

The 2016 Summer Games at Rio:

BY GEORGE DICKIE **bring your camera**

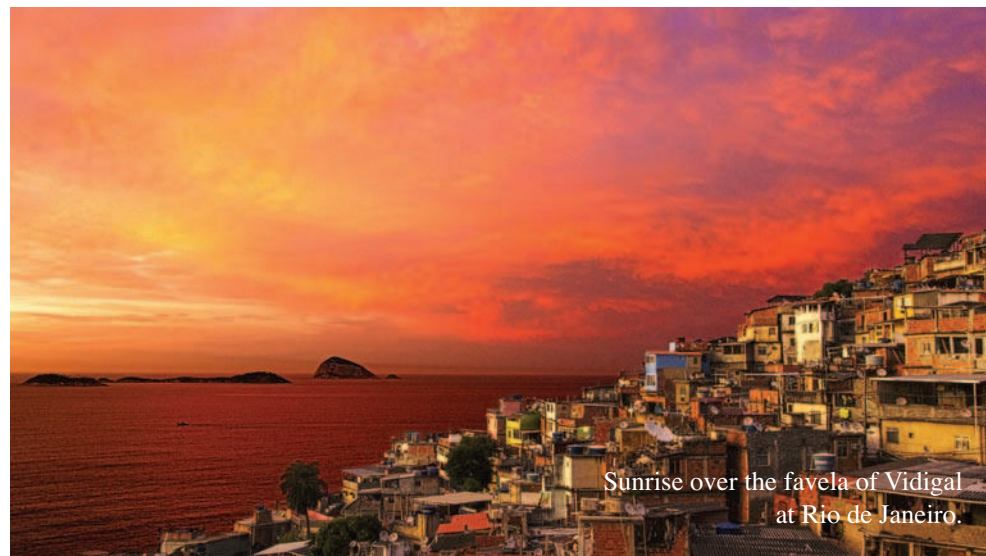
In terms of natural beauty, there has probably never been an Olympic host city to equal Rio de Janeiro. Indeed, when the 2016 Summer Olympics get going Friday, Aug. 5, on NBC, NBC Sports Network, Golf Channel, CNBC, MSNBC, USA Network and NBCOlympics.com with 17 days of state-of-the-art competition, viewers will not only be treated to the heroics of Michael Phelps, Usain Bolt, Kerri Walsh-Jennings and others, they'll also get an up-close-and-personal look at perhaps the world's most scenic major city.

Situated on Brazil's Atlantic coast, Rio lies on the western shore of Guanabara Bay, rimmed by the Serra do Mar mountains and the Brazilian Highlands. Probably the most famous of these is Corcovado, a 2,329-foot granite peak on which the Cristo Redentor (aka Christ the Redeemer) statue overlooks the harbor, arms outstretched. Constructed between 1922 and 1931 and standing 98-feet tall on the summit, it is easily the city's most definitive feature.

Other sights include the monolithic Sugarloaf, a 1,299-foot sheer granite mountain at the mouth of the bay; the 2,700-foot Pedra da Gavea, a magnet for hikers and adventurers; and the iconic beaches of Ipanema, Copacabana and Abrico, where volleyball and football are the sports of choice, beer is openly sold and consumed and clothing is optional. Yep, you're not in Kansas anymore.

Of course, the city's problems are well-documented: high crime and murder rates, poverty, polluted waterways, a foundering economy, a government in the process of impeaching its president and the ever-present threat of terrorism. And then, of course, there is the mosquito-borne Zika virus, which has already scared away a number of athletes, Irish golfer Rory McIlroy among them, and more may yet drop out. The timing for the city to host a major world event seemingly couldn't be worse.

But with a security detail of about 85,000, more than twice that of London in 2012, and the fact that Rio hosted the 2014 World Cup with no major issues, confidence is high that these Games will go off without a hitch. If everything goes according to plan, this could easily be among the most memorable, if not the most photogenic, of Summer Games.



Sunrise over the favela of Vidigal at Rio de Janeiro.

Of course, the city's problems are well-documented: high crime and murder rates, poverty, polluted waterways, a foundering economy, a government in the process of impeaching its president and the ever-present threat of terrorism. And then, of course, there is the mosquito-borne Zika virus, which has already scared away a number of athletes, Irish golfer Rory McIlroy among them, and more may yet drop out. The timing for the city to host a major world event seemingly couldn't be worse.

But with a security detail of about 85,000, more than twice that of London in 2012, and the fact that Rio hosted the 2014 World Cup with no major issues, confidence is high that these Games will go off without a hitch. If everything goes according to plan, this could easily be among the most memorable, if not the most photogenic, of Summer Games.



A dancer with the Vila Isabel Samba School

performs in the Sambadrome during the Rio Carnival February 8, 2016 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Vila Isabel's parade theme this year was an ode to Brazil's northern state of Pernambuco, one of the hardest hit by the Zika virus.