



# Tamara

## From Guelph to Brazil

*“I was bombarded by a hoard of high school boys”*

These Months that have past, have been the; fastest, hardest, worst and best, months of my life.

To be honest, I was extremely skeptical at first. I knew NOTHING about Brazil, and the only images I had ever seen were of the Amazon, Carnival, nude beaches and Rio de Janeiro. So, when I was placed in a small city that I had never heard of, in the north-east of Brazil, I was scared for my life!

When I finally arrived in Aracaju, I got my bags and ran into the washroom before even coming out of the terminal to meet my family. I needed to make sure that it wasn't obvious that I had been crying for over 12 hours on the flight over (bringing ALL of my friends and family, BIG MISTAKE). I looked in the mirror for a minute while I put on my red blazer, mentally preparing myself, seeing how I did not know more than a few basic words in Portuguese, or anything about the culture, I was just about ready to let my bowels loose but, I managed to keep it together. When I walked out of the terminal, I was greeted with warm hugs from my host family, my chairman, and his Danish host daughter. It was extremely awkward and I was still so upset from leaving home, I was not in the mood of the amount of pictures that were taken.

When we arrived home, I was glad to see that my brother had invited over some of his friends and exchange students to make me feel more comfortable. I arrived in Aracaju on a Friday, and eager to learn the language, I began school the following Monday. I didn't think I would be noticed as much as I was, seeing how I'm short and brown just like all of the Brazilian girls who live up here. To my extreme surprise, I felt like a zoo animal, everyone was staring and pointing at me, through the window of the classroom door. As soon as I left the classroom, I was bombarded by a hoard of high school boys who began asking me questions, introducing themselves and explaining that there were no girls talking to me because they were all intimidated. I'm extremely

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happy that I made the decision to start school right away; it helped me to start understanding most of what was being said to me within two weeks. Other than that, the first month was nothing special really, my brother (the only English speaking one in the house), would take me out occasionally but, most of my time I spent in the house, without internet, or very good Portuguese, missing home and watching TV. I ended that month with a trip to another city Joao Pessoa, for five days with my brother.

The second month I was finally making more friends, and speaking a little more than basic Portuguese. I began to spend a lot of time with the other exchange students, and going to events within the city. This really helped me to get over my home sickness and finally begin being a real part of my exchange. Although I didn't see much of Rotary, my chairman is extremely kind and always let me go out until early hours of the morning with his host daughter. During this month, I met my counselor; he is a university professor who lives with his wife and two children. He and his family are extremely nice people, but I found it very uncomfortable to tell my problems to a man more than three times my age, especially when his English was not the best. I struggled a lot during that time with problems back in Canada, but my host family and the other exchange students really helped me. If it weren't for them, I probably would've hopped on a plane and gone back home. At this time, my host father became very attached to me, I guess it was a good choice to call him Dad from the get go.

My third month continued into my fourth month without me even realizing it, parties, shopping, and more friends every single day. I could not imagine what I would be doing in Canada right now, slaving away in school and freezing in the winter cold. I will admit that I did cry when I missed the first snow, but I'm glad that I won't have to endure it and I can just watch from my kitchen table while I sweat in the incredibly humid 30 degree weather.

Although I have had minor issues with culture, language, and family (and even the maid stealing my money), I've come through it all, obviously with A LOT of help. I barely even remember what my life was like back in Canada, it's like I've lived here the entire time.

With that, I end my beaver tale, not knowing what is to come for these next months, and I can't wait to experience it. Whilst you read this and shiver in the cold, I am putting on my Brazilian bikini jumping into a pool, and enjoying a neighborhood barbeque.

Beijos, e tchauzino

*Tamara*

**Brazil**