



# Elizabeth

from  
Waterloo  
to  
Brazil

## *“The Adventures Just Never End”*

I simply can't believe that I have just under two months left in this wonderful country. This has been another wild ride for the past three months! I've been travelling, have exciting visitors, meeting new friends and facing new challenges! I am so in love with this beautiful country; full of colourful fruits I've never heard of, amazing welcoming personalities and tons of dance and music!

Back in February I travelled with the other exchange students to Rio de Janeiro, one of the most famous cities in Brazil. I have to say it was the most amazing trip! It was just over a week long, five full days in Rio, two days in Paraty and two days of travel. Rio was amazing. I have heard how dangerous Rio can be, but as soon as we arrived, driving these twisty roads through these beautiful hills covered in multi-coloured houses, I fell in love with the city. The beautiful green hills run right down into the lovely bright blue ocean. Absolutely stunning. It's a big city but also has lots of green surrounding rolling hills.



One of the most interesting parts was the *favelas*. Favelas is the Brazilian term for the areas where poorer people live, often the city forces them to live in this area to keep the city “cleaner”. They are usually a group of colourful houses on the side of one of the green hills.



Another part of Rio which I fell in love with, was the nightlife, there were always a musician playing on the corner, or an artist painting by the beach! There was such a artistic vibe to the city which I loved! Not to mention how famous Rio is for all the street art.

Another amazing part of this trip was the views, everywhere you looked you could see the beautiful mountains and blue ocean against the bright blue sky.



Always with the Cristo in the background.





As well we went to see the parades for Carnival, and man oh man, the costumes were amazing, covered in jewels, glitter, and every colour you can think of! When they would dance, every jewel caught the light, like a sea of glitter and colours! It was absolutely breathtaking. Words don't even begin to describe how beautiful it was.

Back in March, my aunt from Canada, came to visit me for March Break. She arrived in my city and we had a lovely time just getting to know my city and I loved showing her around this amazing place that means so much to me. She also got to meet a few of my friends and host families here. Then we packed our bags and hopped in the rental car to head to Foz Iguaçu to visit one of the Seven Wonders of the World! I had already been there, but it's so stunning that it was breathing taking all over again. We also got a chance to see a dancing show of traditional dances from all over South America, which was very interesting! We stayed in a beautiful spa hotel which had never ending pools and delicious food! We also drove one day over the border to Argentina to see the Falls from the other side, which was just as stunning. I loved going to Argentina because it was so interesting to hear Spanish and I could actually understand what the other person was saying to me. I would just respond in Portuguese, but it just blew my mind how amazing languages are. I was so proud of myself from where I have come from, when I arrived in Brazil, I really didn't know more than a few words and verb conjugations, and now I can speak fluently in this beautiful language and I could understand more or less another language! It was such a cool realization! We finished off our road trip with an ice cream and good laugh!

These past few months I have made a bunch of new friends. Beginning in February I started back at school, with a new class of kids. They all seemed so excited to meet me, which was amazing! I then went travelling for almost a month and only attended school for a few days here and there. So when I came back to school full time, it was really hard for me to make friends with the kids since they had already gotten to know each other. They were all nice to me in class, but I found myself not seeing them outside of school. This didn't bother me too much since I had all my friends from the last year and all new friends I had made over the summer. Now that it's May, I have definitely become much better in school. I have gotten to know everyone in my new class and we are all a lot closer! I love having a bunch of friends from all sorts of different groups because from them you meet other people who know your friends from last year or from another city! It always blows my mind how small the world really is.

I definitely had a tough past month from the home sickness. I have always been a person who lives in the moment and doesn't focus on what I am missing, but rather what I am doing right now. Although, this past month I was in a new host family who were very different from what I am used to back home, and what I experienced in my other homes here. I was missing the game nights, or the movie nights, or even just sitting down for a home cooked meal, as the whole family. Nevertheless, I spent more time with my friends and my other host families here, and I pushed through the homesickness. There was also another week when I was feeling the homesickness, when my theatre friends back home, had their biggest performance of the year. I was so so happy for all of them, but seeing all the pictures and the never ending stream of photos on every app on my phone, started to get to me. I talked to a friend here in Brazil, and he gave me some great advice: Just turn everything off. I deleted all my apps except for the ones I needed to communicate in Brazil, for about a week. When I turned them back on, the stream of photos had passed and I felt so much better.

I have learned so much from the past three months, and I am so thankful for this incredible experience. I've learned that everyone is connected in some small way, even if it isn't obvious at first. I've also learned how one little piece of advice, a hug, or one small act kindness can lift your spirits. I have also realized how strong you can be even in tough times, I am really proud of where I have come on this twisty, exciting adventure!

I just wanted to thank everyone who has helped make this experience, an experience of my life! To all the Rotarians back in Canada, all the Rotarians in my city and district here in Brazil, as well as all of my host families who have been kind enough to host me throughout the year. And last, but not least, a huge thank you to my family back in Canada for always being my biggest fans, and always believing in me, love you guys!!

Thanks again and *tchau* for now!

*Elizabeth*