

'Er name is Rio

Londoner is first non-Brazilian to lead the Carnival



SAMBA LIKE IT HOT
Samantha shows off her sizzling form



PERFORMER Samba in costume

BY CHRISTOPHER SUOKINEN *US Editor*

A FORMER London office worker with no professional dance training is set to make history as the first foreigner to lead the Rio Carnival.

Samantha Flores is the first non-Brazilian performer in 78 years of the biggest party on Earth to be named "musa abre alas" – or lead dancer.

The 37-year-old visited Rio in 2006 and had her first taste of the carnival five years later, dressed as a canary.

She said: "It was literally love at first sight. Within six months I had quit my job and moved here."

"I do sometimes think, 'What's a nice Jewish girl who used to just live a

dance, nothing more, doing here? It's a privilege and a responsibility."

Samantha left behind her family and PR executive job in Kimbley Town and is now a property consultant in Brazil.

Around five million people, 1.5 million of them tourists, are expected at the festival and it should bring in around £800million. It starts tomorrow and culminates on Fat Tuesday, before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday.

Authorities hope the bash will provide a much-needed boost for Rio after a crime wave following its hosting of the 2016 Olympics.

More than 3,900 security staff will be on duty.

Last year, thousands of soldiers were deployed on the streets.



PRIVILEGE
Samantha Flores



PASSION She left job to move to Brazil

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