

Bem-vindo a São Petersburgo!

What do we Russians know about Sao Paulo and Brazil? It is all about sunshine, beaches, carnivals and overwhelming joy. What do Brazilians know about Petersburg and Russia? It is a cold city which has a humid climate, bears walk on the Red Square and there are gloomy people wearing trooper hats. It seems that being captivated by such stereotypes it is impossible to find anything similar between Brazilians and Russians. It made our conversation with a student from Brazil, Giovanna Luiza Mendes even more interesting.



The third year student of the Paulista State University (UNESP) heard about the summer school of the Polytechnic University from her friends and decided to enroll. She fell in love with Russia immediately and forever. Giovanna has told the correspondent of the Media Center about the things we and the Brazilians have in common, about the opportunities she has due to studying in Russia, and why she was so surprised to see the fridge in the dormitory room.

- Giovanna, tell us please about what you study in your home University and how you ended up coming to the International Summer School of the Polytechnic University?

- Last year four students from my university took part in your Summer School and were very content. They advised me to take part in the selection of candidates for the trip to Russia. As soon as I heard that our university began to accept applications to the Summer School I handed in mine. It wasn't easy to get the chance for this trip: we have to have good marks, write a motivation letter and prove good command of the English language with a certificate. In a word, the competition was rather strong. Last year five our students got a scholarship from the Polytechnic University for studying and living in the Summer School. This year only three students have been selected so far, but as far as I know some more students are coming here next month. Personally, I believe it is a real good luck to get this scholarship to study in the Polytechnic University.



In Brazil I study different foreign languages in the faculty "International Relations". And I came to the Summer School for one month. It is my first experience of studying abroad and it has been my dream! Here I have an opportunity not only to study Russian but also to learn more about Russian culture. I have signed up for the course "Open your mind to Russia". I have chosen it because the knowledge that I get in the Polytechnic University will help me to improve my analytic abilities and to find a job in future: in Brazil it is highly appreciated if you have experience of studying abroad.

- What do your parents think about you studying in Russia?

- They told me I was crazy. But they are happy that I got a chance to study abroad.

- Tell us more about the course you are doing here. How do the classes go?

- My course is extremely interesting! I study three subjects - "The Russian Civilization", "Business in Russia" and "The Russian language". Usually I have two classes, they begin at 9:30-10:00. One class is in the morning and the second one is in the afternoon, every day in a different way.



I like studying in the Polytechnic University very much. The teachers are outstanding and they speak English very well. During every class they give us a huge scope of information. I am a classical scholar and like subjects connected with culture very much. In my home university I study social phenomena connected with national culture (in particular, processes of globalization and consolidation of the national culture in Europe) and what steps the government takes in different situations. It has turned out really important and useful to me that the teachers in the Polytechnic University during their lectures touch upon some themes connected with my research work. I am going to talk with them about it in more detail. I am very happy that we are studying not only academic aspects but we can apply our knowledge in practice.

- Will some credits be transferred from the course that you're studying here?

- Yes, these subjects will be transferred and it is great. Anyway this course will be very useful for my further studies and work.

- And how do you study Russian?

- A lot of Russians live in Brazil, so when I arrived here, I already knew some words, for example "mushroom" and "school" (Laughing.). Seriously speaking, though, your language is very difficult! I study French and Spanish in my university and these are Romance languages. Russian is absolutely different and for me it's very hard to study. We didn't have a lot of classes, but I'm happy that I can read the names of the stations in the subway! When I got my student card I couldn't read what it said, but now I can. Of course, it helps a lot that I'm constantly in the Russian language environment - all the people speak Russian and all the inscriptions are in Russian. When my Summer School in the Polytechnic University is over we're planning to go to Moscow with my friends from Brazil. In the beginning, we were worried about the fact that everything was in Russian and how we would communicate... But now I know for sure - we can do it!

Reading is the most difficult aspect for me. Your alphabet differs from the other languages that I know. Phonetics is similar to Portuguese, but it's not that easy to learn alphabet and to read. Our Russian lessons are really intensive. There are ten people in my group. The professor explains grammar and tasks in English and we have to read all the examples in Russian. It may even result in a headache from overstress. When our classes are over everyone speaks their mother tongue (Laughing).

- You're staying in a dormitory. What are your impressions?

- I'm staying in the dormitory #12 on Khlopina Street. I love it! Many foreign students live there, we communicate with each other and help each other. I like my room, I even have my own refrigerator! We have a microwave and a kettle in the kitchen. If you live in a dormitory in Brazil you have to buy home appliances by yourself. Here you're provided with everything. Also, there is an elevator and our dormitory is close to the subway - it's very convenient!

- Giovanna, do you like spending time with the Russian students, have you already made any friends?

- Yes, I like them! In Brazil they believe that Russians are unkind and unsociable, but now I know that it is not true. All my Russian friends are like Brazilians, even better (Laughing.). They are all open-minded and are ready to help me, to explain something, to go out together. When I decided to go to Russia, my friends in Brazil wondered if it was dangerous. But I was determined to go and I don't regret that. Saint-Petersburg is a wonderful city, just like in a dream! I walk with my friends a lot; we went to Peterhof and to the Catherine Palace.

- What other places and events have you attended?

- I'm really enjoying the white nights; I can walk a lot and explore this marvelous city. Yes, we went on a boat trip. We even ate for free there (Laughing.). We also went to the Hermitage – had a guided tour, to the Church of the Savior on Blood and the Russian museum. We were given students cards by the Polytechnic University and because of that the tickets to museums are much cheaper. Also, we are planning to go on a picnic to the Gulf of Finland. Furthermore, we visit different events, for example, we are planning to go to Saint-Petersburg's Chamber of Commerce.

- Do you like the local cuisine?

- Yes, very much! I don't know why, but the local food is similar to Brazilian. Maybe it's because of spices and sauces that people love here too. And the prices are the same as in Brazil.

- If you have some difficulties who and how helps you to overcome them?

- About 150 students are studying here in the Summer School, they have tutors and the employees of the International Office of SPbPU help us a lot. During the planning stage of the trip the employees of the International Office of SPbPU helped me with the documents and efficiently answered to my e-mails. When I arrived they explained to me everything in detail – how I could get to the dormitory from the university, buy something in a shop, use the subway. When I fell ill they even sent me a photo of the medicine that I could buy in a pharmacy.

- Giovanna, at the beginning of our conversation you mentioned that you decided to go to the Polytechnic University because you heard positive reviews about our university. Now you are here and see everything with your own eyes. Would you recommend the Polytechnic Summer School to other students from your university?

- Of course! My friends that had been here before I came were really satisfied with the trip to Russia and the studies in your university. I still can't believe that I am in Saint-Petersburg and I love it so much! I want to change the stereotypical attitude towards Russians, so I'll recommend everybody to go here. The only thing I can say is Bem-vindo a São Petersburgo! Welcome to Saint-Petersburg!

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