

(Bound for the) Rio Grande

1. Say was you never down Rio Grande
Away for Rio
It's there that the river runs on golden sand
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!

And away bullies away,
Away for Rio,
Sing fare thee well,
Me bonny young girl
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!
2. Goodbye to Sally and goodbye to Sue
Away for Rio,
and all the rest well goodbye to you
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!
3. Farewell and adieu to you ladies of Spain
Away for Rio,
we're all of us coming to see you again!
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!
4. Now pack up your donkey and get
underway
Away for Rio,
And the girls that we're leaving will get our
half-pay
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!
5. And now we're a-sailing right down for the

- Horn
Away for Rio,
Where you'd wish to hell you had never been
born.
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!
6. You bowrie ladies we'd have you to know
Away for Rio,
We're bound for the south'd O Lord let her go
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!
 7. An now she's a sailing right over the bar
Away for Rio,
A-pointing her nose for the old southern star
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!

And away bullies away,
Away for Rio,
Sing fare thee well,
Me bonny young girl
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!

An **Outward Bound** shanty.

These are the verses sung by Tony O'Neill.
On Youtube, listen to **Johnny Collins** at
<https://youtu.be/wIG5j7RyP8o> or the **Fo'c'sle
Singers** at <https://youtu.be/aVXaMgC1uz0>



Garibaldi and his men carrying boats from Los Patos lagoon to Tramandahy lake during the War of Rio Grande do Sul. 19th century.

From **De Agostini/Getty Images**, via [wikimedia commons](#):

(Bound for the) Rio Grande

Notes:

An **Outward Bound** shanty sung at anchor, capstan or windlass.

Hugill states it was commonly sung on ships leaving the West Coast of England and Wales on their way to stop at Newfoundland or Cadiz for salt or salt cod.

About the words:

Rio is pronounced **Righ-O** ... so much easier to sing when doing heavy work!

The chorus can appear as Away for Rio or Way O Rio or Oh you Rio .

Geography

The Rio Grande referred to here is most likely the mouth of river of that name in the **Brazilian** state of **Rio Grande do Sul**.

The Portuguese found this "great river of the south" in the 1530's. In 1737 the city named Rio Grande was founded there to defend Portugal's territory, which covered what is now the state of Rio Grande do Sul plus the whole of Uruguay.

William Main **Doerflinger**, in **Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman** writes:

It has been suggested that it refers to the famous river on the Mexican border. It seems clear, however, that it was first sung in the **Brazil trade** and was inspired by the port and province of **Rio Grande do Sul**. Most versions show plainly that the Rio Grande of the shanty was not simply a river, but a port or region; one version, for example, runs, "There the Portugee girls may be found."

Usually known succinctly as "**Rio Grande**", the southern Brazilian province and its chief port, of the same name, carried on a busy trade with the United States and Britain, outdoing in this respect all of the many other Rio Grandes on the map."

Stan Hugill, 1994 *Shanties from the Seven Seas*,

"The reference in some versions to "golden sand", whether taken literally or symbolically, apply to this southern Brazilian river and port, for both banks of the Brazilian Great River (it is a lagoon really) are heaped high with sand dunes, and in the past, gold was a commodity found in this district. ... Gold was [also] found in the Mexican Rio Grande district but [by then] this song was already well aired.



Left, a map of South America showing the Brazilian province of Rio Grande do Sul as "RS" in pink,

Below, Brazilian 1940's map from estacoesferroviarias.com.br ("Railway Stations"), showing the province of Rio Grande Do Sul



Argentina is here, to the west

Uruguay is here, to the south

The **Port of Rio Grande** in the south-east corner of the province, at the southern end of the long peninsula, guarding the harbour entrance.