



Aidan

from Georgetown
to
Brazil

"Your exchange year helps shape who you are as a person."

Since my last beavertail, I had Christmas with my host family and rang in a new year and a new decade; this also means I am now more than halfway through my exchange. I spent a lot of that time up at my family's beach house with my host cousins, brother, and dad. We would wrestle in the pool and relax on the beach. Two other exchange students' families have beach houses around the same area, and I tried to see them but couldn't find the time, or it was a special occasion, so there was too much traffic, or it was too dangerous. On New Years my dad, brother, and aunt kicked it off on the beach with some champagne and fireworks. Then we all went to a huge party at one of the "beach class" resorts, which means it's massive and fancy. We danced all night, there was a DJ, he started his music at close to midnight, and there was a live band before and after him. The bands played local music to get the party started and to cool everyone down in the morning. My friends who went to this party and I had a great time. Then we went down to the beach and watched the sunrise in the morning. It was stunning and a great way to start a new year.



I love my host family. They are great. We clicked right away; there is nothing I would change about them. That's why I am so happy that I get to stay the whole year with them. No other student in my city is doing that; they wanted to keep me, and I wanted to stay so they let us.

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My little brother and I get along great. We do all sorts of things, we will go to the beach, or we will go out for burgers when everyone is asleep. We get hungry late at night. He also speaks some English so he can help me learn Portuguese and I help him learn English. I think this is one of the reasons we get along so well because we are always learning for each other. The other reason my brother and I get along so well is that he loves my friends and the other exchange students. I'll throw parties/BBQs or a churrasco as we call them. Here at my house, there is a pool and a basketball/soccer court and a large charcoal grill, so it works excellently. He comes downstairs and joins in sometimes; it's great, everyone loves him. It is cool to have a host family all the other students use as an example for what they wish they had. Obviously, they are all happy with their families, but they often talk about how great my brother is and how much they love my host mom. All the exchange students enjoy the company of my family, and it shows.



As of now, my school isn't requiring me to do the schoolwork; they are asking us to focus on our language skills. I appreciate this because I am trying really hard to improve and hopefully become fluent before I leave. I find people who have known me for a while can understand me better; this is probably because they are used to the Canadian accent. One big difference in the school here is they don't move classes, the teachers do, so I kind of feel like I am back in elementary school. Also, they don't have PE or anytime outside besides to eat and when we go to church. The school here is different, and if I am honest, I definitely prefer Canadian school. But what really matters is the people and my classmates are great so they help me through it. I often go out with my friends from school and we always have a good time. We like to go out to restaurants or the beach; it's always a super fun time.

Carnaval is very special in Brazil; it's during lent. There are very large parties and orchestras in the street. People celebrate Carnaval all over Brazil, but everyone knows that the best ones are in Sao Paulo, then Rio and finally Recife my city so I am really looking forward to going and staying with my friends at a Bloco (that's what they call a house that runs one of these parties) for two days and I'll spend one day in the biggest Bloco, Galo da Madrugada, and also one day in Recife Antigo, the oldest part of the city. The parties can range in size from a few thousand to 5 million at some of the biggest. These parties are huge, and a big part of Brazilian culture and aren't something I plan to miss.

I spend a lot of time with the exchange students. I get along with them really well, and they are really great people. Just this week we all went to this street party/Bloco called Barbas (means beard). It was a lot of fun. There were so many people there and all young people. For me, this makes it a good party. I'll see more people I know and young people here love exchange students, so it's easy to meet new people. This also means lots of people I already know are there, so there are lots of people to dance and talk with.

In my last BeaverTale, I talked mostly about my trip to the south of the Amazon and all the people I met there. They are still very close to my heart, and I talk with some of them regularly. One will even come to visit me in a few months, and I am really looking forward to it. I also plan to see all my friends from Rio when I visit with my family next month.



I had some friends tell me they wanted to hear more about my city after reading my last BeaverTale and I totally understood because all I talked about was my trip. So I will share a story or two from my city. Most weekends I'll start at least one of the days by going to the beach with some friends or meeting them there, we sit and talk and order food for lunch. We will all share a large fish with some veggies and french fries, or we will go to one of the nearby restaurants. But before we eat, we always swim and then walk along the beach and pick up garbage because it's everywhere.

Most weekends there is at least one party that some of us will go to or I'll throw a churrasco at my house for all my friends. We go to the butcher shop and pick out our meat, cook it up on the grill, listen to music and swim in the pool.

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Soon it will have been a year from country announcement day. This is a huge milestone in my life and all other exchange students. It's the deciding moment in your life because your exchange year helps shape who you are as a person. I can feel it as I live my life here. I love Brazil, and I love the exchange, but the exchange is not just a year of your life. It's a whole life in a year, and I plan to savour every last second I have here and really make the most of it.

Aidan