

Brazil to open Latin America's first elephant sanctuary

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Brazil will soon open Latin America's first elephant sanctuary, and its three initial residents will be retired circus animals in need of a safe haven, a report said Sunday.

"The idea is to build an establishment like the Elephant Sanctuary in

Tennessee in the United States," Junia Machado, president of the Santuario de Elefantes Brasil group that is behind the project, told the Folha de S. Paulo newspaper.

The facility is due to open by next year and will be in Mato Grosso state in the western central part of the country, close to soyfields, cattle ranches and a national park.

Machado's group has purchased a property of about 1,100 hectares (2,700 acres) in a forested area near fields and water sources, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the Chapada dos Guimaraes tourist park.

Three female [elephants](#) will be the sanctuary's first guests, including Ramba, a 50-year-old Asian elephant that spent decades working in circuses in Argentina and Chile.

Her background left her with scars, abscesses and a chronic renal problem.

The other two creatures, Guida and Maia, are aged 40 and have lived since 2011 on a farm in Paraguay after they were retired from a Brazilian circus.

The sanctuary may eventually house 50 elephants. They will not be bred and the center will not be open to visitors.

"We want these animals to find peace, and there's not yet a way people can see them up close without them losing their freedom," Machado said.

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