

Internship at UNESP university in Sorocaba, Brazil

Introduction

I got an internship at UNESP university in Sorocaba, which is about an hour from Sao Paulo. Sorocaba lies within the state of Sao Paulo, therefore in the south east of Brazil and is with a population of 650.000 almost considered as countryside according to Brazilian standards. As Brazil has quite a security problem it is to mention that Sorocaba is pretty safe. My internship of 8 weeks happened in October and November. Even though this is just the beginning of summer in Brazil, we had more than 30° C and sun almost every day.



My little exchange students lunch crew: Mexican, Chilean, Peruvian, Colombian and German

The Arrival

I arrived at the airport in Sao Paulo, where a member of IAESTE picked me up and took me to the city centre to take the 1,5h bus to Sorocaba. The girl who picked me up was really nice and invited me directly into several WhatsApp groups for IAESTE gatherings in Sao Paulo and weekend trips to Rio de Janeiro, the beach and more (Brazilians use WhatsApp for literally everything: To order food, to talk to their professor, study projects, etc.). In Sorocaba I was picked up at the bus station by my future flatmates. When we came to their house, they had already prepared a barbecue (Brazilians love their *churrasco*) and we got to know each other

quickly. All in all, my arrival in Brazil was super smooth and easy going and all without me speaking any Portuguese.

Housing

I lived in a house with 7 other guys around 10min by walk from the university. The UNESP university is a little outside of the centre of Sorocaba, so most students are able to live very close to the campus. All my flatmates were students at UNESP, and their house was a so-called Republica. It is basically a shared flat with only men living in a Republica. But don't worry, this is nothing like a religious house or whatever. It is simply a tradition (I was told there were Republicas with girls before it didn't work out so well...). You are allowed to do what you want and bring who you want. Republicas are a student tradition all over Brazil. They usually do house parties every now and then (there is at least one party per week in some Republica) and they also sometimes organize bigger parties. All the Republicas know each other and invite each other over for beers and/or barbecues all the time. Around half of my flatmates spoke good English, the other half so so. All in all, it was absolutely great to live with Brazilians, you meet new people so quickly and without even leaving the house. My rent was only 350 Reais which is around 75€ per month.

The University

The UNESP university in Sorocaba is quite small, it consists of only one building and has around 500 students. The university is only offering two courses: Mechanical and environmental engineering. Even though the small size was a little shock for me in the beginning, it turned out to be great: Within 2 weeks there I knew basically everybody in the university by name: The students, the staff and even the professors. On my first day, I was received by Ms. Lilian who was already expecting me and helped me with some paperwork as well with the money that I was receiving from the university.



Entrance of UNESP Sorocaba

The Work

During my 8 weeks I was an assistant to Prof. Roveda, who was supervising (and teaching) the environmental engineer study program. The Professor was super nice and gave me a warm welcome on my first day at university (my flatmates took me to university the first day and showed me around). My only task in week 1 was to prepare a lecture to tell the UNESP students about my life, my city, my university and my study program in Munich. In the following weeks I worked mostly only with the Professor. I had to compare European and Brazilian methods to calculate specific environmental indices (e.g. water quality). There is a method called fuzzy logics which was developed by UNESP professors and is currently used in Brazilian environmental quality evaluations. All in all, the workload was manageable, and I always had time to join students on field trips and even participate in a small group project of master students. In general, Brazilian work and student life is a bit different from a German one. My often professor forgot, postponed and simply didn't show up at several of our meetings. Students do study projects or studying for exams mostly the night before (but then 24h straight). In way last week my professor invited me his house for a barbecue.

The Life

Overall, my 8 weeks in Sorocaba have been absolutely amazing. People are so warm and welcoming (and for some reason love Germans and German language), everybody just wants you to have a good time in Brazil. Due to living in a shared house and the small sized university it was so easy to make friends. Every week there were student parties (and Brazilians really know how to party) or Republica barbecues. As many students travel during the weekends to their family's cities, the weekends sometimes were calmer than the week itself. Hence, I used the weekends to travel myself: Either to the beach (there are good beaches 3h and incredibly beautiful ones around 6h from Sorocaba) or go to Sao Paulo, which is a huge, intimidating, but crazy interesting and exciting city.



One of over 100 beaches in Ubatuba (6h from Sorocaba)

Questions? Feel free to contact me via E-Mail: simonlutz@gmx.de