

# Travelogue

## Passport to... Brazil



Emily Antoszyk - Contributing Photographer

Participants practice Capoeira, a Brazilian style of martial arts. Top right, young boys play drums on found objects in the Rocinha favela, Rio de Janeiro. Bottom right, horseback riding through the Pantanal. To see more pictures or read Antoszyk's blog from her trip to Brazil, visit [eantoszyk.blogspot.com](http://eantoszyk.blogspot.com) or [picasaweb.google.com/Emillia9](http://picasaweb.google.com/Emillia9).

## Lessons learned in Brazil put student's life into perspective

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After studying abroad as a sophomore, I developed a serious travel bug. The idea that more adventures could be mine if I made them was a consuming thought, and by 2008 I was ready to go abroad again.

Coincidentally, just as I formulated these ideas in my head, I saw a flyer on campus for a program called Living Routes. The idea to travel to Brazil and study Permaculture was a passing thought that quickly became a reality.

I departed for Brazil in June 2008 with a few key Portuguese phrases and a vague idea of what it meant to practice permaculture. Before heading to IPEC (Instituto de Permacultura e Ecovilas do Cerrado), where I would be taking the course, I met up with a friend from New Zealand and several others who would join me at the school.

We began in Rio de Janeiro, where we

spent several days seeing art, visiting ornate churches, eating wonderful food and exploring. Then we headed to the Pantanal, a massive tropical wetland and biodiversity hotspot. In the Pantanal, we saw all sorts of indigenous animals, including the blue macaw, caimans, toucans and the capiberra. We even fished for and ate piranha!

After Rio and the Pantanal, it was time to head to the eco-village. In total, about 20 of my peers and I (mostly Americans with a few Brazilians, Londoners, a Puerto Rican and a Venezuelan) spent three weeks at IPEC learning the principles of permaculture and specific techniques of green building. At IPEC, we also had certain integrations into Brazilian culture such as Portuguese and capoeira classes.

Living at the school was the first and only time in my life where I have not felt completely conflicted about my lifestyle. It was wonderful to feel a holism in existing, conserving water, composting toi-

lets, feeding food waste to the pigs, eating local, not driving anywhere and utilizing solar energy. It was such a good, healthy feeling, and the working bees (in which we built a cob oven and a keyhole garden) increased the ties we all felt to the earth.

While there, I spent much of my time outdoors. Even the classrooms were outdoors; sometimes we held class at a giant mango tree. There were fresh bananas, monkeys in the trees and beautiful fauna. It empowered me to be around so many people focused on greater global sustainability.

Leaving IPEC was a shock, and I felt immediately wasteful. Luckily, my travel mates and I transitioned back into the mainstream by first trekking through national parks (Chapada dos Veadeiros and Chapada Diamantina), easily some of the most amazing places I have seen. Then we headed down the coast to Salvador, Itacare and Arrial d'Ajuda, all coastal towns. In Arrial, we stayed with a professor from

IPEC, continuing our permaculture education by helping him build a composting toilet on his farm.

Back in Rio, the second time around was very different from the first. About two-and-a-half months after arriving, our Portuguese was passable, and we had a friend to stay with in the city. We felt relaxed, like we were getting into the swing of the culture.

I can now be a certified permaculture apprentice through the skills I obtained studying in paradise. The diversity of life in Brazil continually amazed me, and not only the wildlife, but also the diverse human populations in places like Rio and Salvador.

Overall, my many great adventures completely removed me from my comfort zone. I traveled in a country where I spoke little of the language. The experience so empowered me that now I feel like I could do it anywhere!