B**rasil - Elizabeth Gavranich**

Hey there all Outbounders, Inbounders, Rotarians, families, friends and, most importantly, those wishing to do exchange in the near future. These past three months have been a hectic but exciting ride in my first six months of exchange here in Brasil.

It started in May with the famous Amazon Tour. A short 10 days filled with so much fun you end up not wanting to go home. A little nervous, mostly due to the influence of a few significant films such as "Anaconda", and the stories we had heard about malaria, I and 60 other exchangers from all over the world headed out to Manaus, the capital of the Amazons, with enough insect repellent to protect an entire country from mosquitoes! But don't worry, I lived to tell this story didn't I.

The kinds of things we saw in those short 10 days included Indians, crocodiles, pink dolphins, piranhas, sloths, snakes, lush forests and the most beautiful river in the whole of Brasil. We spent the majority of the trip on two boats on the river, one for sleeping and relaxing and one for eating. We also had little canoes with which we visited different parts of the river, communities and, of course, animal spotting! Yay! My favourite part was sleeping in hammocks every night, and being rocked to sleep by the gentle sway of the boat, or in actual fact by those few game exchangers who liked to play dominoes with the rest of us. All in all, apart from the fact that we stank, were dirty and were staring to crave a normal house, we were in the Amazons and that was way cool!

The next big thing was of course the arrival of my 18th birthday, and with that my mother and best friend nicely wrapped in jet-lag and with suitcases full of presents for me! Okay, I'm kidding- just a quarter of a suitcase. We travelled to Rio De Janeiro where we saw all the famous sights, my favourite being the beautiful Cristo Redentor. I'm talking serious when I say that you walk away taking more photos of him than of anything else in Rio. We later returned to my town, Botucatu, where my mum and best friend stayed with my first host family. I was so excited because they got to see my new life here in Brasil. I got to show them around my town, to see my friends, my families and my favourite places to hang out. As was my wish, we celebrated the big 18 in my town with a nice dinner that included my two host families thus far, and my mum and best friend. Was hilarious because we managed to take photos of me with my three mums! The next day I had a small gathering of my closest friends so they could meet my mum and friend. The best memory being when my mum drove the car down the road to fetch some groceries and all 7 of my friends decided that they wanted to go in the car with her. Not only was it a new experience for her having to drive on the wrong side of the car AND the road, but she also had a 5-seater car packed to the brim with 7 Portuguese-speaking kids. I personally enjoyed every minute of it! The day after this, we went travelling again to Foz de Iguaçu. One of the most beautiful places in Brasil, literally. We got to walk along and right up and under the falls where you couldn't help but return completely soaked. My best friend and I forgot for a couple of seconds that we were mature 18-year-olds and continued to prance around like a couple of 4-year-olds with ants-in-their-pants. Also saw the falls by boat and helicopter, neither of which beat the way you feel on top of the world when you are looking out and over the top of layer and layers of huge cliffs of running water. Simply divine.

After my mum and friend left, I had about 15 days of breathing before I was packing for the trip of a lifetime. Nordeste Trip July 2007. 26 days visiting some of the most beautiful beaches along the northeast of Brasil. 36 students, a really decent size, we had mostly hot, sunny days, stunning beaches and lots of sun-tanning. Souvenirs were plentiful, bikinis were cheap, the sun was free and our days were laid-back- what more could you ask for in a month-long holiday in Brasil!

So that's my news, and busy news it has been. I'm back home now and back at school, and here in my town it is so bloody cold I have almost died various times! But nonetheless I am happy as Larry to be back with my friends.

Peace out children, and- Eu amo o Brasil!