

# BRAZIL

*“Drink coconut milk by the sea, sleep on hammocks, play cards until midnight, dance until your feet hurt and then dance some more, ride atop a horse, meet people you would never have dreamed of meeting, eat rice and beans until you burst, live and learn the Brazilian culture like you are one of them. Leave your eyes open, never judge before you try, become one of the people, make new friends. Accents, verb conjugations, r that sounds like h, this is what makes up the beautiful language of Portuguese. It will come to each and everyone, but for now enjoy your surroundings and join in the fiesta.”*

*Emily Gifford, participant from the U.S., 2002/03*

Everyone knows two facts about Brazil. First, it is home to the Amazonian rainforest, a jungle so vast and dense that much of it remains unexplored, with plants and animals that are likewise undiscovered. Second, Brazil's nationwide five-day Carnival, an annual festivity ending on Ash Wednesday, is one of the world's most jubilant, uninhibited public celebrations, especially in the big cities. In fact, Carnival's extravagant and detailed floats and costumes are emblematic of Brazilians, who work as hard as they party, who frown on showing anger or disagreement in public, and who, rich or poor, believe that happy times spent with family and friends are, in the final analysis, the most rewarding pursuits of all.

## **AFS & Your Experience**

AFS Brazil has been in existence since 1956. AFS volunteers in 85 chapters across the country work hard year-round to provide you with the most satisfying intercultural experience possible. During the school year, AFS Brazil hosts nearly 300 AFSers from as many as 33 countries.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural exchange. Even before leaving your home country you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have an incredible experience abroad.

## **Landing in Brazil**

Your flight will arrive in San Paulo, Brazil's largest city. After the plane lands and you collect your baggage, you and your fellow AFSers will pass through customs and be met by AFS Brazil staff and volunteers.

## **Arrival Orientation**

The national Arrival Orientation is normally held at a country inn during your first weekend in Brazil. You and your fellow participants will gather at the airport and be taken by bus to the orientation site, approximately 45 minutes away. The main goal of the national Arrival Orientation is to share information and review expectations. In order to allow a diverse group to communicate more effectively, the orientation will be held in English.

## **Living in Brazil**

### **Lifestyle and Family Living**

Brazilians are generally affectionate and expressive with close-knit families. In the typical Brazilian family, the wife usually has a job, supervises the children and manages the household while the husband is involved with work outside the home. Children are expected to help with the household chores. Families are protective of the children, particularly the girls. For example, teenage boys have more liberal curfews than their sisters. Teenagers are expected to keep their parents informed of their activities, such as when they go out and where they are going. Brazilian host families, like AFS host families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family life. Students may be placed in any region in Brazil, mostly with middle-class families.

### **Dress and Appearance**

Brazilians like to wear European fashions and are very style-conscious. However, teens prefer casual clothing. Students are encouraged to bring one or two nice outfits for special occasions (dress shirts and ties for men, dresses or skirts and blouses for women). If you are placed in São Paulo or the southern regions of Brazil, you

will need warm clothing for the winter months. Most schools require students to wear uniforms. Uniforms consist of jeans, tennis shoes and a school T-shirt (sold in Brazil for approximately US \$15).

### **Diet and Meals**

In Brazil, eating well means eating a lot. Most Brazilians eat two large meals a day which are lunch and dinner. Breakfast is quick and light.

Meal times are important family gatherings, and all members of the family are expected to be present unless they have excused themselves in advance. The staples of the Brazilian diet are *arroz* (white rice), *feijão* (beans) and *farofa* (manioc flour), also called *farinha*. These are usually served with *carne* (beef), *carne de porco* (pork), *frango* (chicken) or *peixe* (fish), and lettuce and tomato salad. Barbecued meat is very popular, and traditional foods also include African-influenced fish and chicken stews. *Feijoada*, the national dish, is a bean dish prepared with air-dried beef, smoked tongue, pig's ears and tails, garlic and chili peppers. Over this is added pulverized *farofa*, and the whole dish is garnished with collard greens and slices of orange.

A variety of fruit and vegetables are available throughout the year. It is extremely difficult to place vegetarians. In Brazil it is considered inappropriate for individuals to request special foods, to prepare separate food for themselves or to raid the refrigerator.

### **School**

Brazil has both public and private schools. AFSers can be placed in either kind of high school in the equivalent of second-to-last year with classmates ages 15 to 17 years old. Students attend classes in either the morning or the afternoon. Ten or eleven subjects are offered such as Portuguese and Brazilian literature, chemistry, physics and biology, math, geography, Brazilian and world history and physical education. Some courses are elective, such as languages, art and cooking. Students are responsible for presenting group research and are expected to get involved in class activities. Some schools may provide a letter of attendance and a report card if students attend classes regularly and pass the examinations.

### **Teen Life**

Some, but not all, schools offer extracurricular activities like sports and crafts clubs. Getting involved in local community organizations is a great way to meet people and make friends. Because of the tropical climate, outdoor activities are common. Soccer is the national sport of Brazil, now played by girls as well as boys. Traditional dances, festivals and street parades are popular and vary from region to region. Carnival is the most famous festival in Brazil, occurring between mid February and early March. On weekends, Brazilian teens like to get together with friends in each other's homes, go to movies or hang out in the town square or a favorite local café.

### **AFS Activities**

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS Brazil will provide you with several others. AFS orientations are a chance for participants to join together (often for a weekend or for a few days) to talk about both expectations for the future program and past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also allowing participants to share their own points of view. AFS orientations are very social, interactive and educational; bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experience.

Local chapters of AFS Brazil may arrange events such as informal gatherings, weekend excursions and picnics. There will be a regional orientation about six weeks after your arrival orientation. There may also be short-term exchanges in a different part of Brazil. Each year, there are four optional trips scheduled that you may be able to join for an additional fee: two weeks to the Amazon and into the jungle in May (approximately US\$1050); to the Northeast for approximately four weeks in January or July, including Brasilia, inland colonial areas and coastline (approximately US\$1,100); to Iguazu Falls for a week at Easter break (approx. US\$250); and to Pantanal-Bonito for approximately one week in October (approx. US\$320). So that their initial adaptation process is not disrupted, participants are not allowed to join the optional trips during the first four months of their stays. Last, but definitely not least, is the so-called End-of-Stay. You will get together with other AFSers right before you return home. The End-of-Stay is about looking back at your exchange and sharing memories with other AFSers. It is also about thinking of the future.

## Travel

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in Brazil, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you will have many opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization, or local chapter of AFS Brazil. We strongly discourage travelling on your own or with friends.

## Spending Money

AFS recommends that you bring some amount in cash and a debit card so that you can access money as you need. We believe US\$150 per month will cover your personal expenses, apart from the optional trips. Do not expect to open a bank account in Brazil, as it's difficult for minors and foreigners. Host families are asked to pay only for ordinary family events in which you are expected to participate. When you do things such as shopping for yourself or going out with friends, the related expenses are your responsibility.

Spending more than your peers and family may create a distance between you and them.

## Safety and Support

Brazil is a relatively safe country and you will be fine if you use all the precautions you use in your home country.

During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as a Brazilian. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has two rules: no driving and no use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes. Any student who violates either of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS Brazil may have additional rules.

## Health Precautions

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for Brazil (which you can get from your government or easily find on the Internet) with your personal doctor, to determine what is best for you and your personal needs.

If you require any medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant your medical expenses are covered for illness or accident injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

## Documents

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices in your region and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. It is your responsibility to obtain your visa and pay the fees. However, AFS will let you know how to proceed and will provide you with the documents you need to apply for the visa.

## Program Prices

All participants are required to pay participation fee **and** do a mandatory fundraising. To get further information, please visit our website [www.afscanada.org](http://www.afscanada.org) or contact us.

The program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport and visa fees,

required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

## **Country Information**

### **Geography and Climate**

Brazil is located in South America, on the equator line, and it borders ten countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela) for a total of 14,691 km (9,000 mi), and the Atlantic Ocean with a total coastline of 7,491 km (4,500 mi).

From the Amazon basin in the north and west to the Brazilian Highlands in the Southeast, Brazil's topography is quite diverse. The Amazon River system carries more water to the ocean than any other river system in the world. It is navigable for its entire 3,200 km (2000 mi) trip within Brazil.

The Brazilian Highlands and plateau generally average less than 1220 m (4000 feet) but the highest point in Brazil is Pico de Neblina at 3014 m (9888 feet). Extensive uplands lie in the Southeast and drop off quickly at the Atlantic Coast. Much of the coast is composed of the Great Escarpment which looks like a wall from the ocean.

The climate varies from arid scrubland in the interior to the impassable tropical rainforests of the northerly Amazon jungle and the tropical eastern coastal beaches. The south is more temperate. Rainy seasons occur from January to April in the north, April to July in the Northeast and November to March in the Rio and São Paulo area. The Amazon basin, occupying more than sixty percent of the entire country, receives more than about 200 cm (80 inches) of rain a year in some areas. Almost all of Brazil is humid has either a tropical or subtropical climate. Brazil's rainy season occurs during the summer months. Eastern Brazil suffers from regular drought. There is little seismic or volcanic activity due to Brazil's position near the center of the South American Plate.

### **Population**

The population numbers about 160 million; Brasilia is the capital of Brazil and São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are Brazil's largest cities, respectively. Brazil's population is largely made up of people of European (55%), American Indian and African descent. Brazil has the largest population of people of Japanese descent outside of Japan.

### **Language**

Portuguese is the official language of Brazil. English is widely understood. Amerindian tribes living on reservations speak their own languages.

### **Government**

Brazil is a federal democracy with three branches of government: executive, legislative and judiciary. The National Congress is composed of two houses, the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate.

### **Religion**

Although officially most of the population (95%) is Roman Catholic, Brazilians are used to and believe in a great variety of beliefs. Still, Christianity is the most widespread religion. Many families attend weekly services, and the youth religious movement is getting stronger.

## **Launching Your AFS Experience**

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that those students who prepare prior to leaving have the best experience. In order to get yourself ready, first make every effort to learn some key Portuguese words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the language.

To familiarize yourself further with life in Brazil, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about Brazil and its culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to Brazil. This person will be an excellent resource to you regarding living as a Brazilian. If you do not

know any alumni, please contact your local volunteer or AFS Interculture Canada office. Also, AFS Brazil will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information.

Brazilians will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

### Curiously Brazilian

- ☀ Brazil has the biggest Carnival parade in the world where thousands of samba schools from all over the world compete.
- ☀ When the Spanish explorers discovered the river through what is now Brazil in the 1500s, they were attacked by women warriors. The explorers remembered a Greek legend about women warriors called Amazons. The explorers named the river after them.
- ☀ The Amazon forest is also known as the “Lung of the Earth.”
- ☀ Brazil is the only country in the New World to have been the seat of government for a European country.
- ☀ In December 2001, Brazil produced a scented postage stamp to promote its coffee—the smell was intended to last between three and five years.

### How to Apply

You first have to fill out the Preliminary Application form that you can find on our website at [www.afscanada.org](http://www.afscanada.org). If you don't have access to Internet, call us at (514) 288-3282 or 1-800-361-7248 and we will send you the document by mail.

### Quick Facts

Student age (upon arrival)	16 years to 18 years	
Country data	Size	8,511,965 km <sup>2</sup> (3,319,666 mi <sup>2</sup> )
	Population	160,737,489
	Official language	Portuguese
	Government	Federal republic
	Currency	1 real (R\$) = 100 centavos
Useful website	<a href="http://www.umich.edu/~port150/">http://www.umich.edu/~port150/</a>	
AFS Brazil website	<a href="http://www.afs.org.br/">http://www.afs.org.br/</a>	