



University of St.Gallen

Experience Report São Paulo 2019/2020

by

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Things to consider before going

If you got accepted, first of all Congratulations! You are going to have an amazing year ahead of yourself. But before you get to enjoy São Paulo you will need to take care of some things. First of is the Visa. This is fairly straight forward and FGV will provide you with all the information necessary. The closest Consulate is in Zürich. While you are there you should also apply for your CPF number, which you will need for a lot of things in Brazil. Once you are in Brazil you will need to register your visa within three months (subject to arbitrary changes, always check latest info provided by FGV). This process is a bit easier now compared to previous years. Again, FGV will inform you with everything you need in due time. If you are looking for additional information on how to get settled in São Paulo there is also a lot of information on the St. Gallen Institute of Management in Latin America (GIMLA) website. Once in São Paulo, feel free to pay them a visit. It is also a good idea to invest some time into learning Portuguese (e.g. through Duolingo or the HSG course if you have the time). Their office is just a 5 minutes' walk from FGV. The last thing you should probably start looking at before going is housing (although personally I just arrived like 2 weeks early and looked at places there), we decided to dedicate a whole chapter to this:

Housing

We certainly recommend start looking for a nice (shared-) apartment rather sooner than later. While there are many offers, the good ones are a bit harder to find and usually get picked first by internationals. Your best bet is to ask around and talk to prior exchange students as they might be able to connect you to their host or landlord. Otherwise, Airbnb or the local Roomgo website are quite good places to start looking around and you can always approach hosts via the personal message function and ask for a monthly rental agreement. Moreover, there is an international students FGV Facebook group, where people post all kinds of housing opportunities prior to the new semester. Price wise expect to pay between 400 to 1000usd (depending on the location, amenities, and condition of the apartment). If you want to live within walking distance from campus try to find something in Bela Vista or Jardim Paulista. Bela Vista is a lively area close to Centro and definitely feels less upper class compared to Jardim Paulista, which is more expensive and feels "safer". I have lived in both places and would recommend them equally. Bela Vista is comparably more dangerous but definitely more vivid and there are many cool restaurants and bars. I have always walked around and never felt insecure (even at night). However, one should always keep an eye out and avoid flashing your cell phone or other valuables. Pinheiros is another favourite among exchange students and certainly a cool area to live (Jonas lived there and is happy to provide more insights). A lot of expats live in Pinheiros and it is full of fancy/hip bars and restaurants. Moreover, the public transportation system in SP is surprisingly good and feels very safe. Generally, it is faster and cheaper to take a bus to campus as rides tends to get stuck in traffic. Hence, living within walking distance from FGV is nice but not a necessity, as there are plenty of transportation methods.

Academics

Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) is recognised as (one of) the best business schools in Latin America and holds triple accreditation. The university disposes over several campuses throughout the city. The EAESP campus, where the MPGI courses (relevant for double degree, CEMS, and most exchange students) take place, is conveniently located on Avenida 9 de Julho, close to Avenida Paulista, which could be described as the centre of this vast urban sprawl. The MPGI programme consists of roughly 100 students. Around half the students are local, the other half is incoming exchange, CEMS and Double degree students. Most of the local students work fulltime. The student visa allows holders to work in Brazil and it is fairly easy to find work as the FGV name can open a lot of doors. The school year is split into trimester. Each trimester students can choose a new set of courses. Double-degree students need to complete eight local courses, worth 6 ECTS each. This can be done within the first three trimesters, meaning the students will have the last trimester to work, write their thesis or travel. For me it mostly meant that COVID-19 did not greatly impact at least my FGV experience. All the MPGI courses are taught in English. If one speaks fluent Portuguese they may also elect courses from other programmes taught in Portuguese. Each course has weekly 3 hour sessions. The courses tend to be comprised of many smaller assignments and midterms and

finals. Overall you will probably be busier during the semester than at HSG, but will not have to cram so much for the finals. Participation is usually graded. FGV offers a Portuguese course which Luca took. The course might be useful if you are a complete beginner otherwise, we would rather recommend taking private classes, they are affordable, and you will benefit immensely.

Strategy in an International Perspective (Mandatory for Double Degree)

We would highly recommend this course. The grading is very fair, and the amount of work is rather low. Professor Sérgio Túlio Prado Júnior is very engaged. He presents a lot of concepts, some of which I already encountered during “Orga & Führen” at HSG. Usually the students will be split into groups that have to apply those concepts to companies of their choice. The grading is 40% based on two workshops which follow what we described and include a presentation. Then there are two individual papers that are worth 30% each and that also require you to apply the concepts and frameworks from class.

Advanced Research Methodology (Mandatory for Double Degree)

We would not recommend this class to anyone that has worked on academic papers before, as it will be mostly repetition. Grading is generous and the amount of work is moderate depending on how much you benefit for your thesis. The professor Benjamin Rosenthal seemed to be under the impression we were complete novices in the area. In Brazil, Bachelor student often do not have to write research papers. Funnily enough in the semester when I took the course, only the incoming double-degree students had to take it, almost all of which have already written theses. The course takes place bi-weekly but during the whole semester. Each week a different topic of academic work is addressed. You might benefit somewhat from this course if you are in the process of writing your master thesis. The professor is very nice and will genuinely try to help you, but his expertise is in marketing and not in anything quantitative for instance. The grade is made up 30% from a group presentation wherein you will analyse a paper. 30% from a poster wherein you have to present your idea for your thesis and 40% from a paper wherein you further elaborate on your planned thesis.

International Project Management

If project management is something you are interested in I would recommend this course. Although grading seemed a bit random and the workload was on the upper side compared to other classes. Groups of students have to develop a theoretical project during the course. This involves some smaller exercises (10%). During the last session these projects were presented to the class using posters (30%). There was also a midterm exam (30%) and a final exam (30%).

Fundamentals of Investments

This course was okay and the professor seemed very engaged. However, she is mainly interested in behavioural economics/ finance (e.g. Kahneman). It is definitely recommendable for people that are not as familiar with financial markets. There was a strong focus on behavioural finance. Grading is extremely fair and the amount of work rather low (but somewhat random). Professor Claudia Yoshinaga seems knowledgeable, her slides were terrible though. The grade is comprised of participation, a final exam, one graded homework and a short paper written in pairs.

International Economics for Emerging Markets

I overall enjoyed this course and would recommend it. The grading was fair and the amount of work was medium. It is taught by Julia, a German that has been living and teaching in Sao Paulo for decades. The course is mostly based on loosely moderated discussion of interesting weekly Harvard Case studies and other papers. 20% of the grade is participation (for which she makes literal ticks, you will need to speak three times per session for the max grade). There are two group reports with presentations that are worth 20% and 30% respectively. Then there is a final exam, in which you will basically have to write an essay to answer an open question.

Marketing Analytics

This was probably my favourite course. Grading is very fair and the amount of work is not very high. The prof Leandro Guissoni is quite entertaining and knowledgeable although he is definitely not the most organised. The class looks at how a CMO can evaluate the efficiency of their marketing efforts by looking at KPI's. The class includes weekly readings and discussions. Three of the session were dedicated to a simulation wherein group of students took over the role of CMO of beer brands and had to compete against each other. This was worth 30% of the grade. Another 30% were made up from a group presentation wherein students had to analyse the marketing efforts of one company. The remaining 40% of the grade came from an online exam wherein concepts were described and then immediately applied that could be taken at any time during the trimester. I felt like I learned a lot during this class

Global Management Practice (Mandatory for Double Degree)

We would not recommend this course. The grading is fair and workload is rather low. Isabela, the professor, is a lovely person. In my opinion this course did not feel academically adequate for a master's level. I feel like I learned next to nothing. Effectively the course was about (Brazilian) culture. We talked almost two sessions just about Carnival (and how close Brazilians are to each other). There was also some international differences that were addressed. Overall, I was disappointed with the course. It did not help that the last four sessions were held over zoom due to Covid-19. Participation made up 10%. An argumentative paper about Brazil, written in pairs another 30%. Then there was a consulting report on the effects of Covid-19 on the operations of one business in our home countries, written in pairs. That assignment was changed due to Covid-19 and would have been a bigger group consulting report with presentation originally. The last 30% of the grade were based on an individual take home exam.

Innovation in Global Companies

We would not recommend this class unless this topic really interests you. The grading is ok and the workload is high. Juliana addresses quite a few interesting research topics and concepts in class. For this students are expected to read several papers per week and write an outline for one. These outlines are graded (15%). Participation is also graded (15%). In-class activities (20%) were not previously announced. I missed one class and thus lost 10% of the total grade. Finally 25% of the grades come from seminars, which are effectively case study presentations in groups with feedback from other groups. Finally there is an individual writing assignment related to the seminar (25%). The last three of the sessions were held remotely due to Covid-19, this at least impacted the seminars.

Everything Apart from Academia

After having read the above course reviews you might have realized that course attendance and work will not consume most of your precious time during your exchange here in Brazil. Consequently, you will have more than enough time to enjoy everything São Paulo and its surroundings have to offer. Subsequently, we will talk about some of our favourite places and provide some recommendations, which should make your life and arrival a bit easier (we cannot help you with the terrible Brazilian bureaucracy though).

Nightlife

When it comes to partying and having a great night out with friends, São Paulo offers plenty of opportunities and definitely never sleeps! However, at the beginning it is quite difficult to find yourself around as the choice seems overwhelming and the truly good spots seem a bit hidden or off the grid. Brazilians love to hang out in bars and there are even restaurants that turn into a club (e.g. Tetto, Café de la Musique, etc.). Moreover, the number of clubs is rather limited compared to other global metropolises but good news: there are plenty of independent parties and festivals every weekend ranging from countless funk parties, raves, rock, hip hop, etc. The vast offering does make it hard to decide for an event sometimes. Furthermore, it is advisable to follow the right party labels on social media in order to be stay up to date with the different events. It is recommended to check Eventbrite, Sympla, Ingresso, and Blacktag once in

a while. These are the main ticket (ingresso) platforms and all big events are usually listed there. Some of them do not allow to buy tickets with international credit cards, which is super annoying. All FGV parties are listed on Blacktag for instance, which does not allow for foreign credit cards. Hence, either try to buy the ticket on campus or find a Brazilian friend whom you can pay in cash. Some of the most famous techno labels in and around the city are: mamba negra, carlos capslock (both warehouse style), gop tun (some nice festivals), mbrsaopaulo, souoca (both more rooftop/ European festival style), etc. If you spend your exchange in fall definitely go to TUSCA (the biggest “sports tournament” for universities of the state of São Paulo. To be honest it is mainly a huge festival where roughly 70,000 students join together in São Carlos (around 5h from SP by bus). Highly recommended as it is a unique experience (be prepared for a terrible hangover the following week though). We think you got our point by now. Opportunities are endless and there is something for every taste. Planning ahead and buying tickets early enough can save you a lot of troubles and money as some parties get sold out or ticket prices go up considerably.

Restaurants

If you are a food lover, you have come to the right city. To list all our favourite restaurants would go beyond scope. Nevertheless, there is a short list of some classics that you better not miss out on:

Best smash burgers according to Luca: Guarita Burgers (many other good burger restaurants)

Great Sushi: Osaka Cocina Nikkei (on the more expensive site but well worth its price, try the mixed platter with ceviche)

Great Italian: Tavolino Jardins (it’s super small and offers every day a different traditional Italian menu for a very competitive price) and Enosteria Vino e Cucina (highly highly recommended as well for home-made pasta and other Italian classics for a very fair price)

Great Deli: Z Deli for sure (always a huge crowd waiting to get served and famous for its roast beef sandwich)

Great Indian: Not too many around but restaurant Tandoor was always a good choice

Great Greek: Mytho Restobar or Kouzina

Great Arab: Arabia or Halim

Great Argentinian Steak: Pobre Juan (nice restaurant chain but a bit on the expensive site).

Best Pizza: you will not find it in SP unfortunately...but good news, there is a really good Pizzeria in Rio called JOANA Pizza (only serves Pizza at night) and then there is Nema Bakery (just around the corner from JOANA Pizza), which offers a very tasty Pizza to go (perfect hangover cure during Carnival).

Churrasco: plenty of options (e.g. Bovinu’s, Fogo de Chão, etc.) but both of us were not huge fans of it. In SP comparably expensive and there are better food options.

Brazilians definitely love to eat meat but there are more and more vegetarian/ vegan restaurants, which offer very good food (search around in Pinheiros for instance). Moreover, there are numerous fine dining locations (e.g. the different restaurants by Alex Atala), which are kind of expensive but certainly worth a try. However, most of them offer very reasonable lunch menus. Traditional Brazilian lunch is called PF (prato feito), which is a choice of meat, rice, beans, etc. There are many “lanchonettes” (small restaurants that offer sandwiches, PF’s, fruit juices, and alcoholic beverages) around FGV and they all serve the same kind of food. Moreover, Brazilians love “kilo restaurants” where you have a big buffet and you pay by grams. If you are into Asian food do not miss the city part “Liberdade”, which is worth a visit and offers traditional Asian food (everything from Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Thai, etc.).

Getting Around

As mentioned before, public transportation in São Paulo is very safe and a great option during the day. However, if you go out partying, we highly recommend sticking to Uber/ Taxi99 (the local uber) unless it is still early. Traffic is usually no longer an issue at night times, and it is definitely safer, especially if you are going to parties that are either in Centro or outside of Jardins/ Pineheiros. Nevertheless, do not end up like most students and only rely on Uber out of laziness or irrational fear. By doing so you will waste money, miss some nice places, and spend countless hours stuck in traffic.

Traveling

Given the relatively low amount due for FGV you will find plenty of opportunities to travel. The beaches surrounding SP are nothing special and are notoriously dangerous. Hence, we recommend to rent a car (Localiza in Centro is great) with a bunch of friends and drive off to Ubatuba, Ilha Grande or Ilhabela for instance (do not forget your mosquito spray and ensure you got your yellow fever vaccine). These are perfect 3-4 days trips. If you have more time we highly recommend going to the Nordeste and travel down along the coast (e.g. Jericoacoara, Lençóis, Natal, Pipa, Recife, Bahia, and down to the vibrant city of Rio de Janeiro (also recommended to go there for a weekend)). There are plenty of small cities along the coastline with friendly people and beautiful beaches that invite to stay for 1-2 nights. Fortaleza is on the route, however, we recommend skipping this city as it is said to be extremely dangerous and on top has not much to offer apart from “Praia do Futuro” (relatively nice beach).

Iguaçu is another short trip (not more than 3 days as it gets boring) which we highly recommend. Most importantly you have to go to the Argentinian site as it is much bigger and offers more impressive views. We also went to the national park “Chapada Diamantina”, which offers various beautiful 2-3 days hiking trips. The hikes are on the longer side and can get a bit difficult. However, nothing your pair of sneakers can’t cope with and you will be rewarded with unique and haunting sceneries in return.

Also consider going to the unique Lençóis Maranhenses National Park, the Amazon, the Pantanal with its unique wildlife and the Cerrado (Savannah).



