

My Trip to Salvador, Brazil – South America



This summer, I took the plunge and travelled to Salvador, Brazil for a 6-week volunteering internship organised by AIESEC. I chose to do the ‘Smarketing’ (Smart Marketing) project as it perfectly coincides with my degree of Marketing and Management. I decided to go on this trip because I wanted to do something that not many people can/want/are able to do, thus it gives me a unique life and work experience that will make me stand out in the jobs market, as well as fulfilling my love of volunteering at the same time. Myself and 6 other people from all around the world formed a group; Me - UK, Isabel – Spain, Carmo – Portugal, Omer – Turkey, Claire – Belgium, Vaiturai – French Polynesia & Canada and Keity – Peru, and we worked in an NGO in an area of Salvador called ‘Vila Laura’ – which was a troubled area. The NGO was called ‘Lar Da Crianca’ (House of the Children) and it is an orphanage for children who have either lost parents, been abandoned or who have been sexually and physically abused. In this account I will explain my expectations of the trip, what my role was and what I achieved in this role. I will then go on to explain about how this trip partially funded by the Expeditions Fund, benefitted me as a person as well as my studies and career prospects.

Expectations

You hear a lot of bad things about South America; the incredibly high crime rates, outbursts of diseases and extreme poverty to name a few. I must admit, when I told my family and friends about this trip, these stereotypical ideas automatically flooded their heads and many tried to talk me out of it. However, I knew of the beauty of Brazil, the rich culture and wildlife and this really interested and motivated me from the start. When I found this internship with AIESEC I thought I was dreaming; volunteering + travel + work experience in marketing – to me it seemed like a no-brainer. I applied for the marketing project in various cities in Brazil; Fortaleza, Recife and of course, Salvador. I chose Salvador after I was impressed with the people who contacted me from the AIESEC office there – who were just students from the University of Bahia. Ana, who actually ended up being my host in Brazil, was so kind and informative and we got on very well from the start, so I had a good feeling and went for it! I had mixed emotions going through my mind in the run-up to my departure such as safety worries, travel worries and also a fear about not making good friends. However, I knew this is something that I wanted to do, and knew it would benefit me either way.

My Role

As previously mentioned, I was part of a group of seven students from all around the world, all working towards a goal. That goal was to provide the NGO with a new marketing plan and help them improve their financial situation. I came to learn that the situation in Brazil for NGOs and much of the population is very dire. The government are cutting all previous funding and

help they normally give to NGOs so that they can keep providing services the government consistently fail to do. This meant that Lar Da Crianca were desperate advice on how to improve their situation. We went to work four days a week for around 4 hours, and within this time, we always made sure we spent time with the children and gave them some attention, the youngest was just 14 days old. We started by planning what we were going to do to help fundraise as well as improving the children's standard of life. My role was mainly based around the social media presence and organising the party which was going to be our big money-maker. I developed a new flyer and poster that they could use as their new marketing material. We also developed a customer retention strategy in order to prevent the 'one off' donations and instead create loyal and regular donors which would help them with their financial situation as the current process was inefficient and not functioning well. From all the fundraising we did, we raised enough money to fix the windows in the children's bedroom and also fully replace their bathroom (toilets, sinks and showers) in order to improve their standard of life as it was near enough impossible for the NGO to save up this amount of money.



Contribution to My Studies



After being back at university for a few months, I can see the impact this trip has had on my studies. I now realise the real-life applications of what we learn in lectures and seminars and how I incorporated some of my knowledge into the project and furthermore, taught me that I still have a lot more to learn about businesses, charities and NGOs and their processes all around the world. However, this trip has not only benefitted my studies, it has made me more globally aware of issues I didn't fully understand before. It threw me in at the deep end in a country where I did not speak any of the language and didn't truly know

what to expect. This is life experience in itself and prepares me for challenges and uncomfortable situations I will undoubtedly experience in the coming years. I am extremely grateful to the Exhibition Fund Committee for accepting my application and offering me the chance to have this experience. It took a bit of the financial pressure off of me and allowed me to truly enjoy the time I had there. I travelled to different places at the weekends including Rio De Janiero which was an amazing experience and wouldn't have been possible without this fund.

My Brazil experience was full of surprises, the cultural difference was a big shock to me and having to live and integrate in a foreign country is something I have never done before and I will carry the experiences and memories I had with me for a very long time.