



Aidan

from Georgetown
to
Brazil

"I Caught the Travel Bug"

"Before I went on exchange, I was warned about what could happen, the diseases I could catch, and they were right. I caught the travel bug."

My exchange has come to close, I'll be home in just a few days. I don't know when I'll see most of my friends from Exchange again, but I know they will all always have a place in my heart. I'm just waiting for the day to see them all again, even though we likely won't ever be together again as a big group. I know I can count on seeing the real ones very soon, I have made sure they all know my house is their house. Time won't change that; whenever they can visit they should cus I'll be there in a heartbeat. As far as I am concerned, all 2019-2020 exchange students are family to me, and I'll treat them as such.

I am doing my best to stay busy during quarantine, we are at the beach house, so I have been going for walks and swimming on the beach or in the pool. I also started fishing in the ocean as I did before quarantine and I love fishing in . I, but I don't know much about the fish here. If I am honest, I'm scared because as much as I swam in the ocean this year, I am still super scared of some of the ocean's animals and where I am fishing the water isn't very clear. Still, it's packed with fish for this, so I have actually stepped on fish before. So far, I have only caught one fish I would call a good size, but I also managed to catch three crabs in the same time, yes using my fishing rod. No, I couldn't do it again.





In the last beavertail, I wrote I talked about the Carnaval, what it was and how much I was looking forward to it. I'll start by saying it definitely didn't disappoint. I spent the whole time with my best friend Simion. We also hung out with some friends of my host cousin. I got to know them super well, but then my host cousin moved away, and I just kept hanging out with them. This was lucky because they all stayed at a bloco house together in Olinda each year and they invited me to stay with them. I wasn't allowed to stay the night, but we still met up with them every day we were in Olinda. I went to Galo Da Madrugada, and it was amazing, this is when I met the governor of my state and the mayor of my city. This isn't really normal, but I was in the fancy area with my host mom. I would have liked

to go down to the street, but they said it was too dangerous. I spent three days in Olinda with Simion, Hector and the rest of my friends; it was a really crazy time. I had the sunglasses stolen off my face and at one point, when we were all packed together, I had someone take my shoe off my foot. Luckily, because we were all packed together, I saw my shoe being held in the air a minute later and my buddy Hector grabbed it for me. We ran around the city with a bunch of different blocos and had an amazing few days.

We also spent a day in Recife Antigo it means "Old Recife" it has all these beautiful buildings, some more than 300 years old and very colourful. Everywhere in Brazil costumes are a big deal during Carnaval, and so is the music. It was really cool to see it performed in person with all the craziness of Carnaval going on and these guys were walking all day carrying big heavy instruments and playing them in the heat. It was great to see all the costumes; I definitely plan to go back to do Carnaval as often as I can. I think it's very different in different cities so that's something I wanna experience again.

School closed

My school was one of the last schools in my city to close, but when they closed my host brother's school my mom just kept me home. My friends told me most of their families were doing the same. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to complete the classes in the second semester. The first semester they had us focus on speaking Portuguese, so I won't be able to get credits back in Canada for most of my schooling here, but I might be able to get language credits or maybe a PE credit. Still, I wasn't counting on any, so it's not such a big deal. For me and I think for everyone, the worst part of going home right now is not able to say a real goodbye. We can call and text but no party or big hugs to the people who made our exchange what it is. This makes me upset, but I still obviously understand why we can't do these things, but it's just a bit sad.



So here are two photos of the people who made this year as amazing as it was, the people I called my family, the ones I'll never forget, the ones I know I'll come to visit. One of my friends who is a lot better at staying positive than I am told me in a group chat that this just guarantees that we will have an absolutely crazy reunion one day. He made a point that we would all obviously meet up anyway but the fact that we can't have a proper goodbye is going to make it so much better when we can finally see each other again.



Missed trips: Many of my friends know about the trip to the Amazon rainforest that I was going to go on and that I was going to Rio with my family. Now that both of these had to be called off, we have been invited back another year if we would like. I am not sure if I'll be able to come back just to go on these trips, but it's nice to know I'll have the chance. The Amazon trip seems really amazing; two weeks on a boat going down the rivers of the Amazon sounds like an amazing time, plus there was an overnight trip into the Amazon, and to me, that's like a dream. My friends who were all going to go on that trip and I have all been in touch and plan to try and go the same year if we can. That way, we can at least experience it together as we would have on our exchange. I think that dedication shows that it's really the people who make my exchange special. My host dad also told me that our trip to Rio hasn't been cancelled only postponed and that he had already bought a ticket with my name on, so at a time in the next few years when I come to visit my host family again I'll go with my host dad and brothers to Rio. This means a lot to me; my host dad and I have gotten very close during quarantine, and I am very happy that we are as close as we are. I don't think many people can say they are as close with their host family as I can and I am immensely proud of this. So if my host family is reading this, I love you guys.

I have become very good friends with a lot of people down here, one of my best friends is my friend Simion. He is from Lithuania. When he moved host families he moved about 2km away from me and right next to my gym. Even though we were hanging out a lot before this, now we were really inseparable. We worked out together and would go out for lunch and dinner as much as we could. Sometimes we would invite other students but most of the time it was just us and some of our Brazilian friends. I am not sure the exact day I realized, how much I have changed/am improving, but I know I wouldn't have been able to do it without the help of my friends and especially Simon. He changed a lot too. We both had a very strong drive to improve ourselves and make the most of our time and we are very passionate about things we care about. I think this is why we got along so well. We always managed to have a good time when we were together. We even have a deal that one day we will try to race in the Dakar rally together. I think this is a great example of how exchange can build long term friendships and open doors all over the world.



To summarize this year was far far far from what I expected, and it is something I'll remember forever and has changed me forever. Let's just say there was never a dull moment of this year not even my departure to Canada was what I expected it to be, despite everything not always going to plan I wouldn't change anything about this year (except Corona) because every mistake that happened I learned a lesson and I couldn't be more grateful for this opportunity. So if you're thinking about doing an exchange all I can say is go and don't forget a camera.

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