

Vamos ao Brasil!

Have you considered a veterinary study tour to Brazil?

Brazil. The word conjures up the mighty Amazon rainforest and river; spangled carnival dancers, white sand beaches and bikinis; rhythm-filled streets; colour, culture and *caipirinha*. These drawcards are the reasons many people visit this spectacular, contradictory land. But there is another attraction for the veterinary profession – the huge animal population, both wild and domestic.

Brazil is a country that loves its animals. Along with Mexico and Argentina, they have the highest rates of overall pet ownership in the world, and they especially love dogs. SMALL dogs: Brazilians have nearly 20 million small dogs at home, more per capita than any country in the world (at 101 small dogs for every 1,000 people according to the Euromonitor survey). Or, to put it another way, Brazilians have nearly 36 million dogs – many more dogs than Australia has people. Some 55 per cent of those dogs weigh less than 20 pounds (9.1 kilos), as tiny terriers, shih tzus, and chihuahuas fit with the lives of the 85 per cent of Brazilians who live in cramped urban areas.

It ranks third only behind the behemoth markets of the US and the UK for the amount of money it spends on pet care and, despite the dire economic crisis in Brazil between 2015 and 2017, pet care has been one of the few industries that have continued to grow. Brazilians bond deeply with their pets and they become part of the family – partly a response to recent changing social conditions, such as smaller families, a propensity to delay having children and increased divorce rates – which means they will maintain standards for their furry and feathered friends, even if money gets tighter during an economic downturn. Pet care therefore has a reputation as a relatively recession-resistant industry.

The Brazilian pet industry runs to both ends of the scale. At the top is Cobasi, a large chain of specialist pet supermarkets. Every weekend, its stores are full of cats and dogs being cosseted and treated, with the outlets offering a wide variety of services – including pet-friendly products, a pharmacy and veterinary care. At the other end of the scale, every neighbourhood has its own local pet shop and its own vet.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Brazil is also the country with the most veterinary doctors in the world. According to data released in 2013 by the Federal Council on Veterinary Medicine, there are more than 84,000 professionals in the field.

There are more than 200 public and private universities in Brazil that offer veterinary medicine and Brazil is the only Latin American country featured in the top 50 universities for veterinary science – the Universidade de São Paulo (36 for veterinary science; 132nd in the world rankings) and the Universidade Estadual Paulista “Julio de Mesquita Filho” (45 for veterinary sciences; 421-430 in the world rankings).

Despite the large number of trained veterinarians, the market is expanding – not only thanks to the levels of pet ownership, but also because of the livestock industry and the varied landscapes and geography of this enormous country. Veterinarians are tasked with treating not only domestic and farm animals but a huge range of tropical and wild animals.

Brazil has a sizeable beef industry and in remote areas the cattle face a very particular environmental problem – jaguar attacks, due largely to the reduction in their natural habitat and prey. In response, NGOs are researching ways ranchers can respond, rather than (illegal) retaliation on the big cats. One ingenious

solution is to increase the proportion of certain introduced Creole cattle breeds that have an inherent ability to defend themselves from predator attacks and demonstrate a gregarious herd behaviour, similar to the one exhibited by Asian Water Buffaloes. Another approach is to use experienced older animals (bulls, steers or older cows with horns) that confront predators and teach defensive grouping behaviour to the younger animals, thereby frightening the predators off. These animals can also be provided with bells to scare the predators. Combined with an appreciation of the tourism opportunities provided by the big cats and other livestock management techniques, these approaches demonstrate an alliance between conservation and agricultural productivity.

The role of veterinary doctors in Brazil therefore ranges widely across domestic veterinary clinics and university lecture halls, to thoroughbred horses, large livestock farms, training in the Amazon and working with conservation projects.

Take a rhythm-filled country with spectacular beaches, rainforest and rivers, with vibrant culture and history, that is also rich in domestic and wild animal life and boasts a thriving veterinary industry, and you have the perfect destination for a veterinary study tour. In fact, some vets on a previous Jon Baines Tours study tour to South Africa suggested Brazil as an ideal future destination. This tour, departing in August 2018, is led by William Renato da Silva Mendes – a veterinarian, part time guide and proud Rio resident, who will not only show the tour group his country but will provide first-hand knowledge of veterinary training in Brazil and the daily life of a Rio vet.

The tour travels from iconic Rio de Janeiro to the atmospheric old city of Salvador in Bahia, into the heart of the Amazon and back down to spectacular Rio. The journey is punctuated with regular professional visits and talks and provides real insight into veterinary science and practice in Brazil and the challenges that vets face in treating both wild and domestic animals.

Professional visits include the Fluminense Veterinary School at the University of Rio de Janeiro, along with a domestic veterinary clinic and a meeting with equine vets at the Jockey Club. Further north in Salvador, the tour participants meet with vets working with dairy farms as well as sea life conservation projects. The tour travels into the Amazon to see the new veterinary school in Manaus and INPA, a research institute working on manatee projects. Along the way there are many opportunities to explore the culture, music and natural beauty of Brazil across its many landscapes and to learn more about its contemporary society at all levels.

As well as enjoying the impressive tourist sites and activities, the tour provides more unusual experiences including piranha fishing, an optional visit to a Golden Lion Tamarin Conservation Project and seeing the Rio Jockey Club vets working on race night.

The pet care industry goes from strength to strength in Brazil, neatly exemplified by an announcement by Swiss food giant Nestle in February 2018 that it plans to open an \$86 million pet food plant in Brazil to cater for the 132 million domestic animals there. Also in February, a Brazilian judge ordered the temporary suspension of the export of live cattle from Brazil, following a campaign against the trade by animal rights group. Animal welfare, the livestock industry, conservation and the pet industry are all thriving areas in Brazil, making this a fascinating time to visit an already captivating country.



The tour runs from 4 – 17 August 2018.
To book or request a brochure please
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