



Liam

from Mississauga West
to
Brazil

“Obrigado Brasil”

As your Rotary Youth Exchange year comes to an end, you start to notice how much has happened within the past few months of your life; how many people you have met and how much you yourself have changed. However, I think what has really stuck out to me over these past months is how lucky/fortunate I am to have this opportunity. Despite facing challenges, they have become overshadowed by travel in my case. Throughout the months of March, April and May I spent a lot of time travelling both on my own and with Rotary. With this travel came some of the most amazing trips of my life.

My spike in travel was mostly due to language acquisition and the need for relationships. Being able to communicate in Portuguese easily and needing to build relationships with peers meant traveling to other cities as much as possible. At this point I already felt the time crunch seeing as I only had a few months left and I knew that I had other plans for many weekends at that time. Most of my personal travels were to a city on the other side of my District called Presidente Prudente, which I mentioned in my last BeaverTale, where I have made some really good friends. Each time I go to Presidente Prudente we do more or less the same thing, but we enjoy it just because of who it's with and not because of what we are doing.

Other than visiting other cities I also went on two Rotary trips. The first was in early March. We went to Rio de Janeiro for Carnaval. I really enjoyed the Rio trip. The big trip earlier in the year was really cool but there were so many people that you couldn't connect with everyone there but with this trip there were fewer people and because of that I made stronger friendships with everyone on that trip. We went to quite a few touristic sites like Christ the Redeemer, Sugar Loaf and Escadaria Selaron.

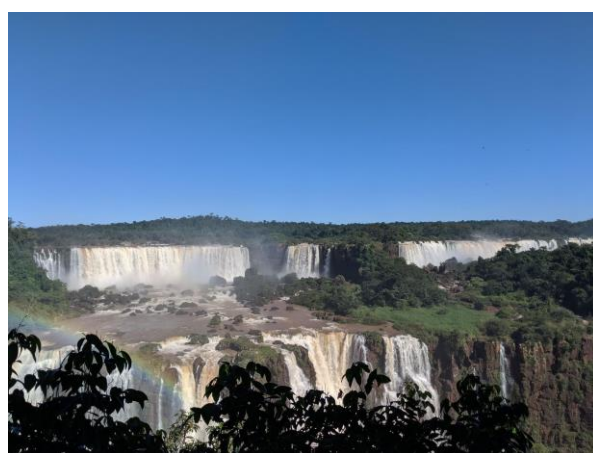


The Carnaval Parade of Champions, where all the top samba schools in Brazil perform, was spectacular! Although it showcased amazing talent and showed great pride in their culture it was also exhausting because it was a 12-hour display. The floats definitely lived up to expectations.

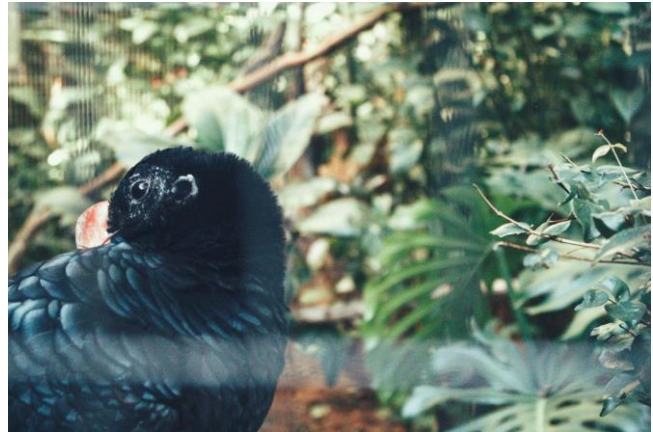
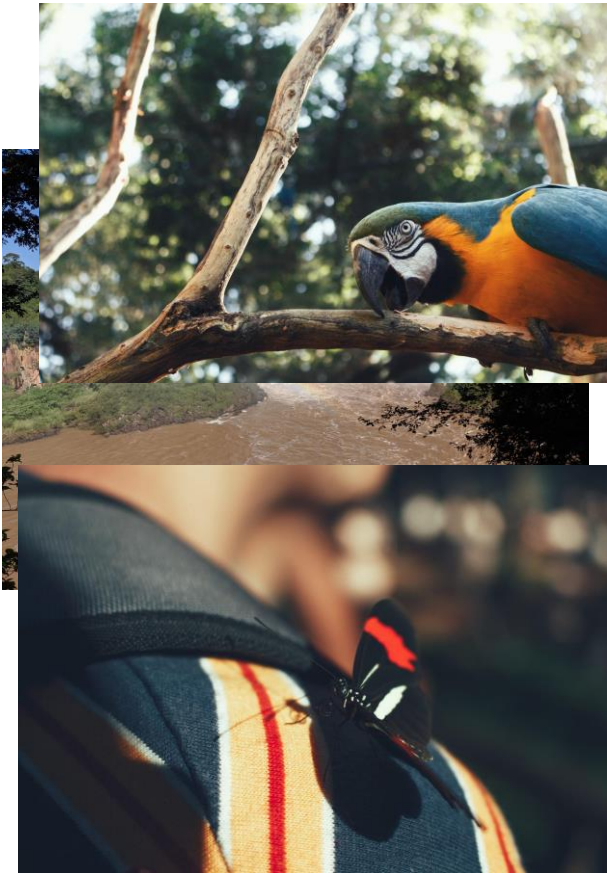


Upon my return from Rio I had two weeks before switching to my final family. I was sad to be moving families because I really felt at home in my third household but I'm sure I'll keep in touch. I am now settled in with my final family. They are relaxed and accommodating; however I now have a four year old little sister who doesn't let me do anything because she is always by my side. Her attention is kind of cute for a short time and I have grown to be able to manage it most days.

My second week in my new family I had my final trip with the other inbounds all together. It was an amazing trip! We went to Foz do Iguacu which is the city where the Iguazu falls reside. The Iguazu falls are the huge waterfalls that are shared by Brazil and Argentina. We visited both sides and they were very beautiful. I think I enjoyed the Argentinian side more than the Brazilian side because it is bigger and therefore allows for a nice long walk. There are two main trails that we hiked while we were there; The Upper and Lower Circuits. We also took a small train to The Devil's Throat which is the deepest part of the falls. There were animals called Coatis that are aggressive and will steal your food, so you do have to be careful.



We also went to a bird conservatory where they rescue animals from animal trafficking. The birds were beautiful, and it was cool to go inside some of the enclosures. The macaws were really striking! The butterflies were so friendly they landed on everyone. I look forward to visiting there again - when I return with family in the future. I look forward to sharing this experience in person with them.



With all that has happened this year, positive and negative, I am glad I was able to spend the time with everyone I met this year and look forward to making the most of the few weeks I have left. I'm sure they will be filled with many emotions, good and bad. The final conference is this weekend and I can't wait to see all the exchange students one last time.

As a final thought, I'd like to give a little bit of advice to any exchange student who reads this. The biggest thing is to just keep looking forward and try to think positively. When things are bad, and there will be some bad days, you have to keep persevering. I know that sounds cheesy but it's the truth and sometimes it's all you can do to improve your situation. Apart from those few days, your exchange will be one of, if not the greatest year of your life. Just like everything good you need to work at it to make it worth it.

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