

Hello!

I have officially survived one month in Brazil! It is really weird to think about the fact that this time last year I was only just starting my application for exchange...

I started my adventure on July 24<sup>th</sup> when I left Calgary after saying goodbye to all of my family, friends and Rotary (shout out to Sandy my Fish Creek Club Councillor for coming to the airport to see me off-thank you!). I flew Calgary to Toronto then Toronto to Sao Paulo. On my second flight there were two other kids going to my district, one from Canada and one from Japan. I sat next to some kids from the central part of Brazil on my flight who were coming back after a program where they lived in Toronto for a month. They helped to teach me some Portuguese, but mostly I just watched movies and slept. When we finally arrived in Sao Paulo it took a little time for us to get out the gate because Danielle's (from Canada) luggage was lost and we waited for her to try and get it sorted. Going through customs was a breeze and soon enough we were put onto two buses and started what would be an 8 hour drive to our respective cities. The whole ride we all talked and listened to music and slept. Part way through we had lunch with the other bus and went to a Brazilian-style buffet, this is where you load up your plate and get it weighed and pay per gram. After a lot more of driving we started to drop people off in their cities. I was dropped off in Presidente Prudente, (a bigger city about 30 min away from mine), and my first host family came with my host aunt and host grandmother and the friend of my brother to pick me up. We went out for pizza (which we ate with a knife and fork) and then drove to Santo Anastácio. Over my first few days in Santo Anastácio I got my phone set up and got my uniform for school. The uniform here is simply a white t-shirt with the school logo on it and whatever pants (not shorts) you want. I was pretty lucky in that my host brother who was here for the first week spoke some English and introduced me to people in my class as he went to the same school as me. He has gone to Tennessee now for his exchange.

School is going pretty well. My main purpose right now is learning Portuguese which I enjoy very much. I have a notebook and as the teacher talks I write down the words I can pick out or write down words in English. Then I ask one of the other kids (some of them speak English) as to how to translate them back and forth. I also make/use flashcards, write out conversations and draw/label things like kitchens and clothes to memorize words. The verbs in Portuguese are pretty difficult for me because you conjugate for each subject (I, you, we etc.), AND there are 6 different tenses. Basically if I don't know the conjugation I say the infinitive verb and people tell me the correct conjugation. Or I just say things in a really weird way and hope for the best, people usually understand what I am trying to say.

Right now I am the only exchange student in Santo Anastácio. There was a short-term exchange student from Hungary here for a month but he has gone home now, he also went to a different school and went on the trip offered by my district so I didn't see much of him. I didn't see any of the other exchange students until the orientation on the weekend of the 24<sup>th</sup>. I was extremely excited to see everybody again and talk about our experiences so far. I was surprised by the fact that we all got so close over only 3 days, but now we feel like one really big family. I am lucky in that I live pretty close to quite a few other kids and will hopefully be allowed to go and visit them on the bus once my Portuguese is a bit better.

I really like my host family, they have a farm outside the town and I go out there about once a week and watch/help out/explore the farm and meet the animals. Their house is very close to the main highway and almost every day I walk to the bridge and watch the sunset. I feel very lucky that my town is so small

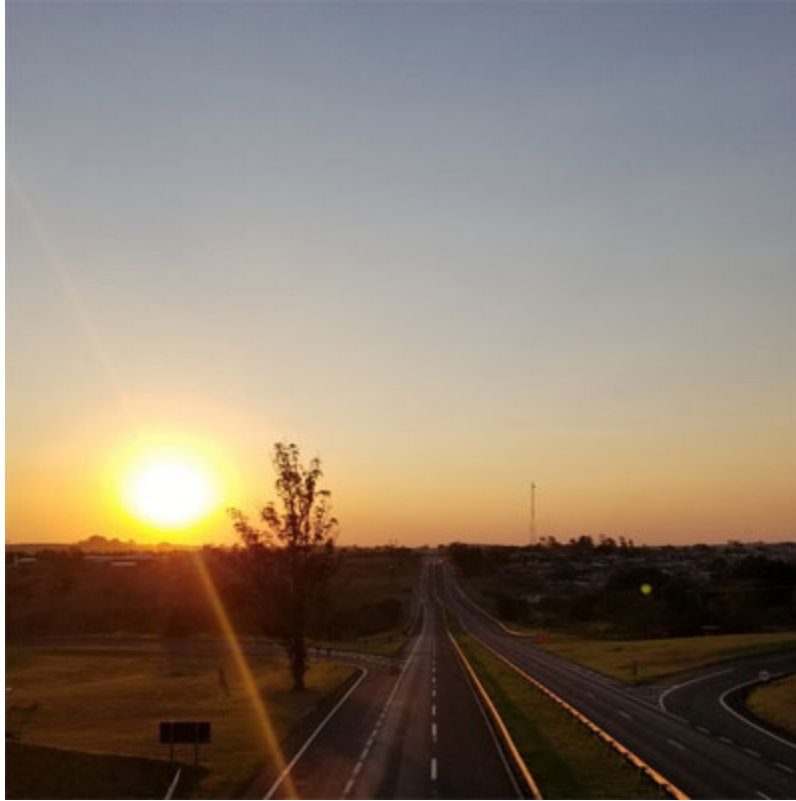
that I can pretty easily walk anywhere and it is safe enough for me to walk alone. At about 2 weeks in my host mum and I started playing chess together, I never really played chess before this but now we play every night after dinner. I like chess because it requires no speaking beyond humming knowingly when your opponent has made a good move.

My Rotary club here is actually split into two parts, the men and the women. Usually, (as it is this year) the president of one club is married to the president of the other, and the President and his wife are my second host parents. Within a week and a half of me being here I was asked to give a presentation about Canada, which was a little nerve wracking. While I could've chosen to do my presentation in English with a translator I chose to do it in Portuguese, which I did with a lot of help from google translate. I also met a lot of people from Rotaract (rotary for young adults), who are a ton of fun and excellent teachers of Portuguese grammar and slang.

Brazilian food consists of a lot of rice and beans and meat which I like. There are also a lot of pastry-type things with either different types of meat or fruits in them and they are really delicious. There is a ton of fruit here and I have LOVED trying them all. Some of them I had never seen or eaten before like guava and passionfruit- two of my favorites. My other favorite Brazilian thing is açaí - which is a kind of sorbet made out of acai berries and while it is delicious on its own, but you usually eat it with all sorts of toppings like fruit and condensed milk. People often go out to get açaí in what are kind of like ice cream parlors.



Delicious delicious açaí



Sunset over the highway



Exchange Friends! Maddy (USA), Clara (Germany), me, Estelle (USA)



My Rotary family!

I am having so many experiences and learning so much about Brazil that it is hard to put it all into one letter. I am very grateful for this opportunity and to have had a smooth start to my exchange. Of course I miss my friends and family at home, but I would do all of this again in a heartbeat and I am looking forward to every second of the next 9-10 months of exchange!

Love,

Emma