

The Global Fellowship Experience – Brazil

Going to Brazil has meant a big step forward for me, both physically and mentally. A country which has never really meant a lot to me suddenly means the world to me.... the trips I've had, the experiences I've encountered, as well the experiences, I will never forget.....



.....Phase 1 – Culture and Language

Spending the first two weeks of this programme in Rio de Janeiro was amazing. Having intense Portuguese lessons, visiting social projects and of course, entering the 'favelas' (slums) has made me so much more open to Brazilian culture....

I'm already a part of two different cultures, the British and Indian culture, both which I adore dearly, however, being a part of the

Brazilian culture and learning Portuguese in the first two weeks, I can say, has helped me see Brazil more closely....closer than I'd ever think I'd get. Before I went to Brazil, I didn't know a lot about the country, except for that it had a lot of crime and violence among the children living in the slums. However, while in Brazil, I visited a lot of social projects based in slums helping the children in the slums to divert their mind towards sport or other activities besides crime and violence – visiting these social projects helped reduce the negative image I had of Brazil, as well as, helping me see that Brazil is improving a lot quicker than I thought.

Learning a new language is always hard, and Portuguese was no exception! However, being exposed to the culture helped pick it up easier, as well seeing the way people here behave. One thing which I was surprised was to see how close people get here when they are talking to us – this is something which is totally different from the Indian culture in India, where contact is much more restricted in my opinion – however seeing a new culture was fascinating, this itself has helped me learn a lot about Brazilian and their attitudes. In general, this phase helped me become more open to people's culture and language and see how everyone is so similar, yet so different, in their own ways....

My favourite Phase of the Programme - Education

The second two weeks were spent in Sao Paulo (the business district of Brazil). Here, I stayed with a host family and attended school with the daughter of the household. Before I went to Brazil, I didn't know a thing about Brazilian students or about its education system. I wondered whether I'd get on with the youth, whether we'd have the same interests.. however, from the first second I met my host sister I knew we would get on well...It was actually quite cool how quickly me and my host sister got to just love each other's company – this program has helped me make friends in this part of the world and also has helped me experience life of a Brazilian teenager (which is generally much more busy than any of ours here!), without this scheme this would not have been possible.

During my two weeks with the host family, I tried my best to practice the little Portuguese I had learnt in Rio as my host family, except for the daughter, did not speak any English! Hence, these two weeks helped improve my Portuguese significantly, as well as getting an insight into a typical Brazilian household, and assessing how it was different from ours.



Business Phase

The last two weeks of the scheme were spent working with an international business. I was working with Cambridge University Press (CUP) alongside five other students. During my time here, I learnt about who CUP were, and what they are doing in Brazil. CUP, in Brazil, specialise in publishing English language teaching books, and then sell them onto private institutions and private schools who teach English. Working with CUP helped me understand just how important English is. CUP believed that, for Brazil to succeed they needed to learn English hence, specialising in English language books, and arranging English language conferences for teachers, would help Brazil get ahead in the world. CUP also had a lot of social projects of its own, which were generally tailored towards helping out local communities in the slums and making sure they get at provided with education books.

Conclusion

All in all, having spent 6 weeks in Brazil studying its' education, culture, language and economy I can definitely say I have become a lot more open to different cultures, and also a lot keen on learning more languages! Becoming a part of the globalised economy is something we all need to do! Yes, it is true that in order to understanding other cultures, languages and economies first hand is key in today's more integrated economy, hence, I would advise all current students who have a general interest in the global economy, culture or language to apply to this scheme or any other similar scheme.

One other point I would like to cover is the emphasis on foreign languages. While I was in Brazil, I saw the country, as a whole, putting emphasis on learning the English language, however, they were also putting a great deal of emphasis on preserving their own national language, Portuguese, so they don't forget their roots and heritage. Hence, in a few years time Brazilians will know two languages fluently, English and Portuguese, where as in England most students nowadays do not put emphasis on learning a second languages besides English – in today's global world it is A MUST to know more than just English for better employability or just to reduce pre-conceptions of others cultures.

Shyam Mamtora

The Global Fellowship 2010 (Brazil)