

Internship with Reflex Systems in São Paulo

from April 22nd till June 23rd 2007



IAESTE Trainee's Report
by Rolf Haller



A Dream Comes True

After graduation in Electrical Engineering from University of Applied Sciences Rapperswil (HSR) in January 2007, I headed out towards South America to let my long lasting dream come true. During my studies, I had been looking forward to spend some time abroad, in order to learn a foreign language and allowing me to further improving my professional knowledge within an internship. I was still applying for my position with IAESTE while already brushing up my Spanish language skills in Buenos Aires, Argentina. My original application for a course in Ecuador was finally granted for an assignment with Reflex Systems, a small Brazilian company, located in São Paulo. I was very excited when I hopped aboard the aircraft heading for Brazil, wondering about what was I going to expect in this vibrant and diverse country that almost 200 million people call their home!?!

Big City Life

As a citizen of tiny Switzerland, it is really difficult to even imagine the dynamics of such a huge metropolis like São Paulo with its 20 million inhabitants. Indeed, it is a truly overwhelming experience to witness the never-ending urban area of a bustling city through the airplane-window during approach and landing. Upon arrival at Guarulhos International Airport, I was picked up by Edgardo Rubano - my boss for the time of the internship - and his daughter Laura, who had actually offered this exchange position. I stayed with the family at their homely place. People in Brazil who can afford it prefer to build their houses in so called *condominios*. These are fenced areas, fully protected by private security agencies around the clock. My host family is living in such a safe place, about 20km off the city center. I was offered a private single room in their home, which is equipped with all facilities one could imagine. From the first day, I felt very comfortable and they accepted me as a member of their family. Laura and her two brothers, all of them about the same age like myself, always took me out, showed me around in the city and introduced me to their friends. The three cute dogs and the family's beauty cat were amazingly good fun to play with. I often ate at home, enjoying my host mother's delicious meals, always heartily prepared, including *feijoada*, the famous national dish, which is a stew of beans and various beef and pork products accompanied with rice.

Work

Reflex Systems is a one-man-run company, acting in the fields of Electrical Engineering. It was founded and is owned by Edgardo. He focuses his work in a dedicated way to localize errors and break downs in subterranean and submarine electrical power cables. Therefore, almost all of his customers are major companies located all over Brazil. Only to mention a few, there is *Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional (CSN)*, the biggest steel producer in Latin America or *Light*, the electrical energy supplier of Rio de Janeiro. I always joined my host dad while he was travelling to the customer's sites to carry out his work. I was involved with all professional activities of my boss such as operating sensitive electrical analysis equipment, working with high voltage generators, executing maintenance work on a wide range of electrotechnical systems and so on. Furthermore, I was in charge of web content management to realize a webpage's translation from English into Portuguese on behalf of Reflex's German cooperation firm. On top of that, I supported the English representation of Reflex Systems and its partners on the occasion of the 24th International Electrical, Energy and Automation Industry Trade Fair 2007 in São Paulo – this event was definitely one of the highlights during my internship!

Manifold Benefits

Following my extraordinary time with the Rubanos' and the work with Reflex Systems, I travelled through various South American countries before I finally made my way back home. Now, as I am looking recalling my stay in Brazil and its surrounding countries, I can barely grasp how much I have benefited from this trip to the southern hemisphere. Besides satisfying the thirst of my wanderlust – the passion to discover this world - I not only gained professional, but just as much personal experience. In addition, I managed to improve my level of speaking and writing Spanish significantly and I was even able to acquire good basic knowledge in the Portuguese language too. Exploring and getting accustomed to unknown environments and finding out about different cultures extremely broadened my mind.

I appreciate very much, that I was offered this opportunity to learn how to see the world with different eyes while making new foreign friends - this is what I will now live on for a life time. At this point, I would like to thank very much everyone involved in supporting me to realize this unique, unforgettable experience.

Muito obrigado! ☺