

(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.

This version sung by Tony O'Neill & Whittlebury.



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

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

(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.

Notes on the words:

Rio is pronounced **Righ-O!**

The chorus can be Away for Rio / Way O Rio / Away you Rio etc

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.

Doerflinger, William., *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."

Hugill, Stan, 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, as "RS" in pink, the Brazilian province of Rio Grande do Sul

Below, Brazilian 1940's map from estacoesferroviarias.com.br ("Railway Stations"), showing the province with **Argentina** is to the west, **Uruguay** to the south and the **port of Rio Grande** in the south-east corner at the southern end of the long peninsula, guarding the harbour entrance.

