

# BRAZIL

*“Today I consider myself as the richest person in the world, because now I've got two families, which I live in and love, and the world has become my home. This extra-lesson at the school-of-life has taught me more than anybody or anything could ever teach me. Everyone should use this unique opportunity to get to know the world better.” Jane Neugebauer, participant from Germany, 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, containing plants and animals that are likewise undiscovered. Second, Brazil's nation-wide five-day Carnaval, an annual festivity ending on Ash Wednesday, is one of the world's most jubilant, uninhibited public celebrations, especially in the country's big cities. In fact, Carnaval'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.

## **Community Service Program**

AFS's Community Service program gives you the opportunity to share in and contribute to the life of a community in Brazil by living and working alongside its members in a community-based service organization. At the organization, you will be asked to pitch in and offer assistance in whatever capacity might be needed and to share the knowledge and experience you have gained from your home culture in the process. No one expects you to be an expert with all the answers to local problems or the ability to change local conditions. Rather, you are expected to be a willing participant in a process of mutual discovery. This experience will present you with innumerable learning opportunities both personally and professionally.

Worldwide, AFS Community Service program participants contribute their talents and energies to a variety of social programs that range from protecting the environment to teaching children or adults, from assisting the elderly and the disabled to defending human rights, from enhancing public health to helping local businesses become established.

Past participants in Brazil have been active in social projects working with street children, in orphanages and in schools. Some participants have been involved in human rights and health organizations. However, all specifics—including assignments, orientations, logistics and activities—vary depending on the program cycle.

## **AFS & your experience**

AFS Brazil has been in existence since 1956. AFS volunteers in 83 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.

## **Orientations**

AFS provides a one-day cultural orientation to arriving participants. This is followed by two weeks of instruction in Portuguese for participants who do not already have a basic knowledge of the language.

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS Brazil will provide you with several others. AFS orientations offer participants a chance to meet for several days and talk about expectations for the future program and past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions also provide language training as well as new information and ways of looking at things, while also allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational, bringing together people from

many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experiences while preparing them to handle their community service assignments.

Just before departure, AFS Brazil provides an End-of-Stay orientation that helps participants assess their experiences and prepare for the return home.

## **Living in Brazil**

### **Living arrangements**

Some participants in AFS Community Service programs live with local families, sharing their daily lives, their meals and perhaps a host sibling's bedroom. Other participants live where their community service organization conducts its business. Still others live in rooms provided elsewhere by their local service organizations.

### **Typical day**

Participants spend the day at their community service organizations performing various activities according to the project. The rest of the day is free for the participants to interact with their host family members.

### **Diet and Meals**

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

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, consists of beans 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. Participants who live with a family should be aware that mealtimes are important family gatherings, and all family members are expected to be present unless they have excused themselves in advance. Also, in Brazil it is considered inappropriate for individuals to request special foods, to prepare separate food for themselves or to raid the refrigerator.

### **Dress and Appearance**

The dress code is casual: tennis shoes, jeans and T-shirts for almost every occasion.

### **Activities**

Local chapters plan activities that vary from chapter to chapter. Volunteers tend to leave community service participants relatively free, but those who want to get more involved with AFS should show their interest, which will certainly be highly appreciated.

### **Health Precautions**

AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for Brazil (which you can get from your government or find easily on the Internet) with your doctor at home, 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 injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

### **Safety and Support**

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.

## Travel

AFS's Community Service programs allow participants to travel on their own through their host countries, typically for a week or more, to explore and absorb each country's cultural diversity. However, if a trip conflicts with a community service organization's needs, participants are urged to stay and help the organization.

## 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, 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 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 (2,000 mi) length within Brazil.

The Brazilian Highlands and plateaus generally average less than 1,220 m (4,000 feet), but the highest point in Brazil is Pico de Neblina at 3,014 m (9,888 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 60% of the country, receives more than about 200 cm (80 inches) of rain a year in some areas. Almost all of Brazil is humid and has either a tropical or subtropical climate. 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 made up largely of people of European (55%), Amerindian and African descent. Brazil has the largest population of people of Japanese descent outside 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 religions. Christian religions are the most important and popular. Many families attend weekly religious services, and the youth religious movement is getting stronger.

## Launching your AFS experience

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that if you prepare prior to leaving, you will have the best experience.

Make every effort to improve your Portuguese language skills before departure. Then, to familiarize yourself with life in Brazil, visit your local library or search the Internet. AFS International's website, AFS.org, provides links to websites for each participating country.

Although every participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to Brazil. This veteran will be an excellent resource regarding living and working in Brazil. If you do not know a veteran, please contact your local AFS volunteer or AFS Interculture Canada office.

In addition, AFS will provide you with essential information about your host country to prepare you for immersion in a new and exciting culture.

Finally, Brazilians will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised how much they already know about your country's history and politics. Therefore, you will find it helpful to be informed about current events in your home community and country.

## 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

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>	