



PROGRAM COUNTRY: BRAZIL



STS – more than 50 years of experience in student exchange programs all over the world



To many people Brazil means football, magnificent nature, hospitable people, samba and the carnival, but Brazil is much more than this. It is one of the world's most important economies with many international companies and education of high standard, and it has always been called a country for the future. In Brazil they speak Portuguese and STS does not demand any previous knowledge of the language.

COUNTRY INFORMATION

From geographic size to resources, everything about Brazil is big. Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world, larger than the continental United States (that means excluding Alaska and Hawaii). Brazil is over 8 million square kilometers big, it has over 150 million people and Portuguese is the official language. Except for the languages spoken by Indian tribes living in remote reservations, Portuguese is the only language in daily life. There are no regional dialects, although southerners may also speak Italian or German, depending on their descent. Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking country in Latin America.

The Brazilian Constitution guarantees absolute freedom of religion. However, nearly 90 percent of all Brazilians are Christians. Roman Catholics are the majority, followed by Protestants, Spiritualists (Christian religion) and other religious denominations.

Brazil borders every South American country except Ecuador and Chile. It has 26 states and the Federal District, which is the country capital, Brasilia. The 26 states are divided into five bigger regions: North, Northeast, Southeast, South and Midwest.

With forests that cover more than 65% of its territory, Brazil is home to the world's largest tropical rain forest – the Amazon – which possesses rare plants used for modern medicine. Brazil also has one of the most diverse animal populations in the world.

The differences among Brazil's regions are also big. In the Southern region you will see beautiful beaches and mountains similar to places in Europe. In the Northeast you will find beautiful palm trees and beaches with white sand and warm temperature and

warm sea water all year around. In the Mid-West region you will find savannas similar to the ones in Africa.

The most famous of Brazilian cities is, of course, Rio de Janeiro. The soft blue sea waters and the huge statue of Christ with his arms open wide inspire tourists from all over the world over.

Brazilians are considered friendly, warm people, open to other nationalities. In fact, Brazil is made up of a mixture of cultures, especially Native Indians, Africans and Europeans, the latter coming mostly from Portugal, Spain, Italy and Germany.

In Brazil, you may find that traditional family values and family roles are changing as this country grapples with old versus new ways of thinking. Amidst these contradictions, it is in the free spirited and nationalistic Brazilian people that you are likely to discover Brazil's magic – an affinity for romance and beauty known the world over.

SCHOOL LIFE

The Brazilian educational system includes both public and private institutions, ranging from pre-school to university and post-graduate levels. Education is compulsory for ages seven through 14. Public education is free at all levels. Non-profit private schools are also eligible to receive public funding.

Brazil's educational system is divided into three levels or "graus": Primeiro Grau – 8 years long, compulsory. Students should start school at 7 years of age.

Segundo Grau – 3 years long, compulsory. Students are usually aged 14 to 18. It is the Brazilian high school level.

Terceiro Grau – University level, non-compulsory. The course lengths vary, from a minimum of four years long.

Students in Primeiro and Segundo Graus do not choose their subjects. Required subjects in Segundo Grau are: Portuguese, Brazilian literature, mathematics, geography, history, chemistry, physics, biology and a foreign language, usually English grammar.

Spanish is growing as a foreign language option. Some schools also offer art, and computer skills. It is also common that Segundo



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Grau students take extra language classes at language institutes in order to improve their conversation skills. The same holds true for students who want to study music, arts, dance etc.

Schools in Brazil begin in mid-February after summer vacation (the seasons in Brazil are the opposite of those in the Northern Hemisphere) and finish by the end of November. The program is adapted so that students may participate in an academic year program from July to June, or from January to December; a fall semester program from July to January, or a spring semester from January to July.

The school year is divided into four quarters with one vacation break for four weeks in July. Summer vacation is from December to February. In general, classes in Brazil begin at 7:00 am and end at noon. Students and parents often have lunch at home, as it is the most important meal of the day. There is no school on Sunday, but some schools do have classes or tests on Saturday mornings. Brazilian students are expected to spend the afternoon studying independently at home. Depending on the year in which the exchange students are placed, they will be required to take a standard set of courses with their Brazilian classmates. These courses include: Portuguese language, biology, Brazilian literature, chemistry, geography, physics, mathematics, history, geometry, civics, physical education, and English.

Some schools require the students to wear uniforms. It's usually a T-shirt with the school badge. Also, exchange students may have to buy books as Brazilian students do. Efforts are made to find them second-hand books or some that they can borrow or purchase at a lower cost.

Transportation to and from school will depend on how far the school is from the student's house. Sometimes they can walk, some families take the students by car, and some students take public transportation.

While no previous language study is required, we strongly suggest that students prepare by learning some basic phrases in Portuguese, as all classes will be taught in Portuguese for the Academic Year, Fall Semester and Spring Semester programs.

Students will participate in an intensive 10-hour Portuguese course spread out over the first month of the program. For an additional fee, a language teacher can be hired to help students learn or improve Portuguese language skills while on the program.

Why study Portuguese? Portuguese is the first language of over 190 million people, and considered one of the 10 most influential languages in the world!

HOST FAMILY LIFE

Students will stay with carefully selected host families throughout Brazil. Common placement areas in the past have included Goiania, Curitiba, and Santa Maria. Students are not placed in

large metropolitan areas, such as Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo, nor are they placed in extremely rural locations. Families in Brazil are typically very close, so activities that gather the entire family, including extended family, are common. Adjustment to host family life and Brazilian culture will be assisted by a program representative.

Brazilians are used to two large meals a day: lunch and dinner. Breakfast is quick and light, sometimes just black coffee. Others also enjoy milk, coffee, bread, cheese, fruit and juice as breakfast options.

Some families are also used to having a snack in the afternoon. Many young people are also adopting vegetarian food, so they don't eat any kind of meat. A typical meal includes rice and beans on an everyday basis. Type of meat and vegetables will vary from state to state, as well as fruit and desserts. Brazilians usually eat most foods with forks, knives and spoons.

Brazilian cuisine is rich and results from a blend of many cultures, especially Native Indian, African and European. Each Brazilian region has developed its own very diverse dishes.

The family in this country is still a very close unit. Parental decisions are usually respected and followed, and the parents have the last word in disciplinary and other family matters. Though the children are often asked for their opinion, which is taken into account, they are usually not allowed to rule the family by their wishes. Activities that gather the family as a whole are very common - from watching TV to travelling during vacations. The sense of "family" often includes all relatives, especially if they live close to each other. But each family is a different unit. The students will notice some similarities after they become acquainted with different people.

For instance, chances are that the student will be greeted by the host family with warm hugs and kisses (in Brazil, people usually kiss each other two to three times on the cheek). After all, they have been anxiously waiting for this experience!

They will probably appreciate if the student calls them "Mãe" and "Pai".

The host family will be hosting for the pleasure of having a student living with them, since they are volunteer families. Therefore, it is important that the student tries to find out how things are done in this new home - schedules, rules, chores. This process will require a lot of listening and observing.



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Most Brazilian families require their children to provide information concerning their activities. So, if the student plans to go out, they will want to know where he/she is going, with whom and when he/she is coming back. Most likely the student will have to ask their permission to go out.

The more the student participates in family activities, the easier it will be for all to get to know each other better. The first step the student will have to take is to become a member of the family. If they are busy, offer to help. Even if the family has a maid – which is fairly common in Brazil – be ready to help with home chores. Remember that an initiative with the home chores will be much appreciated.

Do not expect the host sister or brother to become the best friend, but always try to act in a friendly way. Children are financially dependent on their parents until they enter university or even until they finish it. This is due to the lack of part-time jobs for students, as unemployment and underemployment force older people to take jobs that would be considered temporary in other countries.

PROGRAM EXTRAS

Students will be given the opportunity to join various group trips and excursions. Prices vary depending on length of trip and numbers of cities visited. Excursions in the past have included: a Northeast tour, which includes a stop in Rio de Janeiro, a tour of Buenos Aires, a tour of Southern Brazil, and an Amazon expedition. More detailed information about the optional excursions and pricing will be provided once students are on the program.

Northeast Tour

It is a region known for its incredible culture, and for its beaches full of coconut trees and dunes from which the students can slide into the warm and clear water. The people here are famously hospitable; happy and eager to show the students the region's beauty, teach them how to dance to their music, and share their sun and music-filled way of life by the ocean.

We will visit historical cities, “fishing villages”, museums and buildings full of Brazilian history. The students will also have the opportunity to visit Brasilia, the capital, with its modern architecture and go to one of the most exotic natural sanctuaries in Brazil, the Chapada Diamantina, in the interior of the state of Bahia with its canyons, hills, water falls and the historic town of Lençóis, which was the capital of Brazilian diamond exploration in the past.

Then, Rio de Janeiro is the destination. A city which words cannot describe. Just incredible!

Buenos Aires / Argentina

Less than a three hour's flight from São Paulo, the Argentinian capital of Buenos Aires pleases every tourist with its beauty and with its elegant people strolling along the flowered streets. Buenos Aires is a charming city; perfect for those who are looking to have a great time in a big city full of culture, impressive architecture and very beautiful people!

South Tour

This program shows the students some of the most amazing cities and sights in South America! Starting with Iguazu Falls, a natural spectacle with 275 water falls altogether! Then we drive to the nice views of the south of Brasil, visiting Gramado and Canela with its European style, the beautiful island of Florianópolis, the green city of Curitiba, and the huge São Paulo.

Amazon Expedition

This trip is organized for the exchange students who dream about adventures on the Amazon rain forest! We will go deep in the jungle, get into extremely wild spots, go on a five-day boat expedition on Amazon and Negro Rivers, sleep in hammocks in the rain forest, swim with the Amazon pink dolphins, visit an Indian community, swim in waterfalls in the rain forest after amazing trekkings, and also get to know everything about the region from its outstanding ecology guides!



All information is subject to change.

