

Melissa R's Final Report
Ekko Brasil

My first day at the internship site was very exciting. I came one day before the start of my internship date to get settled in before I had to work. I was excited but nervous but quite tired from traveling about 24 hours.

I quickly learned that Portuguese and Spanish are very different. I know Spanish quite well I took it for three years in high school but I had no experience with Portuguese. I slowly however started to learn Portuguese on my own and focused on words that I knew I would have to use regularly. At my internship site, Portuguese isn't required but I would highly suggest learning it because it allows you to communicate to people on a deeper level. Many people in Brazil are very social and want to communicate with you, therefore language is very important. At the end of my internship I was able to have decent conversation in Portuguese because I tried very hard to learn.

My internship really stretched my limits personally because I learned how to interact with people from a completely different culture and values. The biggest benefit I got from this internship was the ability to be flexible and to go with the flow. Many times I was pushed outside of my comfort zone but I was able to solve the issue. Professionally I completed a research project with my organization analyzing camera trap videos at Peri Lake. I was able to learn how to set up my own research project and work through every step of the process. This included developing a hypothesis, then going through the analysis and developing a data sheet to collect data from the videos. I was also discuss and learn more about fisheries and wildlife internationally which has always been one of my dreams. I was also able to learn more about research since Junior, one of my main contacts at my internship site would regularly give us informational presentations all about Brazil from conservation, rehabilitation, otters, capoeira and many other topics. These presentations allowed me to discuss and apply many concepts that I have learned from many classes I have already taken.

The biggest challenges in my internship was cooking, understanding the French interns and learning Portuguese. I am a terrible cook and this internship is slightly isolated. You must walk about 30 minutes to the nearest place for food. Usually after a full day of work, I was too exhausted to walk and get food and then walk back. I slowly got more used to cooking but it is difficult because there is different vegetables, fruits and spices available. The good thing is food was much cheaper so I could try out many things and quickly find out what I liked. One challenge that I didn't anticipate was understanding the French interns. Before I went to Brazil, I learned a lot about the culture, language and everything I could about the country. However, it was sometimes difficult for me to adjust to living with French interns because I didn't know anything about the culture in France or French. I had to adjust my customs slightly in order to make sure they were comfortable. Sometimes many of the interns were French and would speak French continuously to each other. This would make me lonely sometimes. It was difficult sometimes because it felt like I had to navigate two different cultures at the same times.

To be an asset for the organization, I made sure to learn about the organization first and then see how I could help. I wanted to make sure to be helpful and not make it more difficult for them. Also, I made sure to put my job first and showed that I cared. People in Brazil are very committed to people and will do anything to make sure you're happy. I wanted to make sure to show them that same commitment for the organization and the people in it. Sometimes, Americans can seem very cold in comparison so I made sure that I showed them how much I enjoyed them and their organization. Once I gained their trust, I was able to be much more helpful!

I able to get guidance and mentorship all throughout my internship by multiple people at my internship site. Each person mentored me in a different way and I connected to several people at my internship site. They always made sure I was okay and happy, and I appreciated that so much! Junior helped mentor me with my research project and research overall. I liked just listening to his

stories about him traveling the world and life. He inspired me to continue exploring my dreams and the world. Priscilla was my friend and she taught me about Brazil through teaching me Portuguese, cooking for me and helped me explore Brazil through a young person's eyes. The academic faculty from back home helped me know the requirements for receiving credits before I left which was very helpful.

My impression of Brazil really changed during the course of my internship because I challenged myself to really get to know the country. I constantly was asking questions, talking to people in Portuguese and exploring. At first it was difficult to adjust to a different culture and environment but then I embraced the differences and fell in love with everything. It made it so difficult to leave!

10 Things to Know about Brazil

1. It runs on military time, otherwise known as the 24 hour clock. So instead of saying I will meet you at 4:00pm you would say 16:00. Thankfully I have some experience this since it is commonly used with research.
2. Don't flush your toilet paper down the toilet. The pipes here are thinner and can be easily clogged with the toilet paper. Don't worry there are trashcans right next to the toilet that you put your toilet paper. It takes some getting used to at first.
3. Here cars have the right of way. Don't expect cars to stop for you, if a car hits you then it's your fault. This has been difficult and has caused me to run across the road multiple times.
4. The weather is unpredictable be prepared. It's sunny then rainy then windy. I tend to wear layers and bring a raincoat. Now, it's winter the seasons are opposite.
5. Here it's the metric system. This has been one of the biggest challenges for me. I can't easily estimate kilometers instead of miles or liters instead of gallons. I am slowly learning the difference but it is difficult.
6. People drive manual, I haven't seen an automatic car yet. It was strange for me at first to see the bus driver changing gears. I am thankful I don't have to drive, I am not that good at driving manual.
7. It's difficult to drive here. People are aggressive drivers. Also, the roads are curvy and up/down. I sometimes get car sick but I have been lucky so far. The driving here scares me a lot, I always put on my seatbelt and hold on tight.
8. People speak Portuguese not Spanish. This may seem obvious but many people forget this. Also, Portuguese and Spanish aren't the same. There are some similarities but I don't suggest going around speaking Spanish expecting people to understand you.
9. Brazil is like Oregon; you do not pump your own gas. Thankfully living in Oregon has prepared me for this!
10. Do not expect English. There is some English around but do not depend on it. Please learn Portuguese. This has also has been a challenge but I am getting better every day.

Describe a day in your life:

I work every day Monday-Friday from about 8:30 to 6pm. I typically wake up at 8 am to eat breakfast then I feed all the animals at the sanctuary at 8:30 to about 10:30am (the time depends on how many volunteers we have helping). We have to prepare all the meals (cut fish, fruit and rats), clean all the enclosures and clean the kitchen after. We currently have six otters, two arayas, one bird and one raccoon. After feeding and cleaning in the morning we either go on a trek (for the otter intensity and parasite project), kayaking at Lagoa de Peri (to collect feces for the parasite project or setup camera traps a seven otter shelters), meet with a school (sometimes we dress up in an otter costume), work around the center, or learn about research by receiving a presentation (ex: otter ecology, diet or behavior). The places that we go on treks are naufragados, Lagoa de Leste, Pântano do Sul and Saquinho. We typically have lunch from 12-2pm, in Brazil lunch is traditionally longer and is the biggest meal. Then in the afternoon we maybe provide some environmental enrichment for the otters and other animals for example: by changing the enclosure or wrapping

fish in banana leaves for them to rip open. After work, I tend to be quite tired. I usually cook some dinner, then maybe watch some TV, explore the island or hangout with my friends. Recently, I have been analyzing otter behavior on the camera traps as part of the research project I am working on. I try my best to balance my time, right now it's difficult for me to balance my time since I am trying to finish my research before I leave. My days are very physically intense so I tend to rest and recover sometimes.

Housing:

I share a room with two other girls, we all have twin beds with mosquito nets. Also, there is two bathrooms with showers, a living room area with a TV, a kitchen, outdoor sitting areas and a gym (I'm already tired enough though). We live right at the project and it's very safe because there is a high amount of security here. It makes it easy to work and there is a security code we use to get in and out of the project. We can lock our rooms and there are lockers that we can use to lock our valuables so bring a lock. There is also a washing machine that you can use and then hang dry your clothes. I would recommend living at the project because the project is quite far away from everywhere else so it would be hard otherwise.

Finances:

My budget is working well so far but I have had a flexible budget. The most money I have spent here is going to Iguazu Falls, about \$120 for the bus and \$30 for the hostel and \$100 for food for four days, ticket to visit, souvenirs and taxi/bus. Otherwise, I spend like \$40 max a week for food for groceries for the week and maybe \$20 for fun for weekends (dinner, drinks and the bus). I haven't spent too much money but if you love to shop you can definitely spend much more money. It really depends on what you want to do. Surfing lessons and shopping all cost money. I would always make sure to have cash on me because some places only accept cash. The closest ATM that works for me is at Lagoa de Conceição which is two bus rides away (quite far). Pick up some cash at the airport before you leave so you can have cash right away in case.

Travel and Transportation:

I walk a lot but for work Marcelo drives his work truck for the treks for research. I am okay with it but sometimes it makes you a bit slower. The project is about twenty minutes (walking) to the main road and then another 30 minutes to my favorite beach. Walking is the hardest for carrying your groceries back to the project. Bring a backpack and don't buy more than you can walk twenty minutes back with. I also take the bus a lot which can take you all over the island. It's cheap 3,90 reais (for cash) for each ride, the hardest part is the maps are confusing so learn the numbers of the buses that you need to get around quickly. Also, UBER works here but sometimes the drivers get confused about where the otter project is so meeting at the main road is probably a good idea. Driving is different and scary so don't do it. If you make friends here that have cars you can have them drive around. I tend to explore on the weekends or in the evenings after work. If you want to leave for a bigger trip to Rio or São Paulo or Iguazu Falls just let people know before hand and most likely they will allow you to miss some work. I recommend going to the beach, walking to the island it's connected by a bridge and the other bridge to the other side, Iguazu Falls (fly or 15 hour bus ride) Argentina side is the better than the Brazil side, Rio, São Paulo, Campeche Island (it's one of the most beautiful places here), Centro, Lagoa de Conceição and Nutri (it's a good place to eat nearby).