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Degree Program at TAU: B.A

Host University: FGV EAESP

Exchange term: Spring semester (5 Months)

General Experience

I will start by saying that I highly recommend the exchange program. It is a special experience both personally and academically. I am very happy I chose Brazil for my exchange. It is an amazing country; it is huge and has so many beautiful places to see. The majority of Brazilians does not speak English. Therefore, it's important to learn at least basic Portuguese. However, Brazilians in general are very kind people and will always try to help you in any way they can, even with a language barrier.

Sao Paulo is an incredible city. There is always something going on in the city. It has a diverse nightlife, a big art scene and an amazing culinary scene. It also has big beautiful parks where you can relax and forget that you are in the biggest city in South America! Sundays are amazing in the city. The main street is closed for cars and you can walk and enjoy street shows, street food and shopping. Sunday is also the day to enjoy some authentic Samba parties.

Regarding safety, it is true that Sao Paulo can be unsafe, but I believe most cases of robbery can be avoided by taking precaution steps, such as not walking with your phone in your hand, taking Ubers instead of walking at night and waiting for Ubers inside places

or on crowded streets. The reason why many people are robbed is because intuitively we don't think about these things, but in Sao Paulo you should be aware all the time.

Academic experience

The university is very nice. It is located in a relatively safe area (at night you should still be careful). The university is quite small and has only one building. Still, you can find several cafeterias that offer diverse options for food in a fair price and a nice garden to chill between classes.

The students there are very friendly and all speak English. The university assigns a "buddy" to each exchange student. These students are very nice and helpful. Use their help! Many of my friends ended up being close friends with their buddies.

Moreover, the university offers many programs in which you can take part during the semester. Some examples are a drumming group, sports teams and various volunteering programs. Joining one of these programs allows you to meet new people and experience the Brazilian student lifestyle. You can also get help from the university in finding internships.

The university offers some interesting classes for exchange students, in which you can learn things you would not normally learn. Most classes are quite demanding during the semester. They require reading, assignments, projects and presentation throughout the semester. I have taken the following courses:

The Brazilian economy: The course focuses on economic changes throughout Brazil's history. It is not the classic business course, but it is interesting. The most interesting part of the course was the debates and student presentations about economic issues in Brazil. There are no regular assignments, only preparation for the debates.

Global corruption: The class discusses cases of corruption around the world. The course is quite interesting. Class is built as a discussion and not as a lecture. The professor requires participation so it is important to read the cases before class. Other than that, the class is not too demanding.

Marketing for low-income consumers: The most interesting course I have taken, but also the most demanding one. The class requires regular readings and assignments and a final project (similar to the basic marketing course project). The course discusses cases of successful retailers around the world and includes several field trips to retail stores in Sao Paulo.

Accommodation

The university mostly offers accommodation options on its website and on the exchange Facebook page. I have some friends who decided to look for an apartment after arriving to Brazil. It is possible, but I recommend finding a place close to university before arriving. I do not recommend the university's dorms. It is quite expensive and the apartments are not worth it. These are best neighborhoods to live in Sao Paulo:

Bela Vista. FGV is located in that neighborhood. The neighborhood is nice and has many restaurants, markets and shops. It is mostly safe, but some parts of it are less. My experience in the neighborhood was very good. I recommend living in that neighborhood if the apartment is up to 10 minutes walk from the university and close to Avenida Paulista (the main street, very safe).

Jardim Paulista. The safest neighborhood around the university, but also the most expensive one. The neighborhood has many "posh" restaurants and cafes and some bars.

Vila Madalena/Pinheiros. These are the cool neighborhoods of Sao Paulo, where you can find most of the nightlife and many restaurants and cafes. Most of the street there are quite safe as well. However, these neighborhoods are farther away from FGV and require a metro to university.

Transportation:

Metro works very well in most parts of the city. Buses are also not bad. If you don't live in a walking distance from FGV you deserve a discount for public transportation. At night, the best option is Uber. It is quite cheap and safer than a random taxi.

Expenses:

Brazil is not cheap at all. You should not plan your budget as if you are going to any South American country.

Rent in the good neighborhoods of Sao Paulo is similar to Tel Aviv. The prices vary between 1200 (very small room in a shared apartment) to 2300 ILS.

Groceries are a bit cheaper than in Israel, but the difference is not significant. Restaurants are generally cheaper, but it also depends what you choose to eat. Typical Brazilian restaurants are cheap, whereas other types of food are closer to the prices in Israel.

Nightlife is not cheap either. Beer and Caipirinhas are cheap in bars. Clubs mostly cover the entrance and charge a lot for alcohol. However, there are many parties organized by different universities along the semester. I find it the cheapest, most fun way to go out.

Another significant expense to consider is traveling in Brazil. The country is huge and some trips require flights. A good option to make flights cheaper is having a CPF (a national insurance number). The process of getting a CPF number is quite easy and it allows you to book flights in Brazilian websites that offer the same tickets for almost half the price.

Visa:

Visa process in Israel is long and tiring. You have to bring many documents and once you get to the embassy, they might ask you to replace some of them. I had many problems with my documents and had to return to the embassy several times. It took me about 3 months to get my visa and I got it eventually on the day of my flight. For that reason, I recommend starting the process as soon as possible.

Once in Brazil, you have to register in the federal police. Bureaucracy in Brazil is tough, so make sure you have everything they require before you go there. I had a problem with my birth certificate because they wanted the last name to appear next to each name in the certificate. In order to avoid that, if your last name appears in your birth certificate only once and does not appear next to your parents' first names, bring any kind of formal document or signed declaration stating your and your parents' full names.

Health insurance:

The embassy and FGV require a health insurance. Make sure you get a good one that covers everything. Hopefully you won't have to use it, but some of my friends had to go to private expensive hospitals, so it is important to have a good insurance.