

SHAKE THE FUTURE.



Steven LE BARS

Master's degree in Naval Engineering
Centrale Nantes, France
Universidad Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
2011-2015

Steven LE BARS

Master's degree in Naval Engineering Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



1. Why did you choose to do a double degree program at UFRJ, Brazil?

I had already been to Brazil with Nantes Eau Brésil (NEB) for a month and I loved the country. After that experience, I wanted to discover more about the culture, the people and learn Portuguese. Furthermore, the country was really booming when I chose this program, I saw it as an excellent opportunity for my professional career.

2. What did you think about the education system in Brazil?

The good thing about the Brazilian system is that they specialise earlier than we do. Consequently, students have a good technical background in their field. For us it is perfect because we get to choose our credits from a large panel of classes. I would say it is easier to get good grades than in France (if you work enough!) but be careful: you do not have any advantage because you are "gringo", as they kindly say. You must be patient to face day-to-day matters that may rise from the lack of rigor of the education system.

3. And life on campus?

The campus is on a huge island in Guanabara Bay but the "cariocas" (inhabitants of Rio) usually go home after classes, as the university is rather far from their houses. Therefore, you do not have that many activities after class compared to Centrale. It is possible to play sports on Saturday and Friday afternoons or do some class during the day (Brazilian dance, Capoeira..., but it is not well adapted to our timetable. You can also get a beer on Friday nights at the local bars or go to student parties called "Chopadas"; those organized by naval engineering students are famous in Brazil!

4. Concerning your language skills: did you speak Portuguese before leaving? How hard was it to follow classes?

I already had the basics in Portuguese thanks to my experience with NEB and my Brazilian friends at Centrale that gave us classes. Thus, for me it was easy to follow classes from the beginning. I never had problems of understanding. If you do not speak Portuguese when you arrive, relax, Brazilians are helpful and extremely nice. Nonetheless, I do advise to study some Portuguese before the exchange, it helps a lot for the integration.

5. According to you, what is the most important thing that should motivate one to study abroad?

Studying abroad truly broadens your mind on many subjects and makes you more tolerant. For example, I have learned to pass over many daily life situations that used to annoy me. In addition, going out of your comfort zone will really help you to take on responsibilities and face problems: it is a key asset for your future career. I would add

that the double degree is a great opportunity in order to truly know the country and make friendships with local people. Let us be honest, you cannot say that you know such a huge and diversified country after only an exchange semester!

6. What do you do now?

I work for a flourishing small company specialized in underwater works on Reunion Island. I got this opportunity only one week after I ended my double degree. I also had an opportunity of VIE in Rio that I declined for professional reasons even though I would have loved to stay longer in the "cidade maravilhosa".

7. Do you think that your experience in Brazil helped you get this position?

For sure! The company is developing its activity in Mozambique and they clearly told me I will be the first one involved as I speak Portuguese fluently. There are not many engineers able to speak this language, hence, it really gives an advantage to your profile.

8. What is the best thing you've learned through this experience?

Do not complain about small disturbances and do not get angry for anything. You see a lot of poverty in Brazil and it makes you realize how lucky you are to be born in such a well-functioning country as France. Furthermore, I became friendlier with people on a daily basis as Brazilians do.

9. Can you tell me your best memory during these 2 past years?

My weekly football match on Saturday afternoons with Brazilian friends and the gatherings we used to organize after the games.

10. According to you, why are firms looking to recruit students who experienced life in a foreign country?

Living in a foreign country truly proves to the firms your adaptation and multi-cultural skills. These are qualities demanded by many companies as most of them work in direct relation with other countries.

11. Anything else you'd like to add?

If you are willing to experience life abroad, then the double degree is for you. It will be a fresh start, full of discoveries, and you will come out far more mature. Finally yet importantly, South America is an amazing part of the world that you have to explore!