



Sarah

from

Ferus-Elora

to Brazil

Brazil is Family Friends & Food

I arrived in Brazil on July 27th and have been here for three and a half months already. Time is flying by. I've travelled to many countries already in my life, but Brazil is one of the most beautiful and welcoming countries I've ever been to.

I am living in a small city called Jaragua do Sul, Santa Catarina. I was welcomed with open arms and big hugs and kisses when I first arrived in Brazil. It took roughly twenty two hours from airport to airport for me to finally get here. It felt more like twenty two days as I was just so excited to start my year here and meet everyone. I had been talking with my first host family before I came to Brazil, and they all seemed so sweet and excited to have me coming to their house. On my last flight before coming into the airport where my host family was meeting me, there was actually one of the most famous reggae singers on my plane. I didn't know who he was, but thanks to my Rotary blazer and the pins always falling off, Armandinho touched my pins!

The drive back to my house consisted of my host family trying to talk to me and get to know me with me staring out the window because it was so beautiful outside (plus I didn't understand a word they were saying). I really wanted to spend time with my host family and get to know them all since they all seemed so sweet, but I was still very tired from my journey.

We all sat in the living room and tried to talk, but eventually I fell asleep on the couch and woke up to my whole family staring at me.

Brazilians love to hug and kiss, so everywhere I went, especially since they knew I was an exchange student, they gave me hugs and kisses. This was a little strange for me at first and took some adjusting and getting used to, but now it's part of my everyday life. I felt like a celebrity when I first came here. People always wanted to talk to me, be my friend, invite me to parties and take pictures with me. Every Brazilian I've ever met is very affectionate and needs to feel affection. Before coming to Brazil, I read that Brazilians are known to be the most helpful people ever, which I believe to be true. Anything you need, they are glad to help you out.

If there are three things that I've noticed that Brazilians love, its their barbecues, their families, and their parties.

If you ask any Brazilian that is on exchange what food they miss, they will say their barbecues. I completely understand why because their barbecue is delicious. Some typical Brazilian foods are black beans and rice, meat, and bread.

Family is very important to people here. Many Brazilians have tattoos, and most of the time when you ask what the significance of their tattoo is, its for their family.

Lastly, the parties. There will always be a party every weekend. Here, when a girl turns 15, it is like a "sweet sixteen" for us. So whether it's a girl's 15th birthday party, a wedding, a hangout with your friends, or a concert, I am always invited to a party.

When I first arrived here, it was still "winter". It was roughly 20 degrees my first day here, which is considered a nice day of summer in Canada. Now that it is getting warmer (average of 30 degrees), I wear flip flops every day and sweat like crazy while people are wearing pants and a sweater. Apparently in the summer, it gets up to 40 degrees most days, and I live in one of the most southern states of Brazil.

I start school at 7:30am and finish at 12:40. I have 6 classes a day that consist of 50 minutes each, with one 20 minute break in between. I go to school with one other exchange student, who is a boy from France, and he has become one of my closest friends here.

There are only three rotary exchange inbounds in my city, but we have 27 inbounds in my district. In my city, it is me, Baptiste from France, and Sara from Poland. Each week, we all have Portuguese class together with a private teacher provided by our Rotary club here. The classes have been helping a lot! The language hasn't been super hard to learn because I know French and many words are similar. The hardest thing for me is

getting the correct conjugation of words. I can understand most of what people say and I can write very well, but speaking for me is hard. I am very shy to speak because they always laugh and say how cute I am with my accent. Also, many people I know speak English, so it is hard to get into the habit of only speaking in Portuguese.

When I'm not at school, I spend my time with my friends in the centre, at my friend's house by the pool, at parties, dancing, drawing, or just hanging out with my host family. I have been with this host family for the whole time so far, and I will be changing right before the big north-east trip in January.

My rotary club here is very involved with the community which I love! I love volunteer work. So far, we have had a fundraiser for breast cancer, I've painted faces at a big German festival, and have been to many more events of theirs.

I go to the meetings every week, unless they don't have a meeting scheduled for that day.

All in all, I've been keeping very busy and loving each and every day here. Obviously sometimes I get that homesick feeling and have some struggles here and there, but I'm so happy to call this place my home for the year. My first host family has been amazing and are becoming my real family now, especially my host sister. I could go on and on about everything here and how amazing this exchange program is and how blessed I feel to be here.

Beijos (kisses)

Sarah