

FGV-EAESP

(Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo da Fundação Getulio Vargas)



By Michael Katina

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I studied and lived, aug.-dec. 2010, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, as part of my MBA program at the Recanati Graduate School of Business Administration at Tel Aviv University. FGV (Fundacao Getulio Vargas) is one of the most respectable academic institutions and economic research center not only in Brazil but throughout all South America, and offer a wide range of degrees, spanning from undergraduate- to Phd-level. The school has a very well-regarded MBA program in Portuguese but since my Portuguese was virtually non-existent upon start, I had to opt for the English-taught classes, together with other exchange student and some Brazilian students. Most of the courses offered in English were general business or economics courses, however, what appealed to me most were the courses about the Brazilian Economy, Macro Economy in Emerging Markets, and Business Strategy in Low-Income population. These were all excellent courses and taught by very knowledgeable professors. It was especially interesting to study the Brazilian economy in detail and to understand the history behind Brazil's economic and social policies and its transformation for the past 10 years. In total I took 7 courses throughout the semester, which is divided into two parts with a one-week break in between. All coursework and evaluation are based on group assignments, weekly home-works, and a final exam, there is also a participation grade based on attendance and class discussions. The university staff is very helpful, and although the language barrier is a clear obstacle, most students speak good English. FGV is also hosting numerous seminars and lectures, bringing together prominent Brazilian- and international business leader and politicians, though most in Portuguese, most events are very interesting and compelling. The school also provides a 30 hours Intensive Portuguese Course for free, which I would strongly recommend since it is very hard to get around in Brazil without some basic knowledge in Portuguese. The FGV campus is perfectly located behind Avenida Paulista, which is close to the up-scale Jardins neighbourhood, one of the safest neighborhoods in Sao Paulo and a vibrant place full of restaurants, bars, and shopping malls. FGV has an International Relations Office, and even though the administration proved to be somewhat bureaucratic and inefficient, they will satisfy all your inquiries and assist you on both

practical and academic matters. The FGV student service also arranges all kinds of activities for the exchange students, especially at the beginning of the semester.

Visa requirements

Prior to departure it is necessary to obtain a student visa from the Brazilian Embassy, this is required by all non-Brazilian nationals wishing to stay in the country for more than one month. FGV will assist and provide all necessary documents in order to facilitate the procedure. The Brazilian bureaucracy can be very tedious so it is important to obtain all the required documents well in advance, including health insurance, proof of financial backings during the stay and Letter of Acceptance from FGV. Upon arrival FGV staff will serve as your contact person and help you to register your stay at the Federal Police in Sao Paulo

Sao Paulo

Sao Paulo is the engine not only of Brazil, but of whole South America. It is considered as South America's banking, industrial and cultural capital. An immense city of 20 million people, Sao Paulo is the third largest metropolis in the world. You will probably only visit one tenth of the city since many peripheral neighborhoods consists of Favelas (slum) and areas which are more dangerous. Attractive places of interest are clustered between the historic center (Down town) and Avenida Paulista, Itaim Bibi, Villa Madaleina, Morumbi etc. Sao Paulo is also home to the largest Japanese community, the Japanese neighborhood is called Liberdade and is an attraction to visit, outside Japan (approx 1.5 mln) as well as Lebanese community outside Lebanon (approx. 900 000). There are also some 130,000 jews in Sao Paulo, the biggest community in South America after Buenos Aires.



What to do, where to eat, walk, visit, party?

There are so many things and events taking place in Sao Paulo, such as the Carnival (in February), various Music-, Art- Film- and Fashion- , festivals and exhibitions throughout the year. During the Sao Paulo Formula 1 Grand Prix in October, the city virtually turns to a moving dance floor with parties everywhere. The city has 53 parks and in Ibirapuera, the biggest, which is comparable to Central Park in NY, there are plenty of activities every day and very crowded during the weekends. An attractions is also to pass by the legendary Pacembu Stadium to watch a home game of one of Sao Paulo's soccer team; Palmeiras, Sao Paulo or Santos. Another core activity in Sao Paulo is dining- a truly gastronomical experience every time- , Sao Paulo features more than 50 nationalities in its cuisine and almost 13 000 restaurants, with an over representation of Japanese

and Italian ones. The Brazilian cuisine is also famous – Feijoada (Brazil's national dish, black bean stew with great variety of meat etc.) is eaten on Wednesdays and Saturdays, but the highlight is the Brazilian barbecue restaurant – Churrascorias – where you will indulge yourself with the finest meat and salad buffet that this world has to behold. Two words of caution; make sure you are really hungry before, cause you probably have not seen that much food in your whole life, and normally you pay a fixed price to eat as much as your capacity allow you; Secondly; eat slowly, otherwise you will regret you went there in the first place.

As for the Sao Paulo nightlife, it even beats Tel Aviv, which tells quite a lot. There are crowded taverns and bars everywhere from the most chic to the simplest, and for those who enjoys samba to those fancying mega discos, clubs, and techno. Many bars and clubs charge quite hefty entrance fees, everything from R\$50-R\$200 (R\$1≈2 shekels), which serve as a selection method, but then free drinks are included. As for shopping, Sao Paulo is home to 66 shopping malls (!), the most famous in South America, shopping Iguatemi, and the super-upscale Daslu where elite shoppers arrive in private helicopters. By the way, Sao Paulo has more helicopter traffic than any other city in the world, more than 300 helicopters versus a mere 60 in New York. But no worries, there are also dozens of specialty- and high street shopping for the regular guy, Oscar Frerie is a very popular high street and excellent people-watcher stroke located in Jardins, with plenty of cafés, bars, shops (among others, the famous Havaianas flag-ship store)

Transportation

The Sao Paulo traffic is a nightmare and the best way to get around is a combination of walking and the metro. Alternatively, the plentiful taxis are both cheap and safe. City buses are also good and, unless you are in a hurry, I would recommend the bus since the metro lines have limited reach in the center of the city. Travelling around in Brazil is either done by air, relatively cheap, or by bus. Brazil is famous for its inter-state bus connections, the buses are very comfortable and safe to travel with. The only problem is the vast distances, since Brazil is a huge country, the 5th largest in the world. The Tiete Bus terminal, located in the north of the city serves more than 600 locations in Brazil, as well as Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile and Argentina. The bus to Rio takes 5-6 hour, costs between 50-100 shekels, and is great and comfortable, I took it several times.

Housing

I had the privilege to live at my friends flat, who happened to live close to FGV, in the Jardim neighborhood. However, many of my class mates rented flats close to the school, which is considered a friendly and safe area. The best way is to contact the International Relations Office at FGV for information. They will be able to arrange flat-sharing accommodation to reasonable rents. There are also a wide range of Apartment Hotels and hostels where you can stay upon arrival in Sao Paulo. This one is located right next to FGV www.wallstreet.com.br and many students stayed there the first couple of days. Other recommended neighborhoods are Itaim Bibi, Villa Madaleina, Villa Olimpia and Higienopolis (the 'Jewish neighborhood').

Practical Information and lifestyle

Sao Paulo is a gigantic city and it is important to have a good head on the shoulders. Although Brazil's economy is booming and the political stability is improving, the poverty (especially in Northern Brazil and also more visible in Rio than in Sao Paulo) is still lingering. Brazil has many very wealthy individuals but there many, many more poor, an estimated 40% of the population. Yet, Brazil is not a poor country, on the contrary, it is a very rich country, huge natural resources and many great industries, however unfair wealth distribution, corruption and bad political governance have historically been very detrimental to the country's economic and social development. Nevertheless, a lot of progress is under way and the Brazilian economy has never been that booming as it is right now. The inflection point started when ex-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso introduced the Real Plan in the beginning of the 90s, inflation declined, economic reforms and a more progressive social welfare support to the poor was introduced. The former president Lula continued with reforms and large-scale poverty reduction, and a growing middle class coupled with the commodity boom have put Brazil as a major contender to the world's top economies; and this is only the beginning. Today, everybody wants to be in Brazil, virtually all MNCs wants to be there, the market is enormous and Brazilian's have started to spend massively, the banking system is healthy and the lifestyle of the average Brazilian is slowly increasing.

However, there is a huge rift separating rich from the poor. The wealthiest send their kids to private schools and abroad to university. Maids are very common – even among middle-class Brazilians – and some families have chauffeurs and cooks. Depending on where one lives in the country, crime and gang violence is likely to be of high concern. At the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid are people living in favelas, Rocina, South America's 'biggest and most 'famous' is in Rio, where occasional gun battles between police and rival gangs is a danger to the everyday life. But again, don't be too concerned about it as long as you are careful. Try to not flash with money in the streets or walk around with a big gold rolex on your wrist, or walk alone in the night in deprived neighborhoods.

Carnival in Rio de Janeiro



The Brazilian bureaucracy can be a nightmare and it is easy to get the feeling that the Brazilians are working in slow-motion. Don't be surprised if you encounter inefficient service, especially outside Sao Paulo; the motto goes like, 'first have fun and then work'. Anyone who lives in Brazil must possess a great deal of patience. Without exaggeration, Brazilians are the most happy people in the world, and you will probably encounter that many smiling people in the streets as in Brazil, so simply make sure to smile back and raise your thumb (Brazilian expression that everything is fine).

All major mobile phone operators have a pre-paid/pay-as-you-go service, but you must be aware that it is very expensive to call (among the highest in the world). Banks are everywhere and it works fine to withdraw money with your international credit cards, just watch behind your back when leaving the bank.

BRAZIL

Samba, Caipirinha, Carnaval, Beaches, Rainforest, Biodiversity, Football, Commodities Exporter, Booming Economy, Large income inequalities, Churrascarias (Barbecued-meat restaurants), Beautiful girls, Beautiful nature....

Must visits include Rio de Janeiro, Salvador de Bahia, Foz de Iguazu, Florianopolis, the Amazon; but there are many, many more places to explore in Brazil, you just have to pick and choose. Finally, no worries about finding the best beaches in Brazil; The country posses a 7,491 km long coastline with virtually endless stunning beaches.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Can´t wait to get back to Brazil again!

