



Rio's Christ statue gets facelift

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Rio de Janeiro's iconic Christ the Redeemer statue - a giant mountaintop monument to Jesus Christ with his arms wide open like a cross - is to get a facelift starting this week.

The renovations on the 40-metre high statue are to last to June and cost a total of \$US3.8 million (\$4.24 million), according to Brazil's Catholic Church.

During that time, the statue will still be accessible, though "clothed" in a transparent safety shroud to prevent injuries from falling objects.

Workers are to repair the mosaic on its pedestal, and clean humidity stains and remove scratches.

Built 78 years ago, the monument is one of the best-known modern landmarks in the world, along with Paris's Eiffel Tower, Washington's White House and Sydney's Opera House.

Some 1.8 million visitors crowd under the concrete and soapstone construct every year.

Much of the money for the renovation comes from a corporate donation from Vale, Brazil's mining giant which has pledged to look after the heavily touristed site for the next five years.

The statue was officially declared part of Brazil's national heritage early last month.

- AFP

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