

Exchange Universidade de São Paulo – FEA

Liana van der Hagen

During the first part of my third bachelor year I decided to study abroad in Brazil. USP is well known in Brazil and South America and has a high score in the QS rankings. At first I was not sure if São Paulo was a good choice because of all the violence in Brazil, but as my family is from there I already knew how to act in some situations and knew that especially at night you should be very careful. I think you should be warned that São Paulo (and the rest of Brazil) is not as safe as we are used to in the Netherlands, but this should not stop you from going on exchange there. It is an amazing country with nice and friendly people, good weather, nice beaches and other beautiful nature. Later on I will tell you more about the safest places to stay, but first I will start with the preparation.

Preparation

Because I have a Brazilian passport I can't explain anything about the visa procedure. The consulate of Brazil is located in Rotterdam, next to the central station. I heard that it takes some time to get your visa, so it's better to start early with it. Some exchange students arrived later in Brazil because of problems with their visa. Furthermore, for a lot of things in Brazil you need a CPF. A lot of people got it in Brazil, together with their RNE. For Brazilians, a RG is recommended but not necessary. I got my CPF at the consulate in Rotterdam.

It is also important to get your vaccinations at the GGD. I took the ones for Yellow Fever, DTP and Hepatitis A & B. They recommend you to take the vaccination for Rabies, but I did not think it was necessary if I was going to be careful with dogs and other animals.

About the courses you can follow at USP, you should not worry before departure. Once you arrive there, everything will be explained well. There are only a few English courses and a lot of Portuguese courses.

I had already found a place to stay before I went to Brazil, but I believe a lot of people looked there for an apartment. Most apartments are on www.easyquarto.com.br. I wouldn't recommend you to stay near the university (Butantã), but I would look for rooms in Pinheiros or Vila Madalena. In the main streets of São Paulo are bus lanes, so you don't have a lot of problems with the traffic jam.

Arrival

When you arrive at Guarulhos, the international airport of São Paulo, you can take an uber to your place for about 70 reais (which is now about 20 euros). Uber in Brazil is really cheap. If you still don't have a place to stay, there are some hostels in São Paulo or you could maybe find a cheap Airbnb for some days.

Courses

1 USP credit = 2.5 ECTS

Most courses at FEA are 2 or 4 USP credits, which equals 5 or 10 ECTS. I took 3 courses in total, 11 USP credits and 27.5 ECTS. Different from the ESE is that the courses are given in smaller lecture rooms and therefore sometimes there are different options of time schedules for a specific course.

1) Economia Regional e Urbana (4 USP credits = 10 ECTS)

This is the best course I took. The professor is really good and I found the material very interesting. There are two classes per week of 1 hour and 40 minutes. The course is in Portuguese so you should at least understand Portuguese. As the professors at FEA are very flexible, I think you can always ask them if you can write your exams in English (3 exams in total). The teacher also gives a lot of assignments for you to either do in a group or by yourself. They say a basic econometric knowledge is necessary, but I think you can do this without econometrics. More information (about all courses) can be found on:
<https://uspdigital.usp.br/jupiterweb/jupDisciplinaBusca?tipo=D&codmnu=6755>

2) International Management: Doing Business in Brazil (3 USP credits = 7.5 ECTS)

This course is especially for exchange students, even though there are some Brazilians that take it. Almost every exchange student takes this course, so it is nice that you see each other there. The course has only one class a week, but the extra USP credit is due to visiting companies. I have to say that the only visit we had, was to BM&F Bovespa (the São Paulo stock exchange). The professor is really nice and helpful, but the course is more about Brazil and its history than about doing business there. This was the only course I took outside my area of econometrics/economics. There are two exams and one group presentation for this course. But everyone passes easily.

3) Econometria IV (4 USP credits = 10 ECTS)

This course focusses on financial econometrics. Subjects that are taught are ARCH, GARCH, VAR, Markov-Switching and more. Because this course for Brazilians is an elective course, only few people take it (around 10 or 15). The course is taught in the computer room, half of the time the professor is giving a presentation and half of the time he teaches you how to program it in R. The course is graded by a paper you have to write and a final exam. In the beginning of the semester you will have nothing to do, but in the end it gets harder and time-consuming.

For people that want to learn Portuguese, there is also a Portuguese course for 2 USP credits (5 ECTS). This course started later in the semester because of a strike. If you are interested in less advanced econometric courses, I think that it is also possible, even if the course is not in the list.

The international office of FEA is really helpful, so if you have any question, you can always e-mail them: ccintfea@usp.br.

Finances

When I was in Brazil the exchange rate was around 3.6 (reais/euro).

Rent: 1100 reais (Butanta, Pinheiros is normally a bit more expensive)

Sports: free at USP. Group lessons are 30 reais for a whole semester, but you have to be very quick the first day.

Mobile phone costs: I just stayed with my Dutch provider, making use of the wifi everywhere. But it is recommendable to take a Brazilian one.

Transport: If you live next to USP you can walk to one of the gates and inside the university take the free bus. Otherwise you will spend 2 euros per day of transportation to and from university. Then of course you have other trips you are going to make. In Brazil it's also very attractive to take an uber, which is very cheap. Depending on where you are staying an uber from or to the airport (Guarulhos) is 60-80 reais.

Travelling: A lot of exchange students travel a lot, as there is no beach in the city Sao Paulo.

Living: If you wish not to cook and save money, you can eat at the university for 1.90 reais (50 eurocents). They have lunch, dinner and even breakfast. It is not the best food, but once you get used to it, it is ok. At the so called 'bandeião' you do not get your food on a plate, but on a tray. As I did not eat there twice a day and not even every day, my living costs were a bit higher. At the faculty itself, FEA, the lunch is much better, but also more expensive.

Flight	900 Euro
Accommodation	1500 Euro
Study Material	10 Euro
Transport	500 Euro
Travelling	1000 Euro
Living and social life	1000 Euro
Total	4910 Euro

Daily life

I really enjoyed my stay in Sao Paulo. As my family is from there, I was already familiar with the Brazilian culture, the people, but also the danger. Next to the university, in Butanta, are a lot of slum areas. That is why I recommend you to stay in Pinheiros for example. I stayed in Butanta, but got robbed during the first month. If you are going to stay in Butanta, I recommend you to stay in an apartment instead of a house, because it is a lot safer. Also avoid walking alone at night, take an uber then. The rent prices are a bit more expensive in Pinheiros or Vila Madalena. The public transport in Sao Paulo is really good, with a good metro also, much better than I expected. The nice bars are in Vila Madalena (which is close to Pinheiros). São Paulo has a lot of museums, many Shopping malls and good restaurants (sushi, Peruvian food, burgers,...).