

Internship in Campinas, Sao Paolo, Brazil

Spoken Language in Brazil: Portuguese, sometimes english

Duration: 2 months

Field: Agricultural engineering

Workplace: FEAGRI at UNICAMP (University in Campinas)

Field of study: Applied Geosciences

My languages: German, English, French

Preparation

I did not prepare at all for the professional aspects of the internship. I also did not know exactly what I would be doing there. I had emailed the professor responsible for me beforehand to ask if I could prepare myself in any way, but that was not expected at all. I did, however, prepare for the trip to Brazil itself. A visa is only required for Brazil if you stay longer than 3 months, so I didn't have to apply for a visa. I booked the flight about 3 months in advance, it costs about 500 euros one way. I also had my vaccinations checked. A little bit more extraordinary was the yellow fever vaccination, which I got. I got the money for all the vaccinations back from my health insurance. Also, you have to apply for a Brazilian ID so you can receive money. But IAESTE helped me with that. I also clarified that I have health insurance abroad. It was also very useful to buy mobile data volume from my cell phone provider for the first days in Brazil. This costs about 15 euros, but it is really important, because without Internet you are really lost, and to get a Brazilian SIM card is not so easy. The problem is that you can't get a SIM card without a working CPF number. I did have a CPF number, but it didn't work for me or other interns from abroad. Later you can ask if you can get the CPF number of a Brazilian to register the SIM card on it.



Figure 1: Our sleeping room



Figure 2: The living room and kitchen

Arrival and accommodation

When I arrived at the airport in Viracopos (Campinas), my luggage was unfortunately not there. It first took two hours for my details to be noted so that my luggage could be sent to me. This was a bit frustrating, on the other hand, after three days, the luggage came delivered directly to my accommodation with update on the delivery status via Whatsapp. From the airport, my host was supposed to pick me up. Unfortunately, this did not work out, because the car of my host was broken. So I went with "Uber" to my accommodation. Uber is one of the best means of transportation I can imagine. It's safe, uncomplicated, and cheap by German standards.

My accommodation was a relatively large house in a quiet, and safe residential area right next to the university, which was very convenient. When I arrived, I lived in this house together with about 20 other students. About 14 of them were also interns from abroad (Poland, Germany, Turkey, Argentina, Portugal, Czech Republic). The other students were Brazilians. I shared my room with 3 other students. It was very simple. We had only 2 bunk beds, and a big wardrobe in the room. The bathroom and kitchen were not luxurious, but fully adequate. There was a gas stove, several refrigerators, a large countertop, and a large table. Living with so many people in such a small space was sometimes stressful, as you had no privacy, however, you had instant connection and you helped each other a lot, or did things together. The atmosphere in the house was positive throughout, although sometimes very chaotic. On the weekends, we made a lot of trips together, for example to the beach, for hiking or to Rio de Janeiro.

Job

I worked in two different laboratories of the Institute of Agricultural Engineering. First in the laboratory for biogas, then in the soil laboratory. I found both very interesting from a technical point of view, as the working methods and the subject matter were completely new to me as a geologist. In the lab, I received a nice and very friendly welcome. With my colleagues, I always had the feeling that we were friends rather than colleagues. The English level of Brazilians is very different. Some Brazilians speak perfect English, some others can't speak English at all. Therefore, communication was sometimes a bit



Figure 3: The Uni-restaurant



Figure 4: Working with Soil in Minas Gerais

difficult (since I don't speak Portuguese), but people are so nice and try to interact somehow with Google translator or with sign language that you understand each other in the end. I could go to the uni restaurant every day and get food there for free, even breakfast, which was really comfortable for me, because I didn't had to cook during the week at all. The atmosphere at UNICAMP is very alternative, open and you quickly meet a lot of Brazilian students to hang out at UNICAMP together. In the biogas lab, I learned how to make biogas from every waste product imaginable. I learned methods to monitor biogas production and its chemical analysis and quantification.

People in Brazil are extremely spontaneous and flexible, which is admirable on one hand, but on the other hand I also encountered problems. It was absolutely not organized what my job was, which is why after the initial exuberant welcome I found myself without any concrete work. I became more and more frustrated, because even after weeks nobody knew what to give me to work on. And here comes another tip from me: If you really want to learn something professionally during your internship in Brazil, you have to struggle a bit. It took me about 3 weeks of explaining over and over again, first in a friendly way and then more vehemently, that I really want to work and am here to do something and not just to watch. In the end, I went to the professor himself, and explained that I was dissatisfied with my work because I wasn't being challenged enough. The fact that I actively spoke up was met with surprise, but a positive response, and eventually I was allowed to move to another lab where there was more work for me to do. From that point on, my internship was an absolute dream. I immediately established a very nice relationship with my new colleagues, and after a few days I was even allowed to go on a one-week work trip to another state (Minas Gerais). There we took soil samples on a sugar cane plantation, and later examined these samples in the laboratory for their degree of compaction, water capacity, and quality in terms of fertility. All in all, I saw many things during the internship that improved my scientific and technical understanding.

Personal aspect

I think the personal aspect of my entire stay in Brazil was the most important of all. In Brazil, so many things didn't quite go according to plan, so I was forced to find myself in new and unfamiliar situations again and again. However, I had to realize that this was not a bad thing at all, because some solution was always found spontaneously. I think we Germans are very perfectionistic, which sometimes blocks us from being brave and experiencing things. I learned to be more open and relaxed, and I think I can handle new and unfamiliar situations a little better in the future.

Safety in Brazil

Before I traveled to Brazil, of course I was aware of how unsafe and dangerous Brazil is in parts. I do not want to deny that. However, I still had a false image of Brazil. The internet sometimes suggests that you can hardly move freely and that you have to be constantly afraid of being robbed or mugged. That is not so. BUT: You always have to inform yourself when you go where. I traveled around Brazil for three weeks after my internship, including the north, which is even poorer, and more crime-ridden, than the South. Before I booked a hostel, I always checked to see if it was a safe neighborhood. Before I walked somewhere, I always googled at what time, and whether it is advisable to walk there at all. It also makes sense to remember the route roughly in your head, so that you don't have to have your cell phone in your hand the whole time. This can be stolen on busy streets. If you travel longer distances with all your luggage, you should also take a security pack hidden underneath your t shirt with you to hide your passport and a credit card, so that you are not left without everything in an emergency. In

addition, you should always have data volume on the SIM card, so that you can call an Uber in an emergency. All this is not meant to scare you, but rather to encourage you. As long as you do not move blindly, Brazil is a very great country to travel. I saw and experienced so much that stays with me for life. And I almost never felt unsafe in Brazil.

Whenever you have the chance, take it, and move to another country for an internship. It's a great experience and I would recommend it o everyone!



Figure 5: Hiking Tour to Pedro Grande, Atibaia



Figure 6: Rio de Janeiro