



# Brazil 2014

Rio de Janeiro, Soccer, Manaus, and the Jungle

*June 14 - June 28*

What an amazing trip! Since the inception of a seemingly crazy idea to go to the World Cup every four years (thanks Ian!), we have completed our second World Cup experience. For two weeks of the five-week tournament we traveled throughout Brazil and had a phenomenal time. The first week we were in Rio de Janeiro staying with a friend-of-a-friend whose name is Riccardo (and his brother Raphael), and he was a very gracious and fantastic host. It is always nice to have a native speaker with you, and Riccardo enhanced our trip by taking us to great places to eat and making suggestions of things to see and do. Most of the second week was spent in the city of Manaus and the surrounding jungle, and again we had a great time. We went to two matches in Manaus: USA vs Portugal and Switzerland vs Honduras. Both matches were well played, and the overall experience was fantastic. While adventuring in the jungle we met some fellow Americans (Ashley and Mitchell), and we quickly bonded while battling extremely hot and humid conditions, lack of sleep, and bugs.



Like any trip there were highlights and lowlights, but we will remember the overall experience fondly. The following is a summary of our trip, and we hope you enjoy!

Nathan, Thomas, and Ian



## *Rio de Janeiro - Part I*

### **Leblon**

Rio is a sprawling city with many different neighborhoods, and we had the fortune of staying in Leblon. This neighborhood is considered by many to be the best in Rio, because there are many high-end residences, fantastic restaurants, and a lovely beach. The beach was about a ten minute walk, and we visited often during our time in Leblon. The top picture is a panorama of the beach and the picture to the left is one of Nathan, Ian, and Thomas at the beach. For a panoramic view from the apartment window, see the top picture on the next page.



### **The Lagoon**

There is a lagoon in the middle of Rio, and there are many bike paths, sports courts, and restaurants around the lagoon. Nathan, Ian, and Riccardo went to a restaurant to watch Switzerland play Ecuador, because the restaurant was the official place to watch the Switzerland matches (picture to the left). Even though it was quite warm, there were animal-fur rugs, hot Swiss-style food, and two St. Bernard dogs! The match was very exciting because the Swiss scored a last-minute winner, and everyone was going bonkers after they won.



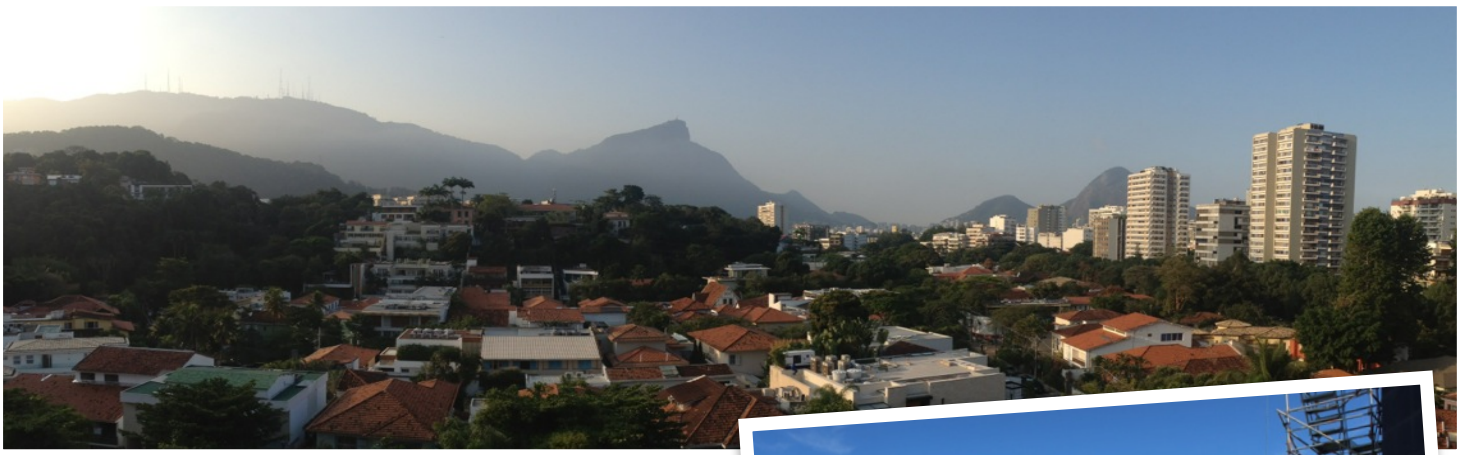
### **Centro**

Nathan, Ian, and Thomas also took a day trip to the city center, known as Centro. While walking around the area we visited many of the well-known buildings and churches, and even saw an intense game of foosball being played (picture to the left). The streets were very narrow, and the European influence on the architecture and city planning was evident. There were flags of various countries everywhere, though the Brazilian flag heavily outnumbered all the rest.

One of the most splendid buildings is the Candelária Church (picture at the bottom of the next page), which is a Catholic Church built between 1775 and the late 19th century. We marveled at the ornate carvings and decorations, and wandered through the Church admiring the craftsmanship.







## *Rio de Janeiro - Part 2*

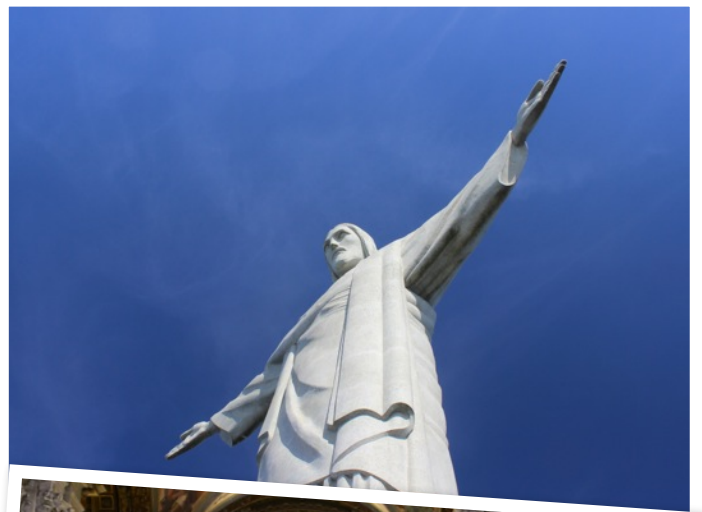
### **Cristo Redentor**

On our last day in Rio, we went to the Cristo Redentor on the Corcovado mountain (the middle mountain in the above panorama). There are three ways to get up the mountain: Hike/climb, taxi, or train. Due to the Brazilian Round-of-32 match in the afternoon, we arrived early to purchase train tickets. However, many other people had the same idea, so it took two hours for our train boarding time to arrive. When we arrived at the top of the mountain, the view of both the statue and surrounding area made the wait worthwhile. Even though we intellectually know the statue is massive, it is almost overwhelming in person due to its size. Another aspect of seeing the statue is that we are practicing Christians, so we have a special connection with Christ that made the journey to see it even better.

The statue is on a small viewing platform, and the entire platform was packed with people of all nationalities. Many of them had their team's colors on, and it was awesome to see so many people coming together in a positive way. Even though the day was a little hazy, the view was tremendous because we could see all of Rio. The upper-right picture is looking towards Leblon (yes, that is a race-horsing track), and the Maracanã was visible by looking from the other side of the platform. Visiting the statue was a highlight of the trip and a great way to finish it!

### **Food**

During our time, we had some fantastic food. From pão de queijo (Brazilian cheese bread) and farofa (yuca flour mixture) to picanha (Brazilian cut of steak) and feijoadada (pork and beans, with spices), we ate very well. One of the best dessert places in Rio is in Leblon, so we sampled three of their desserts... and the place definitely lived up to its reputation! Brazilians also know how to cook chicken, rice, and beans excellently, and the food we had was some of the best we have ever eaten.







## *Soccer*

Due to increased ticketing volume for this World Cup, it was really hard to get tickets to matches. We managed to get tickets to two matches in Manaus, one of which was a USA match. The stadium was brand new, and we could certainly tell this due to the architecture and quality of building. The top panorama is the stadium before the USA match and the bottom panorama is at halftime of the USA match.

### **USA vs Portugal, Manaus**

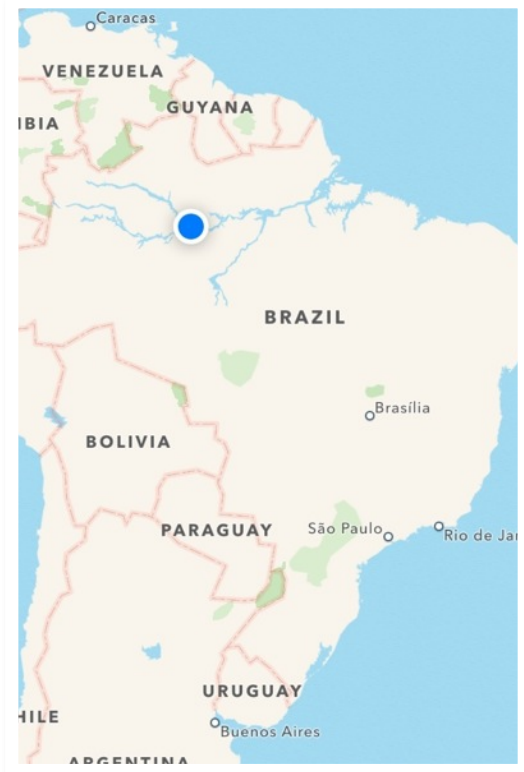
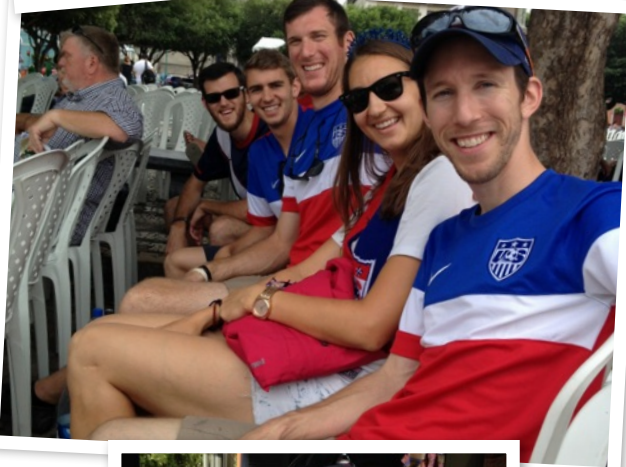
At some point in the last couple of years, we decided to dress as Presidents during this World Cup for a USA match. Ian was Teddy Roosevelt, Thomas was Abraham Lincoln, and Nathan was George Washington. We took pictures for 2 1/2 hours before the match with fans from many different countries, which we estimate taking over 2,000 pictures. The atmosphere of the match was electric, and we really put ourselves into yelling for the squad. The overall experience was amazing, and the only lowlight was the last 10 seconds of the match.

### **Switzerland vs Honduras, Manaus**

This was a great match from a neutral's point of view, because it featured a hat trick by a Swiss player (Xherdan Shaqiri) and other exciting play. Whereas this was a totally different fan experience than when the USA was playing, it was still a very good one.







## Manaus

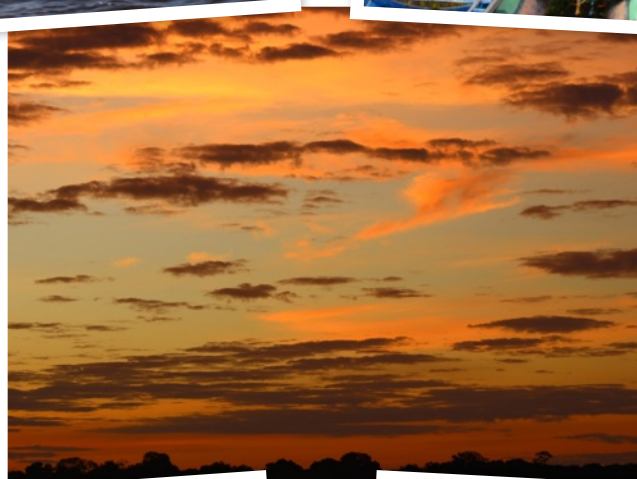
### Location

Ian had the brilliant idea to take the screen shot above while we were in Manaus, and it highlights just how remote Manaus is from the rest of the country. The distance from Rio to Manaus is roughly the same distance as Miami is from Denver, which is about a four hour flight. Manaus sits at the intersection of the two rivers that become the Amazon River, and there is approximately 1000 miles of jungle on all sides of Manaus. The two rivers flow beside each other for 20 kilometers due to differences in acidity and temperature, and this can be seen clearly on the upper-left picture on page 6.

### Opera House and Square

At the turn of the 20th century, Manaus was a massive producer of rubber. The city had quite a bit of wealth, and with this wealth built a beautiful Opera House (as seen in the upper-left two pictures). Our last night in Manaus was the first night of a cultural festival, and there was a jazz band playing that evening. We bought tickets in the upper level of the Opera House and enjoyed a fantastic night of music. Surrounding the Opera House was a cobblestone square, and for the World Cup a stage and screens had been setup for public viewings of the matches. We watched the USA v Germany match at one of these viewings with Ashley and Mitchell and many other USA fans, and celebrated our loss/win with a sucos (which Ian is holding in the bottom-left picture). The sucos were fruit-juice drinks that were simply phenomenal and came in almost all of the fruits available in Brazil.





## *The Jungle - Part I*

### **Water and Boats**

We had booked a 3-day/2-night adventure in the jungle, and we certainly got both adventure and jungle. The camp was only accessible by boat, so it took a bus-boat-bus-boat travel combination to reach the camp. The boats in the upper-right picture are the type used to travel from the camp on our various adventures, and we took them out for sunrises, sunsets, star-gazing, hiking, and fishing. The middle picture is from the second morning's sunrise, and the sunrise was one of the best we had ever seen. The bottom-right picture is on the return trip from fishing, and the boat rides were some of the best times we had on the trip.

### **Camp**

Due to overbooking by the travel company, there were not enough beds for everyone. We resorted to hammocks with mosquito nets, as seen in the lower-left picture. It was insanely hot at night (quote from Ian: "I think someone is trying to cook my body!"), so sleeping was difficult. However, we slept well when we became too tired to notice the heat, bug nets, and hammocks. One highlight was that the food at the camp was outstanding, and we enjoyed various types of fish, chicken, beef, rice, and vegetables.





## *The Jungle - Part 2*

### **Hiking**

On the second morning the group went for an out-and-back hike in the jungle (top-left picture). It was great to see the different types of vegetation and learn some about the forest, though it was difficult because of the number of people on the hike. After crossing several smaller sections of the flood zone on fallen trees, we came to a point where we had to cross through the flood zone (bottom-left picture). We learned later that the hike had to turn around because the guide did not want us to wade through neck-deep water, which was a great decision by the guide. Fortunately no one had any negative reactions to parasites/bacteria in the water, though the clothes and shoes will never be the same.

### **Fishing**

Another adventure we completed was piranha fishing, which was awesome! We used raw chicken and regular fishing line and hooks, and Ian, Thomas, and Mitchell all caught piranhas. Thomas was the first one to catch one, and they were 3 of the 6 people (out of 30) that actually caught them. Nathan was the bait-setter for his boat, so it was a team effort to catch the piranhas. The top- and bottom-right pictures show Thomas' and Ian's piranhas.

