

We flew from Baltimore to Atlanta in the evening. From Atlanta we caught the red-eye flight to Brasilia. We took Emma with us, but we did not buy her a seat. Somehow our seats were not together on the flight to Brazil, Gee was a few rows behind me. I ended up holding Emma for nearly the whole eight and a half hours of the flight. Needless to say, I did not get much sleep. Gee managed to arrange the seating so that she had a whole row to herself, so she could lay down. She also took some sleeping medicine. When it came time to land, she was totally incoherent. I struggled to even wake her. Now I had an infant and a cranky adult to take care of. Somehow we made it through immigration, getting our bags and then through customs. We had four 70 pound bags plus over sized carry-on bags, but they did not inspect us. The friend who was going to pick us up was not there due to some manufactured confusion. After trying to use the pay phone, Gee found someone to lend her their cell phone and called her friend (Cleber). We had quite a time fitting three adults, Emma in her car seat, and all of our luggage into his car. We finally arrived at his place about four hours after we landed. Gee collapsed on the bed. Cleber, Emma and I went out for some lunch and to run some errands. When we returned Gee was still asleep. In the evening we dropped Emma off with Gee's sister (Luciane) so she could have her for a little while before we left in case there were any issues. Luciane is married and has two kids, aged twelve and almost two. That worked out well for having an extra person to watch and to have someone for Emma to play with. We spent three days in Brasilia before we flew north to São Luis.

São Luis is the capital of the state of Maranhao, and is on the north coast about half way along its length. It is a much more primitive city compared to the others of Brazil. We stayed with someone from couchsurfing. In case you don't know what that is, it is a web site where you can find homes all over the world that will let you sleep on their couch while you are visiting their city. We went to dinner with our hosts, and then got a tour of the downtown afterwards. There was an old street where anyone could come and play music and dance. It was quite a show of ordinary people letting go. One of our hosts said she was looking to buy a new camera. We showed her ours and she said it was exactly what she wanted. Imported goods in Brazil cost very much due to the import tax. Cameras are more than twice what they cost in the U.S. Gee wanted to help our new friend, so we sold her the camera, at a profit to ourselves.

We needed to leave São Luis because we had a deadline. Our flight from Natal was only five days away, and we had about 900 miles to cover and many things to see. Since we were without a camera we had an adventure going to downtown São Luis, dragging our bags along with us, to find a cheap camera to buy. We could not go to just one shop, Gee had to comparison shop. The selection was meager, but we found one at the first shop we had gone to. Now we had a mediocre camera to record the trip with. If only we had remembered to bring a spare camera with us from home.

From São Luis we got a ride in a car to Barreirinhas. There is a location on the edge of the city where people with cars give rides to various locations. When we arrived we filled the car going our way. There was one woman waiting for it to fill up. We were quite lucky. The ride took about four hours and it cost only a little bit more than the bus would have. We stopped half way to get some food and drink. The driver took us to three hotels before Gee liked one. We slept in air

conditioned splendor that night. In the morning Gee arranged for us to take a boat down the river to the ocean, to a place called Lençois Pequeno. It took about an hour, with two stops for us to buy stuff and take pictures along the way. At the destination (named Cabure) the river almost reached the ocean. We stopped where there was only a wide sand bar between the river and the ocean. There were a few restaurants and a pousada (bed and breakfast) there. The only access to this place was via boat or vehicle over the sand. Gee learned that we could get a ride from here to a town that would be easier for us to make our way to to the next place on our destination list. She had someone bring our bags from the hotel. The only problem was that we were short on cash, and at this remote locale no one accepted credit cards or would exchange dollars. Gee promised to get money from the ATM at the town we were heading to and pay them then. By this time the sun had set. So, off we went on a quad-runner speeding along the beach in the dark with our luggage tied to the front and back of the vehicle. There was a party in town so we had a bunch of company on the trip. I was driving our quad-runner, with Gee behind me. There were three persons on another vehicle and five on the third one. When we got to the town of Paulino Neves the sole ATM in town was not functioning. After much running around Gee found a couple of people that would exchange dollars, so we were able to pay our debts, get a room for the night and catch a bus the next morning. The only catch was that all the hotels were full as there was some event going on. We ended up staying in the house of the owner of one of the hotels. We almost ended up sleeping in hammocks in the patio of the hotel.

From Paulino Neves we caught a bus at 4:30am. It took us to Parnaíba. At the bus terminal there Gee found a guy with a van ran an informal bus service and was going our way. We had to wait for a couple of hours as he acquired more passengers. That gave us time to go to the bank. We tried using an ATM but it didn't like any of our cards. We found a branch of Gee's bank and did a withdrawal. We had to wait in line a long time as banks in Brazil are always crowded. Her bank cards for the bank were all expired, but the teller gave us a limited amount. After a couple of hours of traveling in the van we transferred to a bigger vehicle which took us to the town of Camocim. There we paid passage on a dune buggy to take us to Jericoacoara. There were two other persons on the bus that joined us on the buggy, so it was quite full. We traveled on the beach, crossing two rivers on tiny ferries, the second one being propelled by long poles being pushed by three kids. We arrived just a little before sunset. Gee spent much of the evening trying to arrange our travel arrangements for the next day and beyond. After much talking with many persons she found a couple that would be going our way the next morning.

In the morning we walked to one of the popular beaches that has a rock archway called Pedra Fourra. We could see lots of windsurfers and kite surfers in the ocean. It was quite windy there, just what the wind surfers like. After that we jumped into a dune buggy for the half hour trip to our new friend's car. The trip to Fortaleza was exciting as our generous host was a too fast driver. In Fortaleza we were dropped off at the bus station. Our onward bus left four hours later, so we saw some of the area around the bus terminal. The bus to Natal was an over night bus, so we left at 9:15PM and arrived at the Natal airport at 5AM. The airport wasn't near anything, so we waited there the four hours for our flight to the island Fernando de Noronha. The flight was a quick forty minutes. When we landed we had to pay a \$22.67 fee per person per day of our stay on the island. All visitors have to pay the fee, only natives and workers that are

recruited for their skills are exempted. We did not have a place to stay. Gee tried to reserve a room, but there was too much confusion doing it online. So, our first order of business was to find a room. We spent quite a bit of time doing that. Gee had to find the optimal accommodation for the minimal price. We did not get settled into our new place until the late afternoon. It had been quite a trek over two days, sweating all the way, with no shower in sight, and I felt and smelled exactly that way.

We woke up early, as Gee had trouble sleeping, so we went walking before it got too hot outside. We went down to the nearest beach and then walked along the beach. The beaches here are pretty small as the island is one big rock. Most of the shoreline is rock cliffs, with small pockets of sand in certain places. As we walked down the beach we had to climb over rocks in a few places to reach the next beach. One of those rock portions was the base of a huge rock that juts up into the sky 1059 feet, called Morro Pico. Getting past that was a challenge that took quite a while. I also ran into a funny looking cactus with microscopic needles. We decided to turn around once we reached the other side of the morro as we needed to get back to the pousada for breakfast before it was finished. To get back we walked up to the road where Gee found us a ride to our place on a tour bus. Everything on the island was quite expensive, as nearly everything was brought from the mainland, and we were a captive audience. The only industry on the island is tourism. The island is tiny, just 4200 acres, the airport taking up a large portion of it. It is about one tenth the size of Santa Catalina Island off the coast of Southern California. We settled into a routine of walking every morning, starting before sunrise, to beat the heat of the day. We would hike in the evenings also sometimes. We eventually covered all the areas we were allowed to go to. Half of the island is a national park, and large parts of it is off limits to tourists. Sea turtles nest on the beaches of the island. We spent eight days there. It was a very different time than the mad dash we made across the north coast of Brazil. Just before we left the island my arm developed a rash, which happened to be in the location of where the cactus got me on our first day of hiking. That was nearly a week earlier. That rash would take another month to fully heal. I discovered another one on my leg that I presume was caused by the cactus also.

We flew back to Brasilia, and retrieved Emma from her sister. Emma had caught a cold or the flu while we were gone. I did not get much sleep that night because it was so hot and Emma was not sleeping well. We moved to another of Gee's friends apartment the next day. I did not get much sleep there either due to the heat and I was getting eaten by mosquitoes. The next day was pure hell for me, and we had lots to do. I barely survived, but I caught Emma's cold. My first cold/flu in thirteen years. I flew home on the red-eye flight the next day. Getting home from Baltimore on public transportation while dragging a large suitcase in thirty degree weather (I had only a light jacket) was kind of a pain. And then I went to work the next day.

Gee and Emma stayed in Brazil for two more weeks, during which Gee made a quick trip to Rio de Janeiro. Those two weeks gave me time to recover from the trip. Also, I lost twelve pounds on the trip.