOW THE beach RULES

Certain unspoken, gender-specific rules govern the public behavior of men and women on the beach at Ipanema—and by extension, on all Brazilian beaches. What follows is a tongue-in-cheek run-down of beach-going do's and don'ts.

**Sunbathing 101:** The most important rule is that *nothing* shall come between a man and the raw, hot sand. A man who uses a beach chair, a towel, or a *kanga* is not a man but a gringo, and shall be shunned. A Brazilian man must plant his Lycra-covered butt down in hot white sili-con, making sure his lower back and thighs are covered in sticky white grains.

There are certain exceptions. A man may sit on a sheet of folded newspaper. A man may sit on a *tiny* corner of a woman's *kanga*, provided the woman is beautiful and he occupies no more than 3% of the total *kanga* surface. A man may also stand, drinking a *cerveja* (beer), looking around manfully and sharing the company of other men.

A woman must sit on a *kanga*. Beach chairs are also acceptable. Women do not touch the sand, nor do women stand. Women do not join in beach sports such as soccer or foot volley, nor do they plod sweatily down the beach pretending to be joggers. The acceptable positions for women are lounging on their backs, lying dreamily on their bellies, or sitting cross-legged in a circle with at least three other women.

When rising from the sand—or newspaper, or corner of a woman's *kanga*—a man may not brush the sticky white sand from his butt. A woman, when rising from the sand, must brush herself voluptuously, making sure both glutes are thoroughly massaged from waist down to lower thigh. Particular attention must be paid to readjusting the bikini bottom so that it rests comfortably between her butt cheeks.

**Water Frolicking 101:** Men *must* swim or at least pretend to swim (many

Cariocas actually don't know how to swim but will fake it). A man who dabbles his toes or contemplates the waves with a far-off look in his eye is not a man but a gringo. Men approach the sea in a series of angry stomps, stopping at the waterline to regard the surf with a steely glare before sprinting forward and diving into a breaking wave. Once immersed, a man may swim farther out, or he may bodysurf. A man may *not* play in the waves.

Women may play in the waves, turning their backs to the surf and giggling as the water breaks over them. This, however, is rare. Generally, a woman dips her toes, advances as deep as mid-calf, and then waits for a breaker, at which time she squats and allows the surf to immerse her bikini bottom. If this is found to be too traumatizing, a woman may also bring a cup to the beach, dip it in the frothy foam and pour the water over various parts of her body,

thoroughly massaging each part for at least 30 seconds afterward.

**Beach Flirting 101:** Men and women do not enter the water together. This is not to say they do not interact. For instance, a man may approach a group of no more than three pretty women sitting cross-legged on their *kangas* and ask them to watch his shorts and sandals while he manfully attacks the ocean. Their agreement obtained, the man will then place his stuff on the sand near their *kangas* and stomp angrily toward the surf, which he will regard with a glare all the more steely for the fact that he knows three pretty women are admiring the manful way he's attacking the elements. The women will ignore him, missing the determined plunge into the roiling surf and the angry stomp back up the beach. But at least they will never call him a gringo!