

Traineeship Report

IAESTE Traineeship in Brazil, 2016

(18.09.2016-26.12.2016 UNESP Ilha Solteira-SP)

In 2016 I got an opportunity to make a twelve-week traineeship at the São Paulo State University on the campus Ilha Solteira in the field of Civil Engineering by means of the student association "IAESTE".

After I got the acceptance letter at end of May, I started to prepare all the materials to apply for an internship visa in Brazil. I went to the Brazilian general consulate in Munich and handed in all the required materials listed on the consulate website. It was issued very quickly and after around one week I could go to the consulate office to pick up my visa. Afterward, I booked my flights and prepared everything to get ready to fly to this country.

One week before my departure date the IAESTE national committee Brasil (they are called "ABIPE") sent me an Email about all the information about the pickup in the airport, accommodation and the registration at the police station. They organized everything for me before I had arrived in the country, so I really felt a warm welcome. After I landed in Sao Paulo Guarulhos airport, a local student from Santos picked me up and hosted me in his apartment for four days and help me to buy the ticket from Sao Paulo to Ilha Solteira where I was going to do my traineeship. This bus trip took me about 10 hours. The good thing for me was that the Brazilian bus is very comfortable and you can sleep at night on the bus. And it is really very common to take a long time bus trip if you would like to travel from one big city to another because Brazil is so huge and there is almost no train to travel the long distance. I was arranged to live in a "WG" with other three Brazilian girls in Ilha Solteira, who also study at UNESP campus Ilha Solteira in the field of Civil Engineering. The house is equipped with everything that you need for a basic living. And I shared one bedroom with one girl. We four shared the kitchen, living room and laundry room. The location of the house is also perfect. It is just ten minutes far away from the UNESP by walking and all the living facilities are in the surrounding.

This traineeship required me to study the literature on the geotechnical classification of the tropical soils for road paving and the pavement constructed with thin soils. After that, I was supposed to do the compaction experiments of mini-Proctor and mini-MCT to classify the soils for pavement and analyze the results obtained. My supervisor at the University was Prof. Jairo. He supervised me to complete all the measures and instructed me all the knowledge about the soils and principles of proctor test. And in the lab, I had another mentor who works in the lab and guided me all the details to complete the experiments. They took me very well and was always reachable. The most time of this internship I spent was in the lab to do the compaction test and also in the office to study the literature about MCT and Proctor tests and the classification about the soil and it was a fulfilled time and I gained a lot of

experiences and skills. There was another trainee from Russian and we had some supervisor Prof. Jairo. Our professor is so nice person and he didn't just give us instructions and guidance when we were working but also took us by car to make a city tour and invited us to try the most famous Brazilian food- Brazilian barbecues (churrasco). I am absolutely thankful for all the help from my supervisor and lab tutor.

What I really want to mention is that it is really recommendable to learn some basic Portuguese or Spanish before you arrive in Brazil and that really helps a lot when you live there. In my offer paper, there is only English required and Spanish is just as an optional language so I almost didn't have anything basis about these two languages. Just after I arrived in Brazil I noticed the importance to learn Portuguese. Because in Brazil only a few people can speak English so it is not very easy to use English especially living in a small city. For example, when you are in the restaurant or supermarket, you always have communication problems. What's more, it was really hard for me to start learning Portuguese, especially the pronunciation. Fortunately, Brazilian people are so friendly and nice and they are willing to help you to learn their language. After months and a lot of repeating and practices, I could get better gradually.

There were also lots of cultural activities, like City Tour, organized by local students from IAESTE Brasil to help us to know more about Brazil and Brazilian cities. I joined two city tours which were organized by IAESTE Brasil. The first IAESTE trip was from Nov. 2nd to 6th and I had the opportunity to know one of the most famous Brazilian city Rio de Janeiro. We visited a lot of attractions and spots and enjoyed the wonderful beaches very much. The other trip from Nov. 11th to 15th was a city tour to dive into Brazilian history in the city Ouro Preto. It is a fabulous and historical city in a deep valley of the state Minas Gerais with full of Portuguese impact. We went to a lot of churches and monuments and saw the golden mine as well. They provided us free accommodation in their student "Republica" and we cooked the traditional Brazilian food together and I really learned a lot of Brazilian traditions and manners.

In my opinion, Brazil is such a marvelous country, not just because of its wonderful landscapes and tasty food, but also for its cheering and kindhearted people. My colleagues in the lab were very nice, as well as my tutor. I felt we were integrated within the team in the lab and they were always there to help us. After I finished the internship I invited all my roommates, my professor and another Chinese student to our house to make a farewell party and I cooked Asian food for them to show our cooking culture.

I spent the last four weeks of my stay in Brazil after my internship traveling around the country. I can't stay longer there because I had to come back to Munich to search my master thesis. But I have visited a lot of wonderful places, such as the Pantanal wetland, Sao Paulo, Rio, Manaus, Salvador, etc. Brazil is so huge and it has so different faces. I can't forget the new year eve I spent in Rio and the largest firework party on the Copacabana beach I have ever seen. It was one of the most important events in Rio and it was so great! I gained a lot of friends, experiences and four unforgettable months that impacted me so much in my life. I am absolutely happy and grateful to have chosen this destination to do my traineeship.