



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Fundação Getulio Vargas – FGV-EAESP
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2, 2019
Otago degree(s)	LLB & BA
Major(s)	Politics & Law

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Introduction to the Brazilian Legal System	English	LAWS101	18 pts
Global Corruption	English	100 level Commerce paper	18 points
Political Science	English	100 level Politics paper	18 pts
Philosophy & Business Ethics	English	PHIL228	18 pts

Any comments about these papers?

Introduction to Brazilian Legal Systems was a great paper, designed specifically for exchange students. Really good background info on Brazil's general and legislative history, would highly recommend. Political Science was also a really interesting paper to learn a lot more about turbulent political history and the class was very interactive and engaging.

How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

Very different from Otago, felt more like tutorials as class sizes were a lot smaller (around ~20-30 people), slightly confusing assessment styles as it was very much up to how the lecturer was feeling on the day. Some exams were more like take home style but done in class, others were open book essays and course outlines aren't really followed. Because you're taking all English classes, most if not all of your classmates will be other exchange students. Workload was very manageable and as a native English speaker you have a great advantage. All papers are graded for participation and attendance is compulsory for all classes.

Accommodation

What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?

Stayed in an apartment with one other person – a young Brazilian guy. The apartment about a 20min walk from university in the Bela Vista neighbourhood. Good location and really good price. Found the apartment through Airbnb. Apartment living is a very common way of living in Brazil, very rare to find flatting situations like in Dunedin. Maybe would've liked to live closer to uni but it would've been more expensive. Most of the apartments listed on the exchange Facebook group are a rip off and the landlords definitely overcharge you knowing you're a foreigner. Would definitely recommend arriving and staying in a hostel or Airbnb for a week or two and trying to find an apartment once you're in Sao Paulo. You can join foreigner (gringo) Facebook groups and post in there for available apartments or on the FGV - Sem Censura Facebook group (FGV's Otago Flatting Goods equivalent). Flatting with another exchange student would've been more ideal as my lifestyle and my flatmate's lifestyles were not really conducive to one another but it was fine most of the time.

Money matters

Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance

Accommodation: R\$1300 per month (incl. rent, bills, Wi-Fi, maid, water)

Food: R\$50-75 per week (breakfast & cooking dinners at home)

Drinks/Social activities: R\$50-100 per week (if eating out/tickets to parties/festivals etc)

Phone plan: R\$50 per month

Metro/Bus card: R\$20 per week

Flights: \$2000NZD return (Wellington to Sao Paulo)

Student Visa: \$180NZD

Vaccinations in NZ: ~\$400NZD

Insurance: 1Cover comprehensive plan - \$830NZD

What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)

I used my NZ debit card – but it operates as a credit card in Brazil. It was accepted everywhere and charged me a very small offshore service fee every time I used it (like 2 cents). Card is accepted everywhere in Brazil, even on the beaches and street food vendors. I only withdrew cash to pay bills because it cost me R\$20 every time I withdrew plus a conversion fee through the bank. The only banks that accept foreign cards are Santander, Bradesco (depending on the card), HSBC & 24 horas ATMS.

Visas & Insurance

Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?

Yes you need to apply for a student visa which is automatically granted for a year even if you only need it for 6 months. It's quite a lengthy bureaucratic process so leave yourself enough time to gather all the documents you need. All the documents needed are listed on the NZ Brazilian embassy website. One key thing to note is you need an exit flight out of Brazil to be granted a visa.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

No you just had to have a comprehensive health insurance plan or be covered for healthcare under your travel insurance. The global affairs office at FGV need proof of this when you go to register for your student ID.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

There are many student organisations on campus but they run quite differently to what we would be familiar with and are mostly for the Brazilian students. The closest student association at Otago to what they have at FGV would probably be Ignite Consultants. I don't know of any exchange students that joined any of the organisations but many joined sports teams. I joined the rugby team and it was awesome. It really enhanced my experience in Brazil as I met some really cool Brazilians who became close friends. They're probably the most social and welcoming out of all the sports teams as rugby is such a niche sport. Would highly recommend you join as they love kiwis and you've already got an advantage having grown up in NZ and being familiar with the game so it really doesn't matter if you've never played as women's rugby in Brazil is very much at the grassroots level. The men's rugby is at a slightly higher level but if you've played even socially here in NZ you'll be fine.

What was the university/ city like?

FGV is split up into 3 faculties, the business school (EAESP) where you will be based, the economics school (EESP) and the law school (Direito). They're very close to one another and the uni is right behind Paulista Avenue, the main CBD street in Sao Paulo. FGV has a very prestigious reputation in Brazil and many people will recognise the school name. It's also supposedly the most expensive university in Latin America so the majority of your classmates belong to the top 1% in Brazil. The campus itself is nothing amazing, it's not really a campus per se it's really just 3 buildings. The ground floor in each faculty is usually a social area with couches, tv, a café etc. for people to hang out but it's not very big or particularly welcoming. I only ever went to uni for classes and never really hung out there.

Sao Paulo is a city you need to live in to love. It's big, smelly and can be overwhelming at times. There's not much greenery and a lot of concrete and skyscrapers so very different to what we're used to in New Zealand. It can also be very dangerous so always be alert and be careful about which neighbourhoods you wander around in especially at night. But in saying that, don't let that hold you back from exploring all the cool things there are to do in the city. Because it's such a metropolitan city, there's food from all over the world which is just as good as what you'd find in the native country, great bars and nightlife as well as some cool parks and historical buildings and sites. I used public transport quite a lot and it was a really cheap way to get around. Ubers are also insanely cheap in Brazil and there's so many in Sao Paulo so it's really efficient. I would highly recommend using uber to get around when it gets dark.

Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?

There aren't many tourist attractions in Sao Paulo like there is in Rio (Christ the Redeemer, Sugarloaf mountain etc.) and there aren't any nice beaches nearby either but being in one of the world's biggest cities is an experience in itself. Paulista Avenue on Sunday is really nice, they close it to traffic and there are a lot of mini concerts, food vendors and arts and crafts stalls. MASP is worth a visit as well as Ibirapuera Park and the many museums within the park. Liberdade has a great market near the metro stop on Sundays and a free walking tour of Centro is recommended to learn about the history of Sao Paulo and a good way to explore a pretty dodgy area of Sao Paulo. I would recommend paying the R\$30 to go to the rooftop of Edificio Italia in Centro to watch the sunset, amazing view of the city and it'll give you a good idea of just how big Sao Paulo is. Vila Madalena is a great bohemian neighbourhood filled with cool cafes, restaurants and shops as well as Beco do Batman, an alleyway filled with cool street art. As for food, Rua Augusta has a lot of cool restaurants and bars and at night Pitico street in Pinheiros is a great place for drinks. All FGV students have been to Chokitos Bar down the road from uni on 9 de Julho for a drink at some point so it's almost like a rite of passage for exchange students.

Any tips for future students?

Go to Brazil with an open mind and an open heart. Embrace the open culture, the friendly people, the amazing food and music and really get involved in the Brazilian way of life. Try learning Portuguese as it'll help you immensely when travelling around Brazil as the majority of people don't speak any English. Brazilians also really appreciate it when you try and speak Portuguese with them so it's a great way to make new friends. Make the most of any opportunities that come your way and go to all the student parties and festivals like GVjada, Tusca or Econo because you'll never experience anything like them anywhere else. Have fun and don't let fear hold you back from visiting somewhere or trying something new. In saying that though, a little bit of common sense goes a long way so be careful, always let your friends know where you are and be aware of your surroundings and belongings!

Overall Experience

Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!

I didn't know what to expect before I got to Brazil. I really didn't know much about the country, the culture or the people but I knew it would be different to home and that's what I wanted. I hoped I'd enjoy my time there but I really didn't expect to love it as much as I did. Brazil is such an experience in itself and it's the kind of place you have to visit and experience for yourself. It took some adjusting to life when I first arrived in São Paulo. I knew zero Portuguese, had just come from winter in New Zealand and now lived in a city with a population 3x bigger than the entire population of my home country (São Paulo has a population of 12 million). I met some amazing people, made some lifelong friends, did some really cool things, had many once-in-a-lifetime experiences and saw the most beautiful landscapes and scenery. Brazil is so diverse, each state is like a different country and I will definitely go back one day to explore more as 6 months was not enough time. I'd 100% recommend FGV and Brazil as a place to go on exchange - you'll never have an experience like it anywhere else.